

THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO: The Land of the Orang-Utan and the Bird of Paradise. A Narrative of Travel, with Studies of Man and Nature. By Alfred Russel Wallace, author of "Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro," &c. In two vols. London: Macmillan & Co.

This work will be perused with deep interest by the general reader, and will be hailed as a high authority by the naturalist, to whom it supplies a mine of pleasure and of scientific lore. Mr Wallace is no holiday-traveller. His bent lay amongst the cluster of islands, many of them of vast extent, lying between the Continents of Asia and Australia; and here he wandered and sojourned for the period of eight years, in the course of which he travelled fourteen thousand miles within the Archipelago, and made sixty or seventy separate journeys. He followed his explorations with uncommon devotion, undeterred by sickness, pain, and peril; and visiting old spots, as well as new ground never trodden by the foot of civilised man, he has vastly extended our knowledge of the physical aspect, and of the various races of mankind, and the native fauna of these interesting regions. He has discovered many new species of beautiful birds and gorgeous insects, and has contributed in other ways largely to the stores of natural history. Mr Wallace's wanderings included Sumatra, Java, Bali, Lombok, Timor, Borneo, Celebes, Gilolo, the Aru Islands, New Guinea, and many other places, which, though small in themselves, gave up most valuable contributions to natural history. He divides the vast cluster of islands into five groups, and shows pretty conclusively—both from the character of the land, the depth of the surrounding seas, the nature of the plants and animals, and the mental and physical features of the races inhabiting these regions—that at some remote period the one portion must have been dismembered from the Asiatic, and the other from the Australian Continent. During the numerous separate journeys which he made, Mr Wallace was generally assisted by one or two, sometimes by three Malay servants, and for a long period he had the services of an English lad named Charles Allen. The collections made during this long period of arduous travel amounted to 125,000 specimens of natural history. The wanderings of the naturalist ceased in 1862, and it may seem surprising that he has allowed so much time to elapse before communicating to the public the result of his labours. But he gives a satisfactory reason for his silence. He tells that on his return to England in 1862 he found himself surrounded by packing-cases which had been sent home from time to time, and which contained thousands of bird skins, thousands of beetles and butterflies, along with quadrupeds and land shells. Many of these he had not seen for years, and in his then weak state of health, the unpacking, sorting, and arranging such a mass of specimens occupied a long time. He found it would be injudicious, therefore, to rush into print before he had done something towards describing and naming the most important groups, and working out the mysteries of the many original specimens in his collection. Thus has the publication of his travels been delayed, but meanwhile he has contributed various descriptive papers to scientific periodicals. As we have hinted, the book is altogether a fascinating one, irrespective of its value as a faithful and voluminous exponent of natural science. The book is dedicated to Charles Darwin, of whose theory the traveller is a follower. Towards the conclusion Mr Wallace makes an attempt to prove that in many respects the savage is in a more comfortable condition than the mass of the humbler classes in civilised society. His reasons, to our thinking, are superficial and untenable; and all we need say is, that while we admire and trust the author as a traveller and a naturalist, we would rather not confide in him as a social reformer. We may add that the work is abundantly adorned with beautifully executed woodcut illustrations. It is impossible, within the limits of a newspaper notice, to give even a summary of the contents of these volumes. We shall, therefore, content ourselves by permitting the author to speak for himself by means of extracts in this, and perhaps in succeeding numbers:—

BORNEO—A MIAS OR ORANG-UTAN HUNT.

I moved about in every direction to get a full view into every part of the tree under which I had been standing, when I again heard the same noise but louder, and saw the leaves shaking as if caused by the motion of some heavy animal which moved off to an adjoining tree. I immediately shouted for all of them to come up and try and get a view, so as to allow me to have a shot. This was not an easy matter, as the Mias had a knack of selecting places with dense foliage beneath. Very soon, however, one of the Dyaks called me and pointed upwards, and on looking I saw a great red hairy body and a huge black face gazing down from a great height, as if wanting to know what was making such a disturbance below. I instantly fired, and he made off at once, so that I could not then tell whether I had hit him.

