

## INTRODUCTION

WHEN ON THE 27TH DECEMBER, 1831, A YOUNG MAN of twenty-three sailed as naturalist on H.M.S. *Beagle* on a surveying voyage round the world (graciously permitted by the Admiralty to pay his own expenses), nobody had the faintest idea that the moment was as pregnant for man's interpretation of nature as when Newton saw the apple fall was for his interpretation of the universe. But the most momentous happenings in the history of man rarely or never proclaim themselves as such. It cannot be said that when, forty-one years later, another young man of twenty-eight joined the surveying expedition of H.M.S. *Challenger*, also as a naturalist, that the result was a similar revolution in Western thought. Moseley was not a Darwin nor a Wallace, but he possessed in common with these great thinkers and generalisers the gift of accurate observation, and the ability to interpret what he saw. Like them, too, he could write simply and interestingly for the general reader, and while his one popular work, the *Notes of a Naturalist*, has not quite the appeal of Darwin's *Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle*, it—to quote the *Dictionary of National Biography*—"approaches" in interest and importance that classic of scientific travel. It is worthy to stand on the same shelf, along with Wallace's and Bates' books on the Amazons, and Belt's *Naturalist in Nicaragua*, which Darwin commended, not to mention the precursor of them all, Humboldt, whose *Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America* inspired Darwin, and so many of his successors to go and do likewise. The *Notes* are not, as was Darwin's *Beagle*, a narrative, but rather what the title indicates, viz.: notes, and scenery and personal experiences are subordinate to the creatures and objects observed. What chiefly interested Moseley was nature. As soon as he was on land he was agog to investigate the life it maintained, the creatures which