

'All right so far. We have had beautiful weather. I was sick only one day and qualmish two or three more. This ship is crowded, we have four berths in our cabin, 3 occupied & there is not room for two to dress in it at once ...'

TO GEORGE SILK, 19 MARCH 1854.

So begins the first letter from Alfred Russel Wallace, written as he crossed the Mediterranean on his way to Singapore on what would prove to be a momentous journey both for Wallace and for science. It was during this journey that Wallace would come to recognize the principle of natural selection. His famous letter to Darwin that prompted the rapid publication of *The Origin of Species* is lost. But collected here in a new transcription are the surviving letters from that journey, both written to and by this quintessential Victorian naturalist and traveller. Wallace's exchanges with family, friends, and naturalist colleagues including Darwin, Bates, and Hooker, give us a vivid picture of the excitement and frustrations of his journey, and a Victorian world at the inception of a revolution in science.

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VAN WYHE and
ROOKMAAKER

ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE OXFORD

With a foreword by
SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH



ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE

Letters from the Malay Archipelago



Edited by
JOHN VAN WYHE and KEES ROOKMAAKER

The great Victorian naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace travelled in the Malay Archipelago between 1854 and 1862, observing and collecting wildlife. It was on this famous journey from Singapore, among the islands of Indonesia, and as far as New Guinea, that Wallace, pondering deeply on varieties and species, independently came up with the concept of natural selection and wrote the fateful letter to Darwin which was to precipitate the publication of *The Origin of Species*.

Wallace's famous account of his journey, *The Malay Archipelago*, has become a classic work. But a number of letters written by and to Wallace during his journey survive, and they tell an equally fascinating story, with an immediacy, candour, and variety of tone that only private correspondence can capture. The surviving 88 letters, some only discovered recently, are collected here in a single volume for the first time in a new, fully annotated transcription by the Editors which clarifies various omissions. Their research also resolves the much debated question of when Darwin received Wallace's essay on natural selection.

During this journey Wallace not only came to formulate a theory of evolution by natural selection but to identify the striking geographical boundary between Asian and Australasian species that divides these islands—now known as the Wallace Line. The collection includes letters to family and naturalist friends and contacts, including Darwin, Bates, and Hooker. The letters transport us to a past world at the height of Empire; a world of imperialist assumptions but also of intrepid travel in remote lands, at a time of exhilarating scientific discovery.



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received by the Museum of Zoology, University of Cambridge during the 19th century. He is the author of over 200 papers and several books, on African exploration and on the rhinoceros. He received the Founder's Medal of the Society for the History of Natural History.

experience of this country vessels. Malacca is an old Dutch city, but the Portuguese have left the strongest mark of their possessions in the common language of the place being still theirs. I have now two Portuguese servants, a cook & a hunter & find myself thus almost brought back again to Brazil by the similarity of the language, the people, & the jungle life. In Malacca we staid only two days, being anxious to get into the country as soon as possible. I staid with a Roman Catholic Missionary, there are several here, each devoted to a particular part of the population, Portuguese, Chinese & wild Malays of the Jungle.⁵⁰ The gentleman we were with is building a large church, of which he is architect himself, & superintends the laying of every brick & the cutting of every piece of timber. Money enough could not be raised here, so he took a voyage *round the World!* and in the United States, California, & India got subscriptions sufficient to complete it.

It is a curious & not very creditable thing that in the English Colonies of Singapore & Malacca there is not a single protestant missionary; while the conversion, education & physical & moral improvement of the inhabitants (non-European) is entirely left to these French Missionaries, who without the slightest assistance from our Government devote their lives to the christianising & civilising the varied populations which we rule over.

Here the birds are abundant & most beautiful, more so than on the Amazon, & I think I shall soon form a most beautiful collection. They are however almost all common, & so are of little value except that I hope they will be better specimens than usually come to England. My guns are both *very good*, but I find powder & shot in Singapore *cheaper* than in London, so I need not have troubled myself to take any. So far both I & Charles have enjoyed excellent health. He can now shoot pretty well & is so fond of it that I can hardly get him to do anything else. He will soon be very useful, if I can cure him of his incorrigible

⁵⁰ Wallace stayed with Pierre Etienne Lazare Favre (1812–1887) who was assigned to the Chinese Catholics at Malacca. St Francis Xavier's Church was built between 1849 and 1856. Decroix, P. 2005. *History of the Church and churches in Malaysia and Singapore (1511–2000)*. Penang, pp. 225–6. Wallace recorded the barometer reading of 'Mr Favrex' at the front of *Notebook 1* on 16 July 1854.

carelessness. At present I cannot trust him to do the smallest thing without watching that he does it properly, so that I might generally as well do it myself.

