THE PROMOTION OF DR. A. R. WALLACE.

The angel of deliverance, whom we miscall Death, has again been busy, and the dwindling band of veteran Spiritualists on this side has been further reduced by the promotion, on the 7th inst., of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace to that other spiritual realm of action about which he has so bravely and consistently written for so many years. He was only ill four days, and he passed quietly away in the presence of his wife, son and daughter. Death came to him as he would have desired, swiftly and mercifully, while his faculties were still undimmed. In 1874 he published his great work on 'Miracles and Modern Spiritualism,' in which he frankly declared that from being a philosophical materialist, with an ingrained prejudice against the word 'spirit,' he had become convinced, by facts which compelled him to accept them, of the reality of the same natural processes that developed his physical structure.' He firmly maintained that Darwin's fundamental principles had never been shaken. Still he was not able to believe that 'the mental and moral nature of man had been developed out of the lower animals wholly and solely by the same natural processes that developed his physical structure.' As a Spiritualist, he believed 'that there is something in man differing in nature as well as degree from the lower animals.' He held that 'at a certain epoch, when the body was sufficiently developed to receive it, there was a spiritual influx,' and that the enormous difference between man and the lower animals must have a cause—but he could not find that cause in the ordinary processes of evolution. He claimed that 'just as there is behind the visible world of nature an "unseen universe" of forces, the study of which continually opens up fresh worlds of knowledge often intimately connected with the true comprehension of the most familiar phenomena of nature, so the world of mind will be illuminated by the new facts and principles which the study of Spiritualism makes known to us.' In an 'interview' which appeared in 'The Bookman' in 1898, Dr. Wallace was asked, 'Do you think the religion of the future will be based on Spiritualism?' He replied:—

'Certainly. There is nothing else to base it upon. When on the one side you have facts and phenomena that are happening to-day, and on the other you have something that is alleged to have happened two or three thousand years ago, and the first can be tested and the other cannot, it is absurd to expect people to accept the one that comes to them through ancient manuscripts and faulty translations and to reject the evidence that is now before their eyes, especially when the ancient and modern phenomena are pretty much of the same kind.'

About his religious standpoint, he said:—'I have always felt, like Herbert Spencer, that God is unknowable and unthinkable; but directly we get the idea of a life beyond ours we can conceive the scale of being rising higher and higher. Whether it culminates in one personality or goes on endlessly we cannot tell, and it does not matter. For thirty years before I became convinced of the truth of Spiritualism I was an agnostic. My old religion is that which I get out of Spiritualism. The world is the means of developing human souls, and our future depends on our use of present opportunities.'

Truly in Dr. Wallace's case this world has been the means of developing his soul, and he has made full use of his opportunities. Almost up to the very end he was alert, receptive, progressive, sympathetic, and in touch with the advanced thought and aspirations of the best minds of the day. Although not a medium, he was a prophetic seer in the best sense—for with forward-looking
vision he foresaw the coming of the day of co-operation, of brotherhood, of altruism, and of spiritual emancipation—when

man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

We have not referred to Dr. Wallace's first great achievement, his discovery of the theory of natural selection, nor to his modesty and manliness in surrendering his claim to priority, and 'in honour preferring' Darwin. These points are fully dealt with in the various newspapers, and we are more concerned with Dr. Wallace's Spiritualism which, although it was such an important factor in his life and work for upwards of sixty years, receives but scanty notice at the hands of his biographers in the Press.

Dr. Wallace himself declared that Spiritualism had made him a better man, more charitable and sympathetic; it had given him the key to much that seemed dark, if not hopeless, in human life. He became more tolerant, and realised that there are 'no absolutely bad men and women, that is, none who, by a rational and sympathetic training and a social system which gave to all absolute equality of opportunity, might not become useful, contented, and happy members of society.'

In a touching passage, he says:

I feel myself that my character has greatly improved, and that this is owing chiefly to the teachings of Spiritualism, that we are in every act and thought of our lives here building up a character which will largely determine our happiness or misery hereafter; and also that we obtain the greatest happiness ourselves by doing all we can to make those around us happy.

His was indeed, as a writer in 'The Daily Chronicle,' says, 'one of the most fruitful and richly freighted lives ever devoted to the twin causes of Truth and Humanity.'