

## ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

THE most impressive event of our trip abroad was our interview with Alfred Russel Wallace, the coöriinator with Darwin of the Theory of Natural Selection, and unquestionably the ablest expositor of scientific thought of our time. He maintained adequately the positions of the investigator and the philosopher, and was distinguished equally by his comprehensiveness and his spirit of broad humanity, qualities in which his eminent contemporaries were mostly deficient, whatever may be said of their keenness of vision within certain lines.

Wallace's clear exposition of what is called the Darwinian Theory first made plain to me much of the intricateness of that doctrine as set forth in Mr. Darwin's more involved style. Indeed, I think that no one would be more free to admit this than Darwin himself, and it is shown in the "More Letters" extension of his biography, published in 1903. In the first emanation in 1887 Wallace was not given a just prominence, due to the facts probably of his own modesty and inclination to give the whole credit to Darwin, and

the circumstance that he was not a university product, in the same light that Franklin, Washington, Lincoln, Blanchard, Edison, and Luther Burbank are discounted. Wealth also had undoubtedly an influence, for Darwin inherited large means, while Wallace had no material property. But with Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Lyell, and other great contemporaries of Wallace, no inclination was manifested towards depriving him of his preëminence in originality and solidity of mental results.

Unquestionably his position with regard to what is commonly termed spiritualism, vaccination, and certain phases of socialism, turned an element of the half-thinkers against him, but with the advancing sentiment of the later period this is mostly forgotten. His greatest work was of his last years, and no one of our time did more to clarify the scientific atmosphere than he.

Many years ago I came to certain conclusions with respect to the effects of vaccination and other courses of inoculation as assumed prevention, modification, or cure, in disease, and while I did not take an extreme position, allowing that perhaps in an emergency, a resort to questionable methods for relief might be the best under uncertain interpretations of cause and effect, I had a conviction that time would witness the passing of these and many other objectionable practices, and this feeling is being justified as the years go on.\* I was brought into conflict with Doctor Adams and certain

\* Witness the changed opinion with regard to contagion and infection, particularly yellow fever, and the effect of "sewer gas." The delusion in connection with the latter needlessly cost the writer many dollars during the period of its course, until it was exposed by the committee of scientific experts about fifteen years ago.

other medical friends of the homœopathic school, who perhaps saw a demonstration of their theory\* in such operations; while with certain "allopathic" physicians I unexpectedly found an agreement.† The fact that Wallace was an opponent of vaccination did not come to my notice until I read his book, *The Wonderful Century*, and at about the same time I discovered that he was an advocate of spiritualism,‡ a theory I had

\* *Similia similibus curantur.*

† An old-school physician of many years' practice assured me that so certain was he of the questionable effects of vaccination, that he would never perform the operation again if the law did not compel him.

‡ In *The Outlook* of November thirteenth, 1913, page 610, the writer offers three statements of what he declares to be fundamental truths against Wallace's belief in or knowledge of spiritualism. The first is frivolous and archaic, and amounts to as much as would the objection to have anything to do with the banking system generally because some banks have failed and certain bankers proved dishonest. The assumption seems to be that such minds as those of Crookes, Wallace, Lombroso and Lodge have reached conclusions without such examination as their astute (anonymous) critic would give.

The second objection is not definite in applying to the question of future existence, but assumes that the intellectual and moral propensities are the result of evolution, and that whether that this is the case or not man is bound to use his faculties in accordance with the moral law. Why, is not explained, and it is evident that this opinion is academic, theological or materialistic. It certainly is not practical, for a too general conviction of the present life limiting individuality has caused a lapse in the observance of the moral law. We may call it selfishness or anything else, but the average human being exerts effort with expectation of desired reward to *themselves*, and few will be found who will honestly apply themselves with the certainty of no profit, as they understand it. Hence the so large an abandonment to sensual gratification in the present life, in seizing that which is tangible with consequences attending only the existence of to-day.

The third point, as to whether communication can be held with departed spirits or not, presumably Wallace was better qualified to judge than one who has not properly investigated. But the assertion that the demonstration would add nothing to increase the obligation of man to fulfill his moral obligations is misleading. The conviction of a continued existence must affect present conduct; if not, nothing will.