The Chinese are most industrious. They clear & cultivate the ground with a neatness which I have never before seen in the tropics, & save every particle of manure both from men & animals to enrich the ground. The country about Malacca is much more beautiful than Singapore, it being an old settlement with abundance of old fruit & forest trees scattered about. Provisions are cheaper, but every thing else dearer than in Singapore. Monkeys of many sorts are abundant here, in fact all animal life seems more plentiful than in Brazil. Among fruits I miss most the oranges, which are scarce & not good; & there is no substitute for them.

I shall remain here probably 2 months & then return to Singapore to prepare for a voyage to Cambodia or somewhere else, so do not be alarmed if you do not hear from me regularly. Love to all at home from

Your ever affectionate Son

Alfred R. Wallace.

Mrs Wallace

Singapore

6. To Mary Ann Wallace, 30 September 1854

Sept. 30th. 1854

Singapore

My dear Mother

I last wrote to you from Malacca in July. I have now just returned to Singapore after two months hard work.

At Malacca I had a pretty strong touch of fever with the old Rio Negro symptoms, but the Government doctor made me take a great quantity of quinine

every day for a week together & so killed it, & in less than a fortnight I was quite well & off to the Jungle again. I see now how to treat the fever, & shall commence at once when the symptoms again appear. I never took half enough quinine in America to cure me.

Malacca is a pretty place, & I worked very hard. Insects are not very abundant there, still by perseverance I got a good number & many rare ones. Of birds too I made a good collection. I went to the celebrated Mount Ophir and ascended to the top.⁵¹ The walk was terrible 30 miles through jungle, a succession of mud holes. My *boots* did good service.

We lived there a week at the foot of the mountain in a little hut built by our men, & I got some fine new butterflies there and hundreds of other new and rare insects. We had only rice & a little fish & tea, but came home quite well. The height of the mountain is about 4,000 feet. Near the top are beautiful ferns & several kinds of fir trees of which I made a small collection. Elephants & Rhinoceroses as well as Tigers are abundant there, but we had our usual bad luck in not seeing any of them.

On returning to Malacca I found the accumulations of two or three posts, a dozen letters & fifty newspapers—my watch & pins &c from Mr Stevens. I had letters from Algernon & my Uncle.⁵² The latter wants me to visit Adelaide, the former wants to visit me but is afraid he cannot manage it. Your letter contained much news. Mr [Thomas] Sims come to London is a miracle. You do not say whether any of you have been to the Crystal Palace yet. Even G.S. [George Silk] who admires nothing says it is indescribable.

⁵¹ The most conspicuous landmark visible from Malacca is Mount Ophir (Gunung Ledang). There were several gold mines on the mountain.

⁵² Algernon Wilson (1818–1884), Wallace's cousin, was Registrar of Probates and an enthusiastic amateur entomologist living in Adelaide, Australia (ML2). See: Wilson, J.G. 2005. *The insect man: Charles Algernon Wilson: Adelaide's first entomologist*. Henley Beach: S. Aust. Seaview Press. The person referred to as 'my Uncle' was Algernon's father and husband of Wallace's maternal aunt Martha, Thomas Wilson (1787–1863), a solicitor and author who emigrated to Australia in 1838 and settled in Adelaide.

I am glad to be safe in Singapore with my collections, as from here they can be insured. I have now a fortnight's work to arrange, examine, & pack them, & then in four months hence there will be some work for Mr. Stevens.

Sir James Brooke is here. I have called on him. He received me most cordially, & offered me every assistance at Sarawak. I shall go there next, as the Missionary does not go to Cambodia for some months. Besides, I shall have some pleasant society at Sarawak, & shall get on in Malay, which is very easy, but I have had no practice—though still I can ask for most common things.

My books & instruments arrived in beautiful condition. They looked as if they had been packed up but a day. Not so the unfortunate eatables. We were all very stupid to pack them up in a basket at all. Nothing but tin cases will preserve such things. The pudding & twelfth cake were masses of mould & insects, quite useless. The covers of the jars were all eaten through by ants and small insects. The currant jam was mostly spoilt, *sour*. The gooseberry remained very good. Anything of the sort put into tin cases & soldered up, which would not cost more than 6^d & would no doubt arrive perfectly good.

