

WALLACE, ALFRED R. *Social Environment and Moral Progress*. Pp. vi, 181.  
Price, \$1.25. New York: Cassell and Company, 1913.

This is a thought provoking little volume, which is likely to start many discussions. Dr. Wallace challenges the prevalent belief that there has been great advance in the realm of morality as a result of civilization. He points out many of the bad conditions at the present time, and seems to believe that through alcoholism, suicide, war, etc., we are falling far short of the ideals of our civilization. This represents the first part of the book.

The second part is theoretical, beginning with a discussion of natural selection among animals, proceeding to the influence of the mind as modifying selection, a survey of heredity and environment, with a survey of possible methods of improvement in the chapter entitled Progress Through Selection. In this he points out great dangers involved in any eugenics movement that would interfere with comparative freedom in the selecting of mates. He is much more favorably inclined towards what has been called negative eugenics—the elimination of the obviously unfit. Dr. Wallace has frequently been quoted as being pessimistic. This does not appear to be fair. He does not think that human nature is perfect but that “it is influenced by fundamental laws which under reasonably just and economic conditions will automatically abolish all these evils.” He believes that a better educational system would in itself raise the average age of marriage; that educational and economic equality of the sexes would more nearly equalize their numbers, and that increase of brain work would automatically diminish fertility. Thus the whole social structure would be in better condition. Society, then, has created its own evil conditions, largely by over-emphasis in competition. “That system must therefore be radically changed into one of brotherly coöperation and coördination for the equal good of all.”

The book deserves careful reading.

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