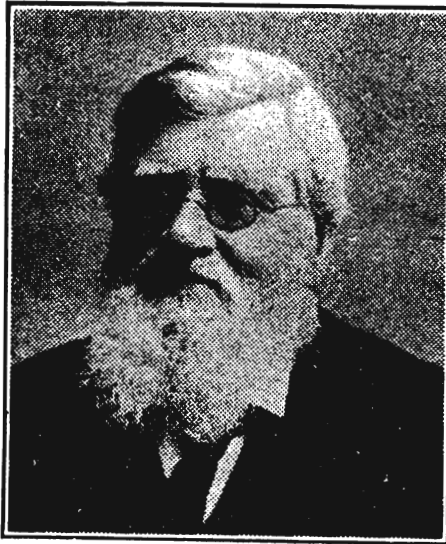


The Last of the Victorians

Death of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace.

Long ago Mr. G. K. Chesterton remarked that if he was asked what great man would be regarded as the most important and significant figure in the nineteenth century he would hesitate between Walt Whitman and Alfred Russel Wallace. And Mr. Chesterton went on to make it clear that he regarded the great



The Late DR. ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

scientist as one of the giants of the wonderful century because he was the leader of a revolution and a counter revolution; the first was the Darwinian movement, the other the movement of psychical research. Dr. Russel Wallace lived to see the second revolution established on grounds of science and credibility, though Mr. Chesterton prophesied that he would not live to see the day when it would be quite respectable to be a spiritualist. He died last Friday at his home in Wimborne Dorsetshire, in his ninety-first year.

Born at Usk, in Monmouthshire, on January 18, 1823, Dr. Wallace's life covered a period of amazing advance in scientific achievement. Throughout these years he was

Wallace and Darwin is familiar, and the characteristic modesty and self-effacement of the two men when they became conscious of their involuntary rivalry still causes a thrill to those who are capable of appreciating an essential

Loftiness of Spirit.

Up to the age of twenty-one Dr. Wallace worked in various parts of the country with an elder brother, William Wallace, a land surveyor and architect. For a year he became English master in the Collegiate School, Leicester, succeeding to his brother's business at Neath, Glamorganshire, on the latter's death. Although he enjoyed the work of land-surveying, some difficulty in getting payment for a tithe-commutation survey which he was obliged to collect from the farmers so disgusted him with business life that he threw it up and proposed to Bates, the famous naturalist, whose acquaintance he had made at Leicester, to accompany him on an expedition to the Amazon. There, as all the world knows, the germ of the evolution theory was implanted in his mind; and all the world also remembers how the theory developed in his mind four years later while he lay suffering from a sharp attack of intermittent fever at Ternate, in one of the Moluccas Islands.

Unlike other scientists, Dr. Wallace made no secret of his religious attitude. For thirty years, until he became convinced of the

Truth of Spiritualism

he was an agnostic. Spiritualism was his religion. He held no Christian doctrines, while accepting the whole story of Christ's life and miracles, which he found it by no means difficult to do on spiritualistic grounds. Like Herbert Spencer, he believed that God was unknowable and unthinkable; but, conceiving the universe as existing for the purpose of developing the human spirit, he flung himself with extraordinary passion and earnestness into the advocacy of Socialism, the emancipation of women, and other great movements of later years. For him the world was a place where human souls were developed, whose future depended upon the use men made of their present opportunities. When they leave this world and put aside their bodies they go on from the exact point they had reached at their death. Hence his earnest insistence upon "equality of opportunity for everyone alike."

Nothing is more remarkable in the intellectual history of the century than the slow and steady movement of Dr. Wallace's mind from the complete materialism of his early years to the broad and liberal spirituality which irradiated his life at the end. In a letter he wrote to a friend only this year he declared that with the experience of age "the completely materialistic mind of my youth and early manhood has been slowly moulded into that of the socialistic, spiritualistic, and theistic mind I now exhibit." And he affirmed his conviction that life with its inherent forces and laws requires a "constantly acting mind power of almost unimaginable grandeur and prescience."

It is, however, necessary to remember that Dr. Wallace's view of the scope of evolution differed fundamentally from that held by his great co-eval and co-discoverer, Charles Darwin. In an interview published in THE CHRISTIAN COMMONWEALTH as long ago as 1899 he pointed out that Darwin believed the mental, moral, and spiritual nature of man was developed from the lower animals automatically by the same processes that evolved the physical structure. "I maintain, on the contrary, that there are indications of man having received something that he could not have derived from the lower animals—there occurred an

Inbreathing of Spirit.

—call it what you will." He added that he believed this influx occurred at three stages in the evolutionary process; at the change from the inorganic to the organic; at the change from the plant to the animal; and from the animal to the soul of man. Evolution, he said, seemed to him to fail in accounting for these tremendous transitions.

The story of the simultaneous discovery of the process of natural selection by Dr.