I shall probably have a box sent in a few months then you can try the experiment. I am sorry you did not send my splayed shoes in Mr Stevens' parcel. The shirts do not send on any account, I have too many here at present.

The butterfly I sent in a letter I knew was not rare. I merely sent it as a specimen of a kind which there is nothing resembling in America.

If it were not for the expense, I would send Charles home. I think I could not have chanced upon a more untidy or careless boy. After 5 months I have still to tell him to put things away after he has been using them as the first week. He is very strong & able to do any thing, but can be trusted to do nothing out of my sight.

Please put a stamp on the enclosed letter & post it.

With Love to all I remain

Your affectionate Son

Alfred R. Wallace.

Mrs. Wallace

7. To George Silk, 15 October [1854]

Singapore

Oct. 15th

Dear G.

To morrow I sail for Sarawak. Sir J. Brooke has given me a letter to his nephew, Captⁿ Brooke⁵³ to make me *at home* till he arrives, which may be a month perhaps. I look forward with much interest to see what he has done & how he governs. I look forward to spending a very pleasant time at Sarawak. These four sheets are for the Lit. Gaz.—correct ad lib. I think you need not rewrite a copy.⁵⁴ The mail is due tomorrow but may not come in time for me, as I leave at 12.

I have had very hard work for 3 weeks here packing up, arranging & cataloguing all my collections; about 6000 specimens of Insects, Birds, ~~Animals~~ Quadrupeds & shells. If too long this letter may be cut in two, at the 2nd page of sheet 2, where I have used a cross would do for a division. I am too hard worked to write home now, so please call at 44 & tell them, that they are not to expect to hear from me for *three mails* now, as communications from Sarawak are not very regular.

Sir W. Hooker's⁵⁵ remarks are encouraging, but I ~~have~~ cannot afford to collect plants. I have to work for a living, & plants would not pay unless I collect nothing else, which I cannot do, being too much interested in Zoology. I should like a botanical companion like Mr. Spruce very much.⁵⁶ We are anxiously expecting accounts of the taking of Sebastopol.

⁵³ Captain John Brooke (1823–1868), nephew and heir-apparent of Sir James Brooke.

⁵⁴ Wallace, A.R. 1855. Extracts of a letter From Mr. Wallace. *Hooker's Journal of Botany* 7 (7): 200–9 [S19].

⁵⁵ William Jackson Hooker (1785–1865), botanist and the first director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in 1841.

⁵⁶ Richard Spruce (1817–1893), botanist. Wallace and Spruce became friends on the Amazon in 1849. After Spruce's death, Wallace edited his *Notes of a botanist on the Amazon and Andes*. London: Macmillan & Co. 2 vols, 1908.

I am much obliged to Latham⁵⁷ for quoting me & hope to see it soon. That ought to make my name a little known. I have not your talent at making acquaintances & find Singapore very dull. I have not found a single agreeable companion. I long for you to walk about with & observe the queer things in the streets of Singapore. The Chinamen & their ways are inexhaustibly amusing. My revolver is too heavy for daily use. I wish I had had a small one.

Yours sincerely

Alfred R. Wallace.

P.S. A Punch⁵⁸ now & then will be very acceptable. Mr Stevens will be sending a box soon.

Excuse the awful uncorrectedness of the scrawl.

G.C. Silk, Esq.

[Enclosure]⁵⁹

our men however declared one day they had seen a rhinoceros. We heard the fine Argus pheasants every evening, but they were so wild that it was impossible to get a sight of them. Our rice being finished, & our boxes crammed full of specimens, we returned, our men taking us by what they termed a better road, winding about through Malay villages, & making our second day's walk upwards of 30 miles. I only stayed at Ayer Panas, sufficient time to pack up all my collections, & then returned to Malacca on my way to Singapore. We were congratulated by all our friends on having lived a week at the foot of Mt Ophir without getting fever.—A.R.W.

⁵⁷ Wallace heard about a summary of his South American travels contained in Latham, Robert G. 1854. *The natural history department of the Crystal Palace described: Ethnology*. London: Crystal Palace Library, Bradbury & Evans, pp. 64–8.

⁵⁸ The satirical London magazine *Punch*, established in 1841.

⁵⁹ On the reverse of the letter to Silk there is a fragment of text that is identical to the end of a paper communicated to Hooker's *Journal of Botany*, dated 10 October 1854. This must be part of the enclosure mentioned in the letter to Silk.