He now moved very rapidly and very noiselessly for so large an animal, so I told the Dyaks to follow and keep him in sight while I loaded. The jungle was here full of large angular fragments of rock from the mountain above, and thick with hanging and twisted creepers. Running, climbing, and creeping among these, we came up with the creature on the top of a high tree near the road, where the Chinamen had discovered him, and were shouting their astonishment with open mouth: "Ya Ya Tuan; Orang-utan, Tuan." Seeing that he could not pass here without descending, he turned up again towards the hill, and I got two shots, and following quickly had two more by the time he had again reached the path; but he was always more or less concealed by foliage, and protected by the large branch on which he was walking. Once while loading I had a splendid view of him, moving along a large limb of a tree in a semi-erect posture, and showing him to be an animal of the largest size. At the path he got on to one of the loftiest trees in the forest, and we could see one leg hanging down useless, having been broken by a fall. He now fixed himself in a fork, where he was hidden by thick foliage, and seemed disinclined to move. I was afraid he would remain and die in this position, and as it was nearly evening I could not have got the tree cut down that day. I therefore fired again, and he then moved off, and going up the hill was obliged to get on to some lower trees, on the branches of one of which he fixed himself in such a position that he could not fall, and lay all in a heap as if dead, or dying.

I now wanted the Dyaks to go up and cut off the branch he was resting on, but they were afraid, saying he was not dead, and would come and attack them. We then shook the adjoining tree, pulled the hanging creepers, and did all we could to disturb him, but without effect, so I thought it best to send for two Chinamen with axes to cut down the tree. While the messenger was gone, however, one of the Dyaks took courage and climbed towards him, but the mias did not wait for him to get near, moving off to another tree, where he got on to a dense mass of branches and creepers which almost completely hid him from our view. The tree was luckily a small one, so when the axes came we soon had it cut through; but it was so held up by jungle ropes and climbers to adjoining trees that it only fell into a sloping position. The mias did not move, and I began to fear that after all we should not get him, as it was near evening, and half-a-dozen more trees would have to be cut down before the one he was on would fall. As a last resource we all began pulling at the creepers, which shook the tree very much, and, after a few minutes, when we had almost given up all hopes, down he came with a crash and a thud like the fall of a giant. And he was a giant, his head and body being full as large as a man's. He was of the kind called by the Dyaks "Mias Chappan," or "Mias Pappan," which has the skin of the face broadened out to a ridge or fold at each side. His outstretched arms measured seven feet three inches across, and his height, measuring fairly from the top of the head to the heel, was four feet two inches. The body just below the arms was three feet two inches round, and was quite as long as a man's, the legs being exceedingly short in proportion. On examination we found he had been dreadfully wounded. Both legs were broken, one hip-joint and the foot of the spine completely shattered, and two bullets were found flattened in his neck and jaws! Yet he was still alive when he fell. The two Chinamen carried him home tied to a pole, and I was occupied with Charley the whole of the next day preparing the skin and boiling the bones to make a perfect skeleton, which are now preserved in the Museum at Derby.

THE DURIAN FRUIT.

The durian grows on a large and lofty forest tree, somewhat resembling an elm in its general character, but with a more smooth and scaly bark. The fruit is round or slightly oval, about the size of a large coconut, of a green colour, and covered all over with short stout spines the bases of which touch each other, and are consequently somewhat hexagonal, while the points are very strong and sharp. It is so completely armed, that if the

stalk is broken off it is a difficult matter to lift one from the ground. The outer rind is so thick and tough, that from whatever height it may fall it is never broken. From the base to the apex five very faint lines may be traced, over which the spines arch a little; these are the sutures of the carpels, and show where the fruit may be divided with a heavy knife and a strong hand. The five cells are satiny white within, and are each filled with an oval mass of cream-coloured pulp, embedded in which are two or three seeds about the size of chestnuts. This pulp is the eatable part, and its consistence and flavour are indescribable. A rich butter-like custard highly flavoured with almonds gives the best general idea of it, but intermingled with it come wafts of flavour that call to mind cream-cheese, onion-sauce, brown sherry, and other incongruities. Then there is a rich glutinous smoothness in the pulp which nothing else possesses, but which adds to its delicacy. It is neither acid, nor sweet, nor juicy, yet one feels the want of none of these qualities, for it is perfect as it is. It produces no nausea or other bad effect, and the more you eat of it the less you feel inclined to stop. In fact to eat durians is a new sensation, worth a voyage to the East to experience.

