MEMOIR OF M. HENRI MOUHOT.

Alexander Henri Mouhot was born at Montbéliard on 15th May, 1826, of parents not rich, but respectable. His father occupied a subordinate post in the administration under Louis Philippe and the Republic, and expended nearly the whole of his salary in the education of his two sons, even undergoing many privations for that purpose. His mother, a teacher of considerable merit, whose memory is held in respect by all who knew her, died young, greatly through overwork and fatigue, incurred in providing for the wants of her family and the education of her children. Two months after the departure of her son Henri for Russia—a separation which was heartbreaking to her—she took to her bed, from which she never rose again. This was in 1844. M. Mouhot first studied philology in his own country, intending to become a teacher; but before long a strong leaning for the natural sciences, easy to be understood in the country of Cuvier and of Laurillard, gave a new direction to his mind; and this, with his ardent desire to see other countries, determined his vocation. His first profession enabled him to extend his researches, and while he perfected himself in c 2
20

MEMOIR OF M. HENRI MOUHOT.

science he continued to follow the arduous and thorny path of the professor. Having a thorough knowledge of his own language, and being a good Greek scholar, it was not difficult for him to acquire with facility both Russian and Polish during his stay in that vast northern empire, which he traversed from St. Petersburgh to Sebastopol, and from Warsaw to Moscow.

He began as a teacher, but soon became an artist, after the discovery of Daguerre, which impressed him strongly; he mastered its mechanical parts, and determined to carry the new invention into foreign lands. This afforded to him the means of an existence conformable to his wishes. He soon made affectionate friends in the highest classes of society in Russia; took out his professor's diploma there, and in that capacity was admitted into several establishments, both public and private; among others, to that of the cadets of Voronége, &c. Devoting himself in his hours of leisure, and at night, to the cultivation of the arts and sciences, and profiting by his visits to various towns and departments of the empire, he constantly augmented his collection of drawings and photographs, comprising landscapes illustrating different parts of the country, portraits of distinguished men, specimens from museums, and buildings in the semi-Byzantine style, equally interesting to artists and to archaeologists.

He scrupulously refrained from politics, and fully appreciated the difficulty of governing a country so immense, and in which the manners, religion, and language differ
so much in its various parts; still he felt deeply the condition of the serfs, a condition which Alexander II., moved by generous sentiments, wishes now to reform. This state of things made a painful impression on the heart of the young Frenchman, and on his return to his own country he gave vent to his feelings in a book called 'Slavery in Russia;' and in order to engage better the attention of the reader he wove it into the form of a novel, in which he was enabled to employ the resources of illustration, and to depict the manners of the country. This work, however, which touched on many of the leading questions of the day, was never published, and is only mentioned here as an illustration of his generous feelings.

The war which broke out in the East induced him to leave Russia, although, doubtless, owing to his numerous friends, he might safely have awaited there the return of a time more propitious to the cultivation of art and science; but his feelings as a Frenchman revolted from this, and he also felt that the gravity of the events about to take place would turn every mind from all but warlike subjects.

M. Mouhot, therefore, returned to France to his father and to a loved brother, who became the companion of his new travels in Germany, Belgium, and the north of Italy; and everywhere they laboured by means of photography to make known the works of the great masters and the beauties of the country, exercising their profession like real artists. They afterwards resolved to visit Holland, where photography was less widely known than in other
countries. After staying there some time they removed their establishment to England in 1856, the more willingly as they had both married English ladies, relatives of Mungo Park, and having friends willing to push on the two young men, who, full of energy, possessed the qualities necessary for success in an artistic or scientific career. During some ensuing years the two brothers pursued their calling together, and shared each other's pleasures and cares; but Henri afterwards found in a peaceful life at Jersey an opportunity of resuming his studies in Natural History, devoting himself particularly to Ornithology and Conchology. These studies revived in him the desire for foreign travel; and beautiful as was the island where he lived—and where his time was divided between his home, his books, and out-door pursuits—his thirst for knowledge made him long for a wider field of research, and one less explored by modern travellers. An English book on Siam came into his possession about this time, as though sent by the hand of destiny, and to visit that country became the object of his aspirations. The great Geographical and Zoological Societies of London, capable of appreciating the man of merit, approved of his project, and aided him efficaciously in its prosecution; and M. H. Mouhot quitted his wife, brother, and all his friends and every advantage of civilization, in order to visit, in the cause of science, regions little known, but where, through much fatigue and danger, the prospect of a glorious future opened itself before him.