Cicindelidae on the same plan, & I hope you have made arrangement for a lot of copies, each part paged consecutively to form complete separate works when finished.

I am here making what I intend to be my last collections, but am doing very little in insects, as it is the wet season & all seems dead. I find in those districts where the seasons are strongly contrasted the good collecting time is very limited, only about a month or two at beginning of dry & a few weeks at commencement of rains. It is now two years since I have been able to get any beetles owing to bad localities & bad weather, so I am getting disgusted. When I do get a good place it is generally very good but they are dreadfully scarce. In Java I had to go 40 miles inland in the E. part & 60 miles in W. to get to a bit of forest, & then I got scarcely anything.

Here I have had to come 100 miles inland (by Palembang) & even here in the very centre of E. forest Sumatra, the forest is only in patches, & it is the height of the rains, so I get nothing,—a longicorn is a rarity, & I suppose I shall not get as many species in 2 months as I have done in 4 days in a good place. I am getting however some sweet little *Lycaenidae* [gossamer-winged butterflies], which is the only thing that keeps me in spirits.

I hope to be home before the opening of the *Exhibition* & look forward to seeing you in London though I fear my collection will be in dreadful confusion till towards the winter. I think my priv. coll. of Col. [Coleoptera] & Lep. [Lepidoptera] will be probably more extensive in *specimens* than yours, as I have a complete series from every island & chief locality (which amount to about 30), and as I intend to re-ticket, catalogue & arrange them all, as well as my extensive collection of birds, I shall have work for years, a labour of love to wh. I look forward with much pleasure.

Remember me kindly to your brother Frederick who I also hope to see, & to have the pleasure of showing him a few of my Eastern gems.

Wishing you health & strength to make known your rich collection & careful observations to the world (a task which I soon trust to be myself labouring), I remain,

yours very sincerely,

Alfred R. Wallace.

H.W. Bates Esq.

I should not wonder but your paper will convert Hewitson.³⁷⁴ He is not I think very susceptible to general arguments, but this will come home to his very bosom & touch his feelings if anything will. I hope you have sent Darwin a copy I am sure it would please him.

P.S. I quite agree with you as to the affinity of the *Crassus* group with *Ornithoptera*,—a note to the same effect has stood in my "Boisduval"³⁷⁵ for years. I doubt however the propriety of placing [Papilio] *Dolicaon* &c with *Protesilaus*. I am now anxious to compare the Eastern forest group *Polydorus* &c. with *Oeneas*, to see if there is affinity of structure.

82. To George Silk, 22 December 1861 and 20 January 1862

Lobo Raman, Sumatra

Dec. 22nd. 1861

My dear George

Between eight & nine years ago, when we were concocting that absurd book, "Travels on the Amazon & Rio Negro,"³⁷⁶ you gave me this identical piece of paper, with sundry others,—& now having scribbled away my last sheet of 'hot pressed writing,' & being just 60 miles from another, I send you back your gift, with interest,—so you see a good action, sooner or later, find its sure reward.

I now take my pen to write to you *a letter*, I hope for the *last time*;—for I trust our future letters may be *viva voce*, as an Irishman might remark, & our

³⁷⁴ William Chapman Hewitson (1806–1878).

³⁷⁵ Boisduval, J.B.A.D. ed. 1832–1835. *Voyage de l'Astrolabe. Faune entomologique de l'Océanie*, 2 vols.

³⁷⁶ Wallace, A.R. 1853. *Narrative of travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*. London: Reeve & Co [S714].

epistolary correspondence confined to *notes*. In fact, I really do think & believe I am coming home, & as I am quite uncertain when I may be able to send you this letter, I may possibly not be very long after it. Some fine morning (before the Exhibition opens) I expect to walk into 79, Pall Mall;³⁷⁷ & I suppose I shall there find things in general much about the same as if I had walked out yesterday & come in tomorrow. There will you be seated on the same chair, at the same table, surrounded by the same account books, & writing upon paper of the same size & colour as when I last beheld you.

I shall find your inkstand, pens, & pencils in the same place, & in the same beautiful order, which my idiosyncrasy compels me to admire, but forbids me to imitate. (Could you see the table at which I now write, your hair would stand on end at the reckless confusion it exhibits!) I suppose you have now added a few more secretaryships to your former multifarious duties. I suppose that you still come every morning from Kensington & return there in the evening, & that things at the Archdeacon's go on precisely & identically as they did eight years ago.

