

Proceedings of Natural-History Collectors in Foreign Countries.

MR. A. R. WALLACE. * — As some account of the unfortunate accident that took place on my voyage home from South America may not be unacceptable to your readers, I beg to send you the following brief statement of the facts.

On the 2nd of July of the present year, I arrived in Pará from the river Uaupés, an unexplored branch of the upper Rio Negro. I had with me a considerable collection of birds, insects, reptiles and fishes, and a large quantity of miscellaneous articles, consisting of about twenty cases and packages. Nearly half of these had been left by me at Barra a year before to be sent home; but a new government, arriving there shortly after I left, took it into their heads that I was engaged in a contraband trade, and so I found them still there on my way down, in the present year, and had to bring them all with me.

On the 12th of July I embarked in the "Helen," 235 tons, for London, still suffering from fever and ague, which had nearly killed me ten months before on the upper Rio Negro, and from which I had never since been free.

The cargo of the vessel consisted of India-rubber, cocoa, arnatto, balsam of copaiba, and Piassaba. Almost all my cases were stowed in the hold. On the 6th of August, when in lat. $30^{\circ} 30' N.$, long. $52^{\circ} W.$, at 9, A.M., smoke was discovered issuing from the hatchways, on opening which, and attempting to ascertain the seat of the fire, the smoke became more dense and suffocating, and soon filled the cabin, so as to render it very difficult to get any necessaries out of it. By great exertions the boats were got out, and bread, water, and other necessaries put into them. By noon the flames had burst into the cabin and on deck, and we were driven to take refuge in the boats, which, being much shrunk by exposure to the sun, required all our exertions to keep them from filling with water. The flames spread most rapidly; and by night the masts had fallen, and the deck and cargo was one fierce mass of flame. We staid near the vessel all night: the next morning we left the ship still burning down at the water's edge, and steered for Bermuda, the nearest point of land, but still 700 miles distant from us. For two days we had a fair easterly wind, but this afterwards changed to N. and N.W., and we could make but little way. We suffered much from the heat by day; and being

* Communicated by himself.

constantly wet with the spray, and having no place to lie down comfortably, it may be supposed that we did not sleep very soundly at night. For food we did very well, having plenty of biscuit and salt pork,—raw, of course,—which we found very palatable, with a little water to wash it down. After a week, having seen no vessel, we put ourselves on short allowance of water, and then suffered much from thirst; and as we now were in a part celebrated for squalls and hurricanes, every shift in the wind and change of the sky was most anxiously watched by us. At length, after ten days and nights we heard the joyful cry of “Sail ho!” and by a few hours’ hard rowing got on board the “Jordeson” from Cuba, bound for London, in lat. $32^{\circ} 48' N.$, long. $60^{\circ} 27' W.$, being still about 200 miles from Bermuda.

We now had a very tedious voyage, and soon got to be very short of provisions, the crew being doubled by our arrival: in fact, had not two vessels assisted us with provisions at different times, we should actually have starved; and as it was, for a considerable time we had nothing but biscuit and water. We encountered three very heavy gales, which split and carried away some of the strongest sails in the ship, and made her leak so much that the pumps could with difficulty keep her free. On the 1st of October, however, we were safely landed at Deal, eighty days after we left Pará.

The only things which I saved were my watch, my drawings of fishes, and a portion of my notes and journals. Most of my journals, notes on the habits of animals, and drawings of the transformations of insects, were lost.

My collections were mostly from the country about the sources of the Rio Negro and Orinooko, one of the wildest and least known parts of South America, and their loss is therefore the more to be regretted. I had a fine collection of the river tortoises (*Chelydidæ*) consisting of ten species, many of which I believe were new. Also upwards of a hundred species of the little known fishes of the Rio Negro: of these last, however, and of many additional species, I have saved my drawings and descriptions. My private collection of *Lepidoptera* contained illustrations of all the species and varieties I had collected at Santarem, Montalegré, Barra, the Upper Amazons, and the Rio Negro: there must have been at least a hundred new and unique species. I had also a number of curious *Coleoptera*, several species of ants in all their different states, and complete skeletons and skins of an ant-eater and cow-fish, (*Manatus*); the whole of which, together with a small collection of living monkeys, parrots, macaws, and other birds, are irrecoverably lost.

I may also mention that I had taken some trouble to procure and pack an entire leaf of the magnificent Jupaté palm (*Oreodoxia regia*), fifty feet in length, which I had hoped would form a fine object in the botanical room at the British Museum.

ALFRED R. WALLACE.

P.S.—I left Mr. Spruce at S. Gabriel, on the falls of the Rio Negro, hard at work and in good health, on the 29th of April last. On the 15th of June I called at Santarem, which place Mr. Bates had left a week previously on an excursion up the Tapajoz.—A. W.

43, Upper Albany St., Regent's Park,

October 19, 1852.

MR. N. PLANT.*—This gentleman left England in September, 1851, for the purpose of collecting objects of Natural History &c. in the southern part of Brazil. I extract a portion of a letter which I have received from him a few days since, dated "San Leopoldo, July 3rd, 1852."

"I now send off to you my first consignment, which I hope will reach you in safety. It consists of about 1300 insects of all orders, upwards of 100 bird and 3 animal skins, 15 specimens of woods and several of rocks, together with a few rough sketches and notes. In the inclosed letter to yourself I give an account of the country, &c., so will only just remark that I left Rio Grande for Portalegré, where I only remained about fourteen days, seeing that nothing could be done there owing to the barren character of the country. I proceeded on to San Leopoldo, where the greater part of my present collection was formed. I left there for Mundi Novo, on account of the Englishman I was staying with being shot in the arm by some enemy, which compelled him to remove to the city, Portalegré, and me to Mundi Novo, which appears to be the best locality in the province for my pursuits, so I shall remain here two or three years if it pays. The present collection is not a large one, having been made in going from one place to another in search of a good locality to settle in; but I hope it may be of good quality, for travelling expenses are very great here, owing to the absolute necessity for keeping a horse.

"In about three months after receiving this consignment you may expect another, with some plants. I shall see by the sale of the birds whether it will be worth while purchasing powder and shot, for all my powder, except one pound, was taken at the custom-house.

"I see in your letter that Bonpland is said to be dead; but I hear

* Communicated by Mr. S. Stevens.