

rock which everywhere appears in the ravines and brooks is a coralline limestone, in some places soft and pliable, in others so hard and crystalline as to resemble our mountain limestone. The small islands which surround the central mass are very numerous . . . and all are covered with a dense and very lofty forest." Here is another short extract, beginning at p. 294, in which Wallace summarises his knowledge and impressions of the vegetation:—"Persons who have formed the usual ideas of the vegetation of the tropics—who picture to themselves the abundance and brilliancy of the flowers, and the magnificent appearance of hundreds of forest trees covered with masses of coloured blossom, will be surprised to learn, that though vegetation in Aru is highly luxuriant and varied, and would afford abundance of fine and curious plants to adorn our hothouses, yet bright and showy flowers are, as a general rule, altogether absent, or so very scarce as to produce no effect whatever on the general scenery. To give particulars: I have visited five distinct localities in the islands, I have wandered daily in the forests, and have passed along upwards of a hundred miles of coast and river during a period of six months, much of it very fine weather, and till just as I was about to leave, I never saw a single plant of striking beauty, hardly a shrub equal to a hawthorn, or a climber equal to a honeysuckle! It cannot be said that the flowering season had not arrived, for I saw many herbs, shrubs, and forest trees in flower, but all had blossoms of a green or greenish-white tint, not superior to our lime-trees. Here and there on the river banks and coasts are a few *Convolvulaceæ*, not equal to our garden *Ipomœas*, and in the deepest shades of the forests some fine scarlet and purple *Zingiberaceæ*, but so few and scattered as to be nothing amid the mass of green and flowerless vegetation. Yet the noble *Cycadaceæ* and screw-pines, thirty or forty feet high, the elegant tree-ferns, the lofty palms, and the variety of beautiful and curious plants which everywhere meet the eye, attest the warmth and moisture of the tropics and the fertility of the soil. It is true that Aru seemed to me exceptionally poor in flowers, but this is only an exaggeration of a general tropical feature; for my whole experience in the equatorial regions of the west and east has convinced me that in the most luxuriant parts of the tropics, flowers are less abundant, and on the average less showy, and are far less effective in adding colour to the landscape than in temperate climates. I have never seen in the tropics such brilliant masses of colour as even England can show in her furze-clad commons, her heathery mountain-sides, her glades of wild hyacinths, her fields of poppies, her meadows of buttercups and orchises—carpets of yellow, purple, azure-blue, and fiery crimson, which the tropics can rarely exhibit."

With regard to the former physical condition of the Arrou group, Wallace, after reviewing the geological evidence and the distribution of the plants and animals, but more especially the latter, comes to the conclusion that at no very distant epoch these islands formed a part of New Guinea, and became separated by the subsidence of the great plain which formerly connected them with it.

The stay of the Challenger Expedition at the Arrou and Ki islands little exceeded a