I feel inclined to parody the words of Cicero & ask indignantly, "How long, O Georgius, will you thus abuse our patience? How long will this sublime indifference last?"³⁷⁸ But I fear the stern despot *habit* has too strongly riveted your chains, & as after preliminary years of torture the indian fanatic can at last sleep only on his bed of spikes,—so perhaps now, you would hardly care to change that daily routine, which has lasted so long, even if the opportunity should be thrust upon you. Excuse me, my dear George, if I express myself too strongly on this subject which is truly no business of mine, but I cannot see without

³⁷⁷ Apparently, 79 Pall Mall was Silk's office address. The same address was in this period used by John Sinclair, whom he served as secretary, as well as by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands.

³⁷⁸ Cicero, Oratio in Catalinam (Catiline Orations), I.1: 'Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? Quam diu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet? Quem ad finem sese effrenata iactabit audacia?'—'How long, O Catiline, will you abuse our patience? And for how long will that madness of yours mock us? To what end will your unbridled audacity hurl itself?'

regret my earliest friend devote himself so entirely, mind & body, to the service of others.

It is an age since you wrote to me last & yet you might have found plenty to write about without touching upon Politics. "Essays & Reviews" & "the Gorilla war" might have filled a page & you might have told me whether my last paper on "*New Guinea native trade*" was read at the Geographical, or any notice taken of it.³⁷⁹—Did you go to see "*Blondin*", have you heard *Mr. Fechter*, have you read "*Great Expectations*"?³⁸⁰ On all these famous matters a line or two from you would have been acceptable, whereas even my last somewhat lengthy epistle has not elicited a word. But I must excuse you;—writing is too much your daily toil,—we will make up for it all when I return & I will talk with you & argue with you on every subject under the sun—except *party politics*.

I am here in one of the places unknown to the Royal Geog. Soc. situated in the very centre of E. Sumatra, 100 miles from the sea all round. It is the height of the wet season, & pours down strong & steady, generally all night & half the day. Bad times for me, but I walk out regularly 3 or 4 hours every day, picking up what I can, & generally getting some little new or rare or beautiful thing to reward me. This is the land of the two horned Rhinoceros, the Elephant, the tiger, & the tapir; but they all make themselves very scarce, & beyond their tracks & their dung, & once hearing a rhinoceros *bark* not far off, I am not aware of their existence.

This, too, is the very land of monkeys;—they swarm about the villages & plantations,—long-tailed & short-tailed, & no tail at all,—white, black, &

³⁷⁹ Powell, B. 1860. *Essays and reviews*. London: Parker & Son. The 'gorilla war' was a controversy about claims of the American explorer Paul du Chaillu (1835–1903) about the ferocity of gorillas. Wallace's paper: On the trade of the Eastern Archipelago with New Guinea and its islands. *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 32: 127–37 (S65), was read on 13 January 1862.

³⁸⁰ Jean François Gravelet-Blondin (1824–1897) was a famous French tightrope walker who first appeared on stage in London in 1861. Charles Albert Fechter (1824–1879) was an Anglo-French actor then appearing at the Princess's Theatre, London. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* was first published in 1861.

gray; they are eternally racing about the tree-tops, & gamboling in the most amusing manner. The way they do jump is "a *caution to snakes*!" They throw themselves recklessly through the air, apparently sure, with one of their four hands, to catch hold of something. I estimated one jump by a long-tailed white monkey, at 30 feet horizontal, & 60 feet vertical from a high tree on to a lower one; he fell through, however, so great was his impetus, on to a still lower branch, & then without a moments stop, scampered away from tree to tree, evidently quite pleased with his pluck. When you startle a lot & one takes a leap like this, it is amusing to watch the others, some afraid & hesitating on the brink till at last they pluck up courage, take a run at it, & often roll over in the air with their desperate efforts. Then there are the long-armed apes, who never *walk* or *run*, but travel altogether by their long arms, swinging themselves along from bough to bough in the easiest & most graceful manner possible.

But I must leave the monkeys & turn to the men, who will more interest you, though there is nothing very remarkable in them. They are Malays speaking a curious half unintelligible Malay dialect,—Mahometans but retaining many pagan customs & superstitions. They are very ignorant, very lazy, & live almost absolutely on *rice* alone, thriving upon it however just as the Irish do or did on potatoes. They were a bad lot a few years ago, but the Dutch have brought them into order by their admirable system of supervision & government. By-the-by, I hope you have read *Mr. Money's* book on "*Java*".³⁸¹ It is well worth while, & you will see ~~how~~ that I had come to the same conclusions as to Dutch colonial government from what I saw in Menado.

