The Malay Archipelago

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## Volume One

### preface

My readers will naturally ask why I have delayed writing this book for six years after my return; and I feel bound to give them full satisfaction on this point.

When I reached England in the spring of 1862, I found myself surrounded by a room full of packing cases containing the collections that I had, from time to time, sent home for my private use. These comprised nearly three thousand bird-skins of about one thousand species, at least twenty thousand beetles and butterflies of about seven thousand species, and some quadrupeds and land shells besides. A large proportion of these I had not seen for years, and in my then weakened state of health, the unpacking, sorting, and arranging of such a mass of specimens occupied a long time.

I very soon decided that until I had done something towards naming and describing the most important groups in my collection, and had worked out some of the more interesting problems of variation and geographical distribution (of which I had had glimpses while collecting them), I would not attempt to publish my travels.

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