He was already well prepared for the life; active, strong,
MEMOIR OF M. HENRI MOUHOT.

and blessed with an excellent constitution: his physical strength was beyond the average—a result of the gymnastic sports in which he had taken pleasure in his youth, and of his habitual sobriety. He had never had an attack of fever, nor any other illness; and he resisted for four years the effects of a tropical climate, incredible fatigue, bad food, and nights passed in forests, without any apparent loss of health or strength, which is doubtless to be attributed to his never taking spirits, and wine only very sparingly.

His intellectual and moral qualities did not seem less to promise success; both a savant and an artist, he was also an indefatigable hunter, and had a degree of kindness mingled with his courage which was sure to gain the goodwill of the uncivilized people among whom he had to live. In all these respects M. Mouhot fulfilled the expectations of the savans of England and of his numerous friends, as is evident by the rich collections made by him in so short a time, by the cordial welcome which he met with throughout his travels, by the respect paid to him by all learned men, and by the unanimous feelings of regret at his death, both in England and on the Continent. Although a Protestant, he inspired sincere friendships among the Catholic missionaries in Siam and the other countries he visited from 1858 to 1861, friendships which are clearly shown in his journal and letters.

We shall not say much about his travels; they form the subject of this work, which, even in its unfinished state, we trust will present much important information to the
24 MEMOIR OF M. HENRI MOUHOT.

geographer and archaeologist, to the naturalist and linguist. Many capable of judging have already hastened to pay their tribute of praise to the traveller who has enriched such various branches of science, and displayed to the world the riches of the extreme East.

M. Mouhot dedicated the last four years of his life to exploring the interior of Siam; he first travelled through that country, then through Cambodia, and afterwards re-asceded the Mekong as far as the frontiers of Laos; visited one of the savage and independent tribes inhabiting the district between those two countries and Cochinchina; then, after having crossed the great lake Touli-Sap, he explored the provinces of Ongcor and Battambong, where he discovered splendid ruins, especially the Temple of Ongcor the Great, which is nearly perfect, and perhaps unparalleled in the world.

Passing from the basin of the Mekong into that of the Menam, he saw mountains of which the principal peak was more than 6000 feet high. He returned occasionally to Bangkok, the capital of Siam, in order to make preparations for fresh expeditions. The loss, by the wreck of the Sir James Brooke, of a very valuable collection, did not discourage him; but he set about at once to replace it. At the time of his death, which happened on 10th November, 1861, he was en route for the provinces south-west of China, when, having already penetrated far into the interior, he was attacked by the jungle fever, and died after twenty-two days’ illness. His energetic mind, full of the task he had to perform, remained clear to the end,
and a few last words were written by him, his strength of will overcoming his weakness.

He set out for Louang-Prabang on 15th October, and on the 18th halted at H—— (the name is unfinished in the manuscript); the next day he felt the first symptoms of the fever to which he fell a victim. From the 29th October he wrote nothing. The last words in the journal, “Have pity on me, O my God,” show the religious principles which had guided his life.

All that we know of his last days and his lamentable end, was learned from his two native servants, who were strongly attached to him; and through Sir R. Schomburgh, the English Consul at Bangkok, and Dr. Campbell, Surgeon R.N., who was attached to the British consulate, and who returned shortly afterwards to England, when he placed all the papers, notes, and drawings left by M. Mouhot in the hands of his widow and of M. Charles Mouhot, whose task it has been to arrange this legacy as methodically as possible, considering the great difficulty of finding the connecting links of his various descriptions.