Nothing is worse & more absurd than the sneering prejudiced tone in which almost all English writers speak of the Dutch Government in the East.—It never has been worse than ours has been, & it is *now* much better; & what is greatly to their credit & not generally known, they take nearly the same pains to establish order & good government in those islands & possessions wh. are an

³⁸¹ Money, J.W.B. 1861. *Java; or how to manage a colony*. London: Hurst and Blackett.

annual loss to them, as in those which yield them a revenue. I am convinced their system is *right* & ours *wrong* in principle,—though of course in the practical working there may be & must be defects, & among the dutch themselves, both in Europe & India, there is a strong party against the present system, but they are mostly merchants & planters, who want to get the trade & commerce of the country made free, wh. in my opinion would be an act of suicidal madness, & would moreover *injure* instead of benefiting the natives.

Personally, I do not much like the dutch out here, or the dutch officials;—but I cannot help bearing witness to the excellence of their government of native races, gentle yet firm, respecting their manners, customs, & prejudices, yet introducing everywhere European law, order & industry.

Singapore

— *January 20th. 1862*

Thus far had I written when I received yours of Nov. 14th. It really pained me to find you so desponding & surprised me to hear that you are still burthened with the support of relations who I had imagined would by this time have been able even to take upon themselves the burthen you have so long borne.

Your brothers can surely now support themselves, & I have I think heard that your sister has musical talents & skill to enable her to support herself;—& I had certainly imagined that she was somewhat of a strong minded young lady who would have scorned vulgar prejudices & disregarded your wishes on this matter:—and I must say I should have admired her conduct more had she done so.

On the question of marriage, we probably differ much. I believe a good wife to be the greatest blessing a man can enjoy & the only road to happiness but the qualifications I should look for are probably not such as would satisfy you. My opinions have changed much on this point. I now look at intellectual companionship as quite a secondary matter, & should my good stars ever send me an affectionate good tempered & domestic wife, I should care not one iota for accomplishments or even for education.

I cannot write more now. I do not yet know how long I shall be here, perhaps a month. Then ho! for England!

In haste

Yours most affectionately,
Alfred R. Wallace.

G. Silk Esq.

Singapore

83. From Mark Moss, 3 February 1862

Dear Sir

Having consulted with M^r Waterworth³⁸² concerning the Paradize Birds, which you wish to purchase, I may mention that we are inclined to sell at \$500 cash. If these terms suit you, you can take them.

Yours Obediently,
M. Moss.

3 February 1862

³⁸² In the *Straits calendar and directory* for 1862, Mark Moss and William Waterworth are listed among the principal inhabitants, both with the address: Mount Vernon, Siffken Road. Mark Moss is listed among the 'merchants and agents' and as an auctioneer in Raffles Place (pp. 69, 72). William Waterworth was the Singapore partner of William and George Waterworth, established 1854, in Raffles Place (p. 71). Mark Moss arrived from England in 1835.

84. From Mark Moss, 6 February 1862

Received from A. R. Wallace Esq^r the sum of \$400 four hundred dollars for two living Paradize Birds.

M Moss

Singapore

6 February 1862

85. To Philip Lutley Sclater, 7 February 1862

Singapore

Feb. 7th. 1862

To P.L. Sclater Esq., Secretary to the *Zoological Society of London*.

Dear Sir

About 2 months back I received information, when in the interior of Sumatra, that there were two live *Paradise Birds* in Singapore. I immediately determined to come & enquire about them & accordingly proceeded to this place a full month earlier than I had intended. They were in the hands of a European merchant who was well aware of their value & asked an exorbitant price. As however they seemed in excellent health, had been in Singapore 3 months & in possession of a Bugis trader a year before that, I determined if possible to obtain them.

After protracted negotiations I have purchased them for \$400 (nearly £100), & *tomorrow* I take them on board the steamer for Europe.

I was afraid to let it be known that a free passage had been offered me with them, as the demands would then have risen proportionally. I therefore obtained a *promise to sell* before applying to the Manager of the P & O Company, when I was much surprised & disappointed to find that *no order for a free passage* had been sent out, but merely instructions to *take care* of the Birds if sent on board.

Under these circumstances I was at first inclined to give up any idea of completing the purchase, but on mature consideration I thought that you would