The inquirer should read the article on Wallace, by W. B. Northrup, in the same issue of *The Outlook*, for some of the utterances of the Philosopher on the subject of continued existence. I was impressed much clearer in my interview with him, but some of the expressions are well defined.

disputed up to the middle nineties on what I assumed were high intellectual and scientific grounds.\* These facts excited my curiosity and interest, especially as I had been brought to modify my opinions with respect to the latter subject.

When we came to go abroad, my mother, whose interest in Wallace's writings and position had for several years equalled mine, insisted from the beginning of our trip that I should seek an interview with this eminent exponent of scientific thought, for a more definite expression of certain lines of his particular investigation than had appeared in his public works. I hesitated to force myself upon the attention of a person of his position, but I finally yielded, and at Bournemouth, where we arrived on the evening of June seventeenth, I addressed a note to him at Broadstone, with the request for a few minutes' conversation the next day. The following morning we visited Wimborne Minster with its chained library, and then drove to Broadstone, where we were met by an unceremonious but cordial response to my message. Doctor Wallace received us at his door,† kindly and without pretension.

He was at first a little on his guard, for it was necessary with one in his position to exercise due caution against imposters and mere curiosity-seekers. He remarked that he was very busy in condensing his two-volume

\* It is gratifying to one's vanity to assume that his intellectual quality is keener than that of his credulous neighbor, who may hold beliefs, in the hasty estimation of the former, erroneous; the consequence, of course, of a weaker mentality. Many materialists and scientists I have known have sustained this error, to find that the boot was on the other leg, to use a common expression.

† A good representation of Wallace's home as it appeared when we visited is given in the frontispiece to the second volume of his autobiography.

biography into a popular edition to meet a call his publishers had had for a cheaper form. I responded that I would only encroach briefly upon his time, but that I had no use for abridged forms of any of his books. This seemed to bring a good understanding between us.

I first inquired if he had found reason to modify or change his opinion with respect to spiritualism since he had written specifically on the subject. He replied "Not at all"; that he was more confirmed in it than ever before, but that having made his statement, he preferred devoting the time that was left to him to the elaboration of other matters in which he was interested. I asked how Darwin and Huxley had regarded his position, and if it made a difference in their estimate or treatment of him. He replied, "No; they were too broad-minded for that. Of course," he added with a twinkle, "they were sad that I should be deluded." Then, seriously, "If they had investigated this matter as I have, they would have stood just where I stand to-day. It could not have been otherwise. But both declined adequate examination, Darwin because he could not divert his attention from what he felt to be the great work of his life; Huxley because his intense temperament and devotion to material fact seemed to exclude anything not readily susceptible to demonstration."

I was gratified to find Wallace's conclusion in agreement with my own formed ten or more years before, in substance, that the breaking up of the old beliefs, and the surrender to the new forms of thought dic-

tated by the materialistic school of scientists, had induced in the multitude an indifference to moral obligation in the feeling that there is no preservation of individual identity or consciousness beyond the grave. Franklins, Darwins and Wallaces do not exist in every period, and minds are few that can make in magnanimity a sacrifice in material things to the well-being or assumed increased excellence of humanity forty generations hence,\* every generation in the meantime doomed in certainty to extinction of personality. The average mind gives to common result a consideration based on the conviction of profit or loss in its culmination, and a conviction that human identity ends with this life has a marked effect with the mass at this time; and it may be confidently asserted lowers the moral tone of conduct and intercourse. Live while you live is the prevailing motto under the despairing reflection of those who yield to it that

“The end is nothing, and the end is near.”

Now, whichever way the main fact is, a *belief* in extinction is not conducive to a high order of truth, justice and morality among mankind.

On the other hand, a conviction of continuous and progressive existence presents even to the dullest mentality an incentive to exertion and higher effort, faced as it would have to be, not with the certainty of reward and punishment, according to the old theological school, but with the scientific and tangible demonstra-

\* An assumption of doubtful verity, since improvement has been shown to advance and recede in the past. Now, just as the peace societies proclaimed universal harmony, comes the most terrible war in history, and other evils will undoubtedly appear in the future.

tion of cause and effect. A man cannot put his hand into the fire without suffering from the burn, and if he is of common quality, will not again subject himself to the infliction, though there may be an element so weak or a few ascetics so indifferent as to do this. Wallace's demonstration was that the elimination of the more animal, grosser and selfish propensities of this part of life, and a cultivation of the spiritual and purer qualities, would enable one to advance so much higher on the plane in the existence he is *sure* to enter when he leaves this one, and that from the consequences of past acts or conditions there is no escape.

