

afterward celebrated Lütke. The vessel sailed for Russian-America in 1817, and completed her voyage in two years, when he was promoted to a lieutenantcy, after which, through the influence of Golofnin, he was appointed leader of the expedition for the exploration of the east Siberian coast and the lands believed to lie to the north from it. For this journey, which has become classical, he prepared himself by special study at Dorpat and St. Petersburg. He went out in 1820 and returned to St. Petersburg in 1824. In 1825 he took the brig Krotky on a voyage to Sitka and return, after which he was appointed to the command of a frigate, and in 1829 to be governor of the Russian colonies in America. He married the Baroness Elisabeth Rossillon, and the young pair started for his new post by the overland route across the whole breadth of Siberia. The journey, severe at the present day, was an extraordinary one for that time, and took a year and a half, during which time a daughter was born to them. Arrived at his post, Wrangell distinguished himself by the reforms he introduced into the colonial administration, and the wealth of scientific material which he gathered for students of geography and ethnology. They returned via Mexico and the United States in 1836. He was made a director of the Russian-American company, and advanced in the government to the post of director of naval construction and conservator of the imperial forests. In 1852 he lost his faithful wife. During the Crimean war he was made director of the hydrographic department, and in 1862 retired from active service. His life thereafter was passed in the bosom of his family, either in his old home or in Italy, where he remained several years. He was made associate of the Institute of France as successor to De Candolle, and his latter days were passed in the study of art, science, and the promotion of the Lutheran communion, of which he was a devoted member. On the 25th of May, 1870, he died, his friend Lütke surviving him eleven years. His services to science do not need to be recounted, his character was pure and elevated, and his executive ability remarkable. The sketch of his useful and honorable life<sup>1</sup> from which the above facts have been gathered, has been prepared as an introduction to a new edition of his 'Journey to the polar sea,' by his daughter, Lisa von Engelhardt. This publication, indispensable to all students of arctic matters, contains an excellent portrait and a new map of the region explored. It is well printed in Roman type, but contains no index. We note as a singularity that,

<sup>1</sup> *Ferdinand von Wrangel und seine reise längs der nordküste von Sibirien und auf dem eismeere.* Von L. v. ENGELHARDT. Leipzig, Duncker & Humblot, 1885.

notwithstanding Baron Wrangell expressly authorized his associates, Baer and Helmersen, to print his name with the final consonant doubled, in this publication it is found without the final *l*.

#### A SEARCH FOR THE GIGANTIC BIRD OF MADAGASCAR.

GRANDIDIER has communicated to the Academy of sciences an interesting account of his search for remains of the gigantic bird of Madagascar, the *Æpyornis*, supposed to be the original from which the fabled roc of the 'Arabian nights' was derived. The hope that the bird itself might still survive, according to Grandidier, is without foundation. A vast area of the interior south of Lat. 20° S., heretofore hardly visited, now proves to be an arid plateau with sparse desert vegetation, suitable perhaps for ostrich-like birds, but where they could hardly exist without being observed even by the scanty population of these wastes. These natives have neither knowledge nor traditions of any such creature, according to our author. Remains, chiefly of the eggs, have hitherto been found only between Cape St. Marie and Machikora on the southern coast, at Mananzari, Port Leven and St. Marie Island. The coast is bordered by immense sand dunes, only a few yards from the sea, which are constantly advancing in a southwesterly direction. The complete eggs have been found only where rain, flooding the ravines, has suddenly washed away large quantities of sand. It is probable that the bird covered its eggs in the warm sand like an ostrich, and that those found whole are such as failed to hatch. They are naturally rare, but fragments of the egg-shell are not uncommon and occur chiefly where the sand is sifted by the wind. On the dry plateau none were found. With the pieces of egg-shell, were found several species of *Bulimus*, *Helix* and *Cyclostoma*, one of which, *Bulimus favanneus* Fér., still retains part of its color marks, and is found living in some parts of Madagascar at the present day. The dunes appear to be formed largely of shell sand mixed with grains of quartz, and occasional concretionary balls of lime. The traveller was not fortunate enough to find any bones. He thinks the *Æpyornis*, like the moa of New Zealand, though now entirely extinct, existed during the present era, but was probably exterminated very soon after the advent of man in the region it inhabited.

— Mr. Latchford of Ottawa recently discovered at Quebec, *Helix cantiana* Montague, hitherto unrecorded from America. It is doubtless an importation, but was abundant under the south wall of the citadel, showing that, like many other immigrants, it has found a congenial home.