

IN THE EASTERN SEAS; or, THE REGIONS OF THE BIRD OF PARADISE. A Tale for Boys. By W. H. G. Kingston, author of "Round the World," "My First Voyage," "Old Jack," &c. London: T. Nelson & Sons. 1871.

IN a short preface the author explains that he has endeavoured "to describe minutely and exactly the numerous objects of natural history which exist in that wonderful region, the Malay or Eastern Archipelago." The plan upon which the book is constructed is simple enough. On the heads of a number of young people and two eminent naturalists are heaped all the adventures which might possibly have happened to all the civilised men who have ever been in or near the islands between Australia and the Gulf of Siam. The persons who figure in the story are rather weakly drawn, and wanting in that individuality which constitutes the charm of dramatic representation. We get little insight into the character of the heroine beyond what may be gathered from her throwing her arms about her brother's neck on solemn occasions, with the ejaculation—"Dear, dear Walter!" The only mark by which the black cook can be traced through the volume, and distinguished from the gentlemen of the party, is that he carefully uses "de" for "the," and has a partiality for the use of "me" as a nominative to his verbs.

Happily the thrilling adventures with which the book is filled are sufficient by themselves to keep up an unflagging interest in the progress of the story from beginning to end. A vivid picture is given of life and nature in the "summer isles of Eden," in which our adventurers

"Wandered far away,

On from island unto island, at the gateways of the day."

It would be useless to analyse a plot which is manifestly but the slender thread upon which pearls are to be strung. It is enough to say that any boy who reads "The Eastern Seas" will be certain to retain much valuable information regarding the wonderful animals and plants, and still more wonderful human inhabitants, of those "Isles that were the Hesperides of all our boyish dreams." There is perhaps enough of shipwreck, tiger, and pirate (and mothers will be thankful for them) to prevent even the most imaginative boy running away to sea, in the hope of repeating the exploits of Walter and Oliver. The book will form an acceptable gift for a boy about Christmas time, when the long nights must be devoted to reading of some sort, and may be devoted to reading of a less pleasant and healthful tone. Its perusal may serve to make the boy forget "the gloom that saddens heaven and earth," and to transport him for the time to the East, with its

"Mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade, and palms in cluster, knots of
Paradise."

Numerous illustrations, without which no boys' book would be complete, are scattered throughout the volume. They are evidently the work of many hands, and though not all of equal merit, add a great attrac-

tion to the story. Those which portray the "lustrous woodlands" seem to us especially successful. "Banyan Trees," and "Ratans and other Specimens of Tropical Vegetation," are both excellent. "The Albatross," in which the bird is seen flying across a stormy ocean, with a background of sea-stacks half buried in spray, reminds us of some of the pictures in "The Bird," Jules Michelet's exquisite book *de luxe*.

The author sometimes attempts to palm off upon his young readers, by way of a joke or surprise, the scientific names of the animals and plants described, as in the following examples:—

"Merlin sprang on him, and seizing him by the neck, quickly dragged him to the shore."

"It is a magnificent hornbill!" exclaimed our uncle—"Buceros bicornis."

—And again—

"What is it?" exclaimed my uncle. "It is worth coming all the way from England to obtain, and living out here many years. Why, this is a perfect nautilus." With the greatest care he drew out the fragile shell with the creature inside. "See," he said, "it belongs to the genus *Cephalopoda*. It is one of the *Polythalamous*, or many-chambered shells."

"Well, I should call it a big anail, of rather a curious shape," observed Roger Trew."

No intelligent boy will be imposed upon twice by such an artifice, but will very soon detect, and laugh at, the thin coating of sugar upon the pill. The object is hardly worth the trouble. Being able to repeat a scientific name is of no use without understanding its meaning; and boys who understand the meaning of scientific names are too old to care to read even a scientific Robinson Crusoe. Authors of books of the class to which "The Eastern Seas" belongs must be content to awaken in boys an interest in natural history sufficient to set them to study it in the old toilsome way. In this we think Mr Kingston will succeed in the present instance, though it is possible that some boys may fall into the error of gathering from his book—what he certainly did not mean to convey—the idea that specimen-hunting is science.