I have not attempted to give here Wallace's statement in detail, but only its substance. I remember his calmly confident expression, "I know it," with reference to the main point; and I remarked his clear and simple yet luminous exposition of this and other questions we discussed, contrasted with the involved, inflated and positive manner of many others denominated scientists and materialists.

Anti-vaccination was another matter talked over, the weight of his argument being substantially as it had appeared in print. Mrs. Wallace was then introduced, and took us through the lower part of the house and over the premises, showing the wonderful collection of orchids cultivated in hot-houses of different temperatures, and many specimens of rare plants of various regions growing out of doors.\* We were

\* Mr. Wallace broke off and presented to me a branch of the American wild rose in his garden, and this I preserved under glass when I returned home. He also returned to me my note asking for the interview. Mrs. Wallace gathered some flowers for my mother, which she has preserved.

very pleasantly entertained for an hour instead of the ten minutes I had intended, and we came away impressed with the feeling that this was the most valuable experience of our trip.

“EUGENICS.”

I WILL revert here to a recollection of an investigation and exhaustive discussion of the subject of the relation of the sexes, and of the deterioration of the native population in quality and number during the preceding half-century. John Howes, Doctor Adams, and several others of lesser knowledge and ability, were the participants, and the period was from about 1874 to 1882. It was a gratification to find in recent years that many of the statements and arguments put forth by Francis Galton at a later period on the questions of selection and quality were familiar to me, although I did not know until recently that he had written upon this special phase of the subject; nor did I know before I read one of the last volumes written by Alfred Russel Wallace, that he had effectively replied to Galton, which perhaps accounts for the omission of any reference to Wallace in Galton's *Memories of My Life*.

I read Galton's *Hereditary Genius* many years ago, and more recently I have had the book substantially rebound. I was very much interested in the statements, facts and examples therein presented, and the subject was new. Twenty years later the author enlarged upon a theory, for which he invented the term *Eugenics*, which was misinterpreted to imply a direct

restriction upon marriage and the propagation of offspring; this the author denied however. Some of the *raw* legislators in the West have undertaken to enact repressive and absurd statutes with penalties for their violation, to restrict the marriage relation generally within the limits prescribed by certain narrow and superficial conceptions of Galton's idea. I believe that the first attempt at enforcement, in which the parties went out of the State to be married, and returned, was met by an injunction of the Supreme Court restraining the authorities from interfering with life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness—the fundamental doctrines of the Declaration of Independence—without a just reason in cases specified. This in an age when the menace to civilization is the failure in the birth-rate among great peoples. As to any artificial restriction Doctor Wallace says :\*

“I protest strenuously against any direct interference with the freedom of marriage, which, as I shall show, is not only totally unnecessary, but would be a much greater source of danger to morals and to the well-being of humanity than the mere temporary evils it seeks to cure. I trust that all my readers will oppose any *legislation* on this subject by a chance body of elected persons who are totally unfitted to deal with far less complex problems than this one, and as to which they are sure to bungle disastrously.”

Of course, laws which have not the approval of the great mass of the people can never be enforced, and

\* *Social Environment and Moral Progress*, page 143, Cassell and Company's edition, New York, 1913.

will be erased from the statute-books. Their enactment is an evidence of the intellectual quality of much of the so-called reform element, which gets into deep water without the ability to swim. Good intention will not be denied to the earnest portion.

It seems to me that Doctor Wallace overlooks the metaphysical or mysterious influence which operates in bringing apparently superior and inferior individuals of the sexes together in the marriage relation, and that he argues too much (for him) from a materialistic standpoint on pages 147-153 in his *Social Environment and Moral Progress*. Galton's assertion on page 323 of his *Memories*, that as opposed to Natural Selection "Eugenics" is "bringing no more individuals into the world than can be properly cared for, and those only of the best stock," is entirely fanciful. How to tell, and *who* is to judge beforehand, are the difficulties. Some apparently perfect parents of traced physical