The ‘Athenæum’ and the ‘Illustrated London News’* both inserted an account of the death of M. H. Mouhot; and the latter journal justly designated his death as another addition to the long list of martyrs to science. It likewise gave a short sketch of the discoveries and scientific services of this intrepid traveller.

Ornithology, entomology, and other branches of natural

* Number for August 9, 1862, which also contained a tolerably good portrait of M. Mouhot.
MEMOIR OF M. HENRI MOUHOT.

history, were represented in the collection sent by M. Mouhot to his agent, Mr. S. Stevens, of Bloomsbury Street, London, and were the subject of several papers by Dr. Gray, Dr. Gunter, Dr. Louis Pfeiffer, and other naturalists, members of the Zoological Society of London, and published in the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History.' At a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society on the 10th of March, 1862, Sir R. Murchison seized the occasion of reading some letters from the traveller relating to the topography of Cambodia, to pay a tribute of gratitude to his merit as a zoological collector and explorer. "His loss," he observed, "will be much felt by men of science, and a long time may elapse before another man will be found bold enough to follow his steps in that country of virgin forests and fever, and to the exploring of which he sacrificed his home, his health, and his life."

Mr. Stevens, in acquainting the brother of the traveller with the fact of his having received a new zoological collection which had been consigned to him, says, "I can truly say that the insects and shells equal, if they do not surpass, any in the most beautiful collections I have ever received, and show clearly what a marvellously rich country for the naturalist lies between Siam and Cochin-China." A splendid scarabæus was also sent to Mr. Stevens, who remarks, that "this insect was described in the 'Zoological Review' of Paris under the name of Mouhotia gloriosa, as a mark of respect to the late M. Mouhot, and stated to be one of the most magnificent known."

The Society of Montbéliard hastened, on the first news
MEMOIR OF M. HENRI MOUHOT.

of his death, to write to his brother, and the letter contains these words:—“His work was left unfinished, but it was gloriously commenced, and his name will not perish!”

Amidst all these eulogiums of a life, short but well spent, one of the most touching is a letter from M. Marie Ch. Fontaine, missionary at Saigon in Cochin-China, who was in Paris in August, 1862, and saw in a newspaper the death of the man whom he had met in Siam and Cambodia, which was soon confirmed by a letter from his brother. This worthy missionary addressed to M. Charles Mouhot a letter, of which the whole should be read; we only extract the following passage:—“I learned, when on my mission, the death of my father, and then that of my mother. I assure you that these two cruel blows scarcely made more impression on me than the news of the death of a man whose equal I had not met with during the twenty years that I have inhabited that country; and to hear of his dying without any help, and having no one near him but his servants throughout his illness, in a country so barbarous, was more than sufficient to make tears flow at the memory of this good and benevolent friend. Be assured, my dear Sir, that my sentiments are shared by all here who knew M. Mouhot. The natives themselves must have felt regret at his loss, for all whom he came near praised him for his behaviour towards them, and his gentleness and generosity; qualities invaluable in the eyes of that people.”

In a letter recently addressed by Sir R. Schomburgh to M. C. Mouhot, enclosing the portraits of the King and
Queen of Siam, that gentleman thus expresses himself:—
"I admired the zeal and knowledge of your late brother; and his manners were so amiable and modest that one would have thought that every one with whom he came in contact would have exercised all their influence to assist him in his plans. I often regretted that he was not an English subject, that I might have been able to do more for him. I shall look impatiently for the publication of his book, and have given orders that the French edition may be forwarded to me at once."

I can add nothing to these touching testimonies, which paint faithfully the man as I knew him in Holland. The affectionate heart of Henri Mouhot awakened in others an affection which the tomb does not destroy, but which grows stronger with time.

J. J. Belinfante.

The Hague, December 15, 1862.