

SOME months ago the newspapers reported Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace as saying that the civilized world had made no progress in morality since the days of the Egyptians.

Dr. Wallace on Social Ills Dr. Wallace, now in his ninety-first year, was the co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of evolution, and such a verdict upon social conditions from a man of his ripened judgment seemed discouraging indeed. His point of view is set forth clearly and convincingly in his book, "Social Environment and Moral Progress," which has just come from the press.⁶ It is a sad and dark picture that he paints: "Our whole system of society is rotten from top to bottom, and the social environment is the worst that the world has ever seen"—this is his verdict. In justification of it, he recalls to our minds, with

stinging, incontrovertible logic, all the social, political, and economic wrongs and injustices from which we suffer to-day. After treating of morality in general, and of character as a permanent attribute of humanity, he devotes a chapter to environment during the nineteenth century, tracing the gradual urbanization of life in civilized countries, the drift from country to crowded city, and all the ills of "hectic industrialism." A few of the words and phrases in his chapters show the range of his indictment: Insanitary Dwellings, Adulteration, Bribery, Gambling, Immoral Justice, Prostitution, Alcoholism, and Suicide. The result of the vast economic revolution which has come of the advance of man's power to utilize the forces of nature has been, says Dr. Wallace, "almost entirely evil"; all our remedies "have been petty and ineffectual." Closing with what he calls "the root cause and the remedy, Dr. Wallace says:

"If we review with care the long train of social evils which have grown up during the nineteenth century, we shall find that every one of them, however diverse in their nature and results, is

⁶ Social Environment and Moral Progress. By Alfred Russel Wallace. Cassell. 181 pp. \$1.25.

due to the same general cause, which may be defined or stated in a variety of different ways:

"(1) They are due, broadly and generally, to our living under a system of universal competition for the means of existence, the remedy for which is equally universal coöperation.

"(2) It may be also defined as a system of economic antagonism, as of enemies, the remedy being a system of economic brotherhood, as of a great family, or of friends.

"(3) Our system is also one of monopoly by a few of all the means of existence: the land, without access to which no life is possible; and capital, or the results of stored-up labor, which is now in the possession of a limited number of capitalists and therefore is also a monopoly. The remedy is freedom of access to land and capital for all.

"(4) Also, it may be defined as social injustice, inasmuch as the few in each generation are allowed to inherit the stored-up wealth of all preceding generations, while the many inherit nothing. The remedy is to adopt the principle of equality of opportunity for all, or of universal inheritance by the State in trust for the whole community.

"These four statements of the existing causes of all our social evils cannot, I believe, be controverted, and the remedies for them may be condensed into one general proposition; that it is the first duty (in importance) of a civilized government to organize the labor of the whole community for the equal good of all; but it is also their first duty (in time) to take immediate steps to abolish death by starvation and by preventable disease due to insanitary dwellings and dangerous employments, while carefully elaborating the permanent remedy for want in the midst of wealth."



DR. ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE