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‘Death of Dr. Russel Wallace.’

Co-Discoverer of Theory of Natural Selection.

Scientist, naturalist, Socialist, and spiritualist, Dr. Russel Wallace, last of the pioneers of Evolution, died to-day at the age of 91. The last link has been broken with an era which produced Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Romanes, and Charles Lyell.

Dr. Russel Wallace had been lying ill at his home, Old Orchard, Broadstone, Wimborne, Dorset, for some days, and his condition was considered so serious yesterday that members of his family were summoned.

The greatest achievement of Dr. Wallace was his discovery of the principle of the survival of the fittest. The story is one of the most remarkable in the whole history of science.

It was in the island of Ternate in 1858 that Wallace, then a young man, was lying stricken with fever. All other exercise being impossible he gave himself over entirely to reflection, and one of the problems to which he devoted his mind was that of the origin of species. He had convinced himself that one species changed into another, and now as he lay on his sick bed he called to mind Malthus's exposition of the checks to increase afforded by war, pestilence, and famine; and then it suddenly flashed across his mind that this self-acting process would improve the race—that the weakest would go to the wall, and the fittest would survive.

The young naturalist had perforce to wait for the termination of his spasm of fever until he could make notes; and then, weak and feeble, he wrote out his ideas, and dispatched them with a letter to Charles Darwin, who was living in his quiet home in Kent.

Coincidence.

The essay written at Ternate was the communication read before the Linnean Society on July 1, 1858, along with an abstract of a volume on which Darwin himself was engaged. Jointly they showed that both men, acting entirely independently, and in ignorance of each other's labour, had conceived the theory which was to be one of the achievements of the nineteenth century.

Wallace afterwards described himself in this connection as the young man in a hurry, while Darwin was the painstaking and patient student, for when their theory had been given to the world, Darwin had spent twenty years on its elaboration, whereas he himself had spent one week.

Wallace was born at Usk, Monmouthshire, January 8, 1823, and was thus fourteen years younger than Charles Darwin. He was educated at Hertford Grammar School, and for some years assisted an elder

brother in his work as an architect and surveyor. It was about 1840 that, while living in South Wales, he began to take an interest in natural history, and while acting as English master in the Collegiate School at Leicester in 1844-5 he made the acquaintance of Mr. H. W. Bates, under whose influence he became a coleopterist. In 1848 they went to the Amazon.

In March, 1850, the two friends parted, and Bates remained seven years longer in Brazil; while Dr. Wallace, after exploring the rivers Negro and Uaupes, returned to England in 1852. On his homeward voyage the ship was burned, his collections were destroyed, and he passed ten days in an open boat. After spending a year and a-half in England, Wallace started for the Malay Archipelago, where he spent nearly eight years, collecting in Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, Timor, the Moluccas, and New Guinea.

Wallace's Line.

His discovery that the Archipelago is divisible into two zoologically-contrasted regions by the narrow but deep Lombok Channel was a matter of first-rate importance in zoogeography, this boundary between the Oriental and Australian regions being now known as "Wallace's Line."

He was a man of strong convictions.

Thus he refused to accept the possibility of human life in Mars, and did not hesitate to condemn the theories of Professor Lowell as "gammon and spinach." On the other hand, he was a believer in phrenology, and, indeed, had described its rejection as one of the "failures" of the wonderful nineteenth century, while he was a firm spiritualist, and possessed a set of beautiful pictures, one of which, he declared, was done under the spirit influence of Raphael himself. Further, he was a vegetarian (though he himself ate meat) and a Socialist, but of convictions widely different from those of the professed leaders of that movement.

In 1881 he was given a Civil List pension of £200 a year; while he was in possession of the proudest scientific decorations that a man can obtain. He belonged to the Order of Merit, possessed the first Darwin medal of the Royal Society (awarded in 1890), the Darwin-Wallace medal of the Linnean Society, and the Copley medal.

The Alfred Russel Wallace Page, Charles H. Smith, 2017.