When the fruit is ripe it falls of itself, and the only way to eat durians in perfection is to get them as they fall; and the smell is then less overpowering. When unripe, it makes a very good vegetable if cooked, and it is also eaten by the Dyaks raw. In a good fruit season large quantities are preserved salted, in jars and bamboos, and kept the year round, when it acquires a most disgusting odour to Europeans, but the Dyaks appreciate it highly as a relish with their rice. There are in the forest two varieties of wild durians with much smaller fruits, one of them orange-coloured inside; and these are probably the origin of the large and fine durians, which are never found wild. It would not, perhaps, be correct to say that the durian is the best of all fruits, because it cannot supply the place of the subacid juicy kinds, such as the orange, grape, mango, and mangosteen, whose refreshing and cooling qualities are so wholesome and grateful; but as producing a food of the most exquisite flavour it is unsurpassed. If I had to fix on two only, as representing the perfection of the two classes, I should certainly choose the durian and the orange as the king and queen of fruits.

The durian is, however, sometimes dangerous. When the fruit begins to ripen it falls daily and almost hourly, and accidents not unfrequently happen to persons walking or working under the trees. When a durian strikes a man in its fall, it produces a dreadful wound, the strong spines tearing open the flesh, while the blow itself is very heavy; but from this very circumstance death rarely ensues, the copious effusion of blood preventing the inflammation which might otherwise take place. A Dyak chief informed me that he had been struck down by a durian falling on his head, which he thought would certainly have caused his death, yet he recovered in a very short time.

THE DYAKS—THE GOVERNMENT OF RAJAH BROOKE.

A few words in conclusion about the government of Sarawak. Sir James Brooke found the Dyaks oppressed and ground down by the most cruel tyranny. They were cheated by the Malay traders, and robbed by the Malay chiefs. Their wives and children were often captured and sold into slavery, and hostile tribes purchased permission from their cruel rulers to plunder, enslave, and murder them. Anything like justice or redress for these injuries was utterly unattainable. From the time Sir James obtained possession of the country, all this was stopped. Equal justice was awarded to Malay, Chinaman, and Dyak. The remorseless pirates from the rivers farther east were punished, and finally shut up within their own territories, and the Dyak, for the first time, could sleep in peace. His wife and children were now safe from slavery; his house was no longer burnt over his head; his crops and his fruits were now his own, to sell or consume as he pleased. And the unknown stranger who had done all this for them, and asked for nothing in return, what could he be? How was it possible for them to realise his motives? Was it not natural that they should refuse to believe he was a man? for of pure benevolence combined with great power, they had had no experience among men. They naturally concluded that he was a superior being, come down upon earth to confer blessings on the afflicted. In many villages where he had not been seen, I was asked strange questions about him. Was he not as old as the mountains? Could he not bring the dead to life? And they firmly believe that he can give them good harvests, and make their fruit-trees bear an abundant crop.

In forming a proper estimate of Sir James Brooke's government, it must ever be remembered that he held Sarawak solely by the goodwill of the native inhabitants. He had to deal with two races, one of whom, the Mahometan Malays, looked upon the other race, the Dyaks, as savages and slaves, only fit to be robbed and plundered. He has effectually protected the Dyaks, and has invariably treated them as, in his sight, equal to the Malays; and yet he has secured the affection and goodwill of both. Notwithstanding the religious prejudices of Mahometans, he has induced them to modify many of their worst laws and customs, and to assimilate their criminal code to that of the civilised world. That his government still continues, after twenty-seven years—notwithstanding his frequent absences from ill-health, notwithstanding conspiracies of Malay chiefs, and insurrections of Chinese gold-diggers, all of which have been overcome by the support of the native population, and notwithstanding financial, political, and domestic troubles—is due, I believe, solely to the many admirable qualities which Sir James Brooke possessed, and especially to his having convinced the native population, by every action of his life, that he ruled them, not for his own advantage, but for their good.

Since these lines were written, his noble spirit has passed away. But though, by those who knew him not, he may be sneered at as an enthusiast adventurer, or abused as a hard-hearted despot, the universal testimony of every one who came in contact with him in his adopted country, whether European, Malay, or Dyak, will be, that Rajah Brooke was a great, a wise, and a good ruler—a true and faithful friend—a man to be admired for his talents, respected for his honesty and courage, and loved for his genuine hospitality, his kindness of disposition, and his tenderness of heart.