Mr. A. R. Wallace ranks with Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall among the brilliant literary scientists of our time—a group of writers whose influence over all classes of readers it would be difficult to over-estimate. Most of our great scientists have prudently abstained from extending their investigations into the domain of social and political philosophy. Mr. Wallace has not thought fit to follow their example, and he is so charming a writer that his work, in any event, will always be associated with the Darwinian theory, and his "Malay Archipelago," qualifies him to speak as a first-hand observer when discussing the relation of the primates to the rest of the animal kingdom, and that of the human species to the other members of the order of primates. Cuvier's distinction of Bimana and Quadrumana must, of course, be given up; but to do so is to raise a new difficulty. Man was placed at the head of the mammalia in virtue of his acquired rank as the master of the world and all that therein is; the Quadrumana were ranked next to them to the globe to Its inhabitants. "Descriptive Zoology," "Plant-Distribution," "Animal-Distribution," "Theory of Evolution," and "Anthropology" make up the first volume.
At this time, according to Mr. Wallace, they were probably not separable from the insectivora, perhaps not even from the ancestral marsupials, among whom, alone among the mammals, we find hand-like feet with opposable thumbs. How, then, can the name Primates, which claims for the group to which man belongs the first place in the animal creation, possibly be justified?

This relationship to the lowest of the mammalian tribes seems inconsistent with the place usually accorded to these animals at the head of the entire mammalian series, and opens up the question whether this is a real superiority or whether it depends on the obvious relationship to ourselves. If we could suppose a being gifted with high intelligence, but with a form totally unlike that of man, to have visited the earth before man existed in order to study the various forms of animal life that were found there, we can hardly think he would have placed the monkey tribe so high as we do. He would observe that their whole organization was specially adapted to an arboreal life, and this specialization would be rather against their claiming the first rank among terrestrial creatures. Neither in size, nor strength, nor beauty would they compare with many other forms, while in intelligence they would not surpass, even if they equalled, the horse, the elephant, or the beaver. The carnivora, as a whole, would certainly be held to surpass them in the exquisite perfection of their physical structure, while the flexible trunk of the elephant, combined with his vast strength and admirable sagacity, would probably gain for him the first rank in the animal creation.

It is provoking enough to know that we are first cousins to the monkeys without being told that we are second cousins to the ant-eaters and opossums. Ought we to abdicate the rank we have assumed, yield the primacy to the carnivora or the ruminants, and take a back seat from henceforth among the baboons and kangaroos?

The second volume brings us to Mr. Wallace's "social" articles. More properly they might have been entitled "socialistic," for here Mr. Wallace drops the character of an evolutionist and figures as a revolutionist. It is curious that he does not recognize the inconsistency in this attitude which an opponent might urge against him on the ground that, if human society be part of the scheme of nature, it cannot be exempt from the inexorable struggle for existence which rages everywhere else. We are reminded by his poem entitled "A Description of Javita," printed in his "Travels on the Amazon"—his earliest work—that his socialism is a survival of the generous enthusiasms of his youth. Almost fifty years have passed since that volume was published, and as many since Mr. Wallace was converted by Mr. Herbert Spencer's "Social Statics" to Land Nationalization. Mr. Spencer, we know, has disowned a doctrine which Mr. Wallace tauntingly describes as his "legitimate offspring." We turn with some curiosity to the group of essays entitled "Ethical," and are not greatly edified. One of them is entitled "Why Live a Moral Life?" Here is the answer which Mr. Wallace assures us is the only rational one for those who have not "obtained conviction of the reality of a future life through modern spiritualism":

First, that we shall thereby generally secure the good opinion of the world at large, and more especially of the society in which we live; and that this good opinion counts for much, both as a factor in our happiness and in our material success. Secondly, that, in the long run, morality pays best; that it conduces to health, to peace of mind, to social advancement, and, at the same time, avoids all those risks to which immoral conduct, especially if it goes so far as criminality, renders us liable.

After remarking that these reasons in reality form only one—a fact which would have led most writers to remodel them in a single sentence—Mr. Wallace concedes that they are "of a somewhat low character." They are indeed, for they imply that man owes no duty to conscience, to the social state in which he lives, or the human nature which distinguishes him from the ape.