

MISS BIRD AMONG THE MALAYS.*

THE Golden Chersonese, or the Malay Peninsula, is a slender Asiatic forefinger, stretched southward between the India and China seas, almost far enough to touch Sumatra, and pointing out the maritime highway between that island and Borneo to Australia. The island of Singapore is the nail at the tip of this finger; Malacca is at its lower joint; Penang at the large knuckle. It is a jeweled finger, red with the hot blood of the tropics, bony with lofty mountains, soft-skinned with luxurious vegetation, seamed with mines of tin. Miss Bird, no longer Miss Bird only, but now Mrs. Bishop, yet still the same Miss Bird of the Rocky Mountains, of the Hawaiian Islands, and of *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, homeward bound by way of Hong Kong and Canton, determined to pay a visit to this fascinating peninsula. That visit is the basis of the present volume. She landed at Singapore, and then coasted northward, touching at Malacca, Selangor, the Dindings, and Penang; ascending the rivers wherever she could into the hidden and treacherous interior; visiting English residents in their bungalows and Malay princes in their "godowns;" exploring the jungles, studying the natives, dissecting politics, observing nature, and filling her mind with brilliant impressions and never-to-be-forgotten memories of form, color, life, growth, peril, adventure, and nature, animate and inanimate.

The Golden Chersonese — the Malay Peninsula — stops just short of the equator. A hundred inches of rain are the annual supply. Eighty and ninety degrees Fahrenheit are the normal temperature. Elephants on the highway, tigers in the jungle, cobras in the garden, lizards in the chamber, mosquitoes twenty-four hours in the day, apes that are familiar friends, cockroaches that look as large as mice in the moonlight, are common features. The people are a blending of the Malays and the Chinese; Mohammedanism prevails; the English rule; nature is lavish in her gifts; the climate is hot but healthy; the landscape glows; the forest hums; butterflies with wings that spread five inches glisten in the sunlight; palms, cocoa-nuts, gigantic ferns, immense creepers, gorgeous orchids, diversify the greenwood; the air is soaked with moisture and heavy with fragrance; the stranger feels as if in a vast conservatory.

From this enchanting paradise Miss Bird here writes twenty-three letters home, inter-

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spersing them with four historical chapters, and illustrating them with sixteen pictures and a good map. She was everywhere the same independent, intrepid, indefatigable traveler we have known before. It was nothing to her to be the only woman, not only, but the only European, on a river steamer, commanded, manned, and freighted by Chinese and Malays. When bitten by a centipede she had the pluck to incise the wound sharply and deeply with her pen-knife and pour in ammonia. With like heroic treatment she was ready for every emergency. She could ride an elephant, thread a jungle, wade a river, entertain a Rajah, play with a pet ape, face a tiger, study an ant-hill, sleep alone in a bungalow, perform her toilet before a coolie, and sing one of Dr. Bonar's hymns at a cathedral in a Church of England service. In this book she has a fascinating subject, and she handles it in a fascinating way. It is carelessly written, as would be natural with letters so composed; but one forgets their blemishes of style when looking through them at such wonderful pictures as these. Such sunrises; such glories of foliage and verdure; such expanses of waveless seas; such silence of the night; such weird experiences on the still, dark rivers and in the depths of the forests; such strange figures of outlandish humanity; such sounds and cries; such wealth of color all around; such skies; such picturesque interiors of Malay dwellings, adorned with silk and embroidery and gold; and such reveling in it all, as of a strong, healthy, masculine nature, in love with outdoor life, and bathing in it as a swimmer in the sea!

Oh, this is a rare book! one of the best on the Eastern tropics. Do not miss it, you who like travels and new worlds, and courage, and adventure, and endurance; and, best of all, a glimpse of a rising Oriental people, quickening under the touches of the West.