

DEATH OF DR. ALFRED RUSSELL WALLACE¹

WE REGRET to record that the veteran traveller and naturalist, Dr. A. R. Wallace, O.M., died at 9.25 Friday morning, November 7, 1913 at his residence in the Dorset village of Broadstone, 7 miles from Bournemouth. He was in his 91st year.

Alfred Russel Wallace was born on January 8, 1823, at Usk, in Monmouthshire, and was educated at Hertford Grammar School. At an early age he began to assist in the business of an elder brother who was a land surveyor and architect. This circumstance had an important effect on the course of his life. In the first place, his business engagements took him to various parts of England and Wales; and the observations he made in the course of his journeys about the country persuaded him of the evils of the landlord system and engendered in him those opinions in favour of the state ownership of land which were expressed many years later in his book on *Land Nationalization: Its Necessity and Aims*, published in 1882, and reiterated in his *Social Environment and Moral Progress*, published only this autumn. In the second place, this elder brother was a man of advanced liberal and philosophical views; and through constant association with him Wallace soon lost the capacity of being affected in his judgments either by "clerical influence or religious prejudice."

He thus became a "confirmed philosophical sceptic," a thorough materialist, in whose mind there was no place for any conception of spiritual existence or of any other agencies in the universe than matter and force. But his curiosity being aroused by some inexplicable, though slight, phenomena that occurred in a friend's house, he began to make investigations, and thus came upon facts which he conceived to be "removed from anything that modern science taught or philosophy speculated upon." In this way he gradually arrived at a belief, expressed in *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (1881), in the existence of præter-

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human intelligences of various grades, able to act on matter and to influence the minds of men, and was led to question the validity of the *a priori* arguments against the occurrence of miracles.

TRAVELS IN THE TROPICS

About 1844, while he was a master at the Collegiate School at Leicester, he became acquainted with the naturalist H. W. Bates, and the result of the acquaintance was that the two soon determined to make a natural history expedition to South America. In 1852 Wallace returned to England; but on the voyage he suffered a severe misfortune, for, the ship taking fire, his notes and collections were lost, with the exception of some he had sent on before hand, and he himself was ten days in an open boat. In 1853 he published an account of his expedition, *Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*, and also a small book on *Palm Trees of the Amazon*.

In the following year, having disposed of such specimens as had been saved, he started off for the Malay Archipelago. The main object of this journey also was to obtain specimens both for his own collections and for those of museums and amateurs. He was away from England eight years, and during that time travelled 14,000 miles within the Archipelago, visiting, among other countries, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, the Moluccas, Timor, and New Guinea.

WALLACE AND DARWIN

Wallace was first introduced to Darwin to whom *The Malay Archipelago* is dedicated, in 1854, in the Insect Room of the British Museum; but nothing of any great moment seems to have been said by either on that occasion. A few years later, however, Wallace was destined to cause considerable perturbation in the mind of the man who was to write the *Origin of Species*. So far back as 1842 Darwin had written out an outline of the law of natural selection which in an enlarged form had been read by Sir Charles Lyell and Sir Joseph Hooker in 1844, though otherwise he does not appear to have spoken about it to anybody.

At any rate, when Wallace, who had published in 1855 in the *Annals of Natural History* a paper on *The Law which has Regulated the Introduction of New Species*, wrote to Darwin on the subject the latter gave no hint of having arrived at any conclusion regarding the mode in which such a law operates; and in 1857 he even wrote to Wallace, "My work will not fix or settle anything." Yet in the beginning of 1856, at Lyell's instance, he had begun to write out his views on the "tendency in organic beings descended from the same stock to diverge in character as they become modified," and to expound his belief that the "modified offspring of all dominant and increasing forms tend to become adapted to many and highly diversified places in the economy of nature." He was therefore justifiably astonished, on June 18, 1858, to receive from Wallace, then in the Moluccas, an essay *On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type*, in which his own theory was clearly expressed. The letter which Darwin sent to Lyell on the same day is worth quoting again:

He [Wallace] has sent me the enclosed and asked me to forward it to you. It seems to me well worth reading. Your words have come true with a vengeance—that I should be forestalled. You said this when I explained to you very briefly my view of natural selection depending on the struggle for existence. I never saw a more striking coincidence; if Wallace had my MS. sketch written out in 1842 he could not have made a better short abstract. Even now his terms stand as heads of my chapters.

It was arranged that Lyell and Hooker should "communicate" to the Linnean Society a joint paper by Messrs. C. Darwin and A. Wallace, consisting of Wallace's essay and extracts from Darwin's sketch of 1844, together with part of a letter he had written to the American botanist, Asa Gray, in September, 1857. This was done on July 1, 1858.

One effect of this incident was that Darwin and Wallace became firm friends and frequent correspondents, although not actually seeing much of each other; and at Darwin's funeral in Westminster Abbey in 1882 Wallace was one of the pall-bearers.

His writings did much to promote the progress and understanding of Darwinian doctrine. But he did not see eye to eye with Darwin in every respect. He held, for instance, that other forces besides natural selection have moulded the development of the human race, and adopted views of a decidedly teleological character. In the *World of Life*, published in 1910—a wonderful book to be written by a man in his 88th year—he gave clear expression to these views, arguing that the complexity of the structure of living things necessarily implies: (1) a creative power; (2) a directive mind; and (3) an ultimate purpose, which he conceived to be the development of man—“the one crowning product of the whole cosmic process of development.”

In 1881 Wallace was granted a Civil List pension of £ 200 a year. He published an autobiography, *My Life*, in 1905, re-issuing it in a condensed form in 1908. His most recent publications were *Social Environment and Moral Progress* and *The Revolt of Democracy*, both of which appeared this year, the latter only a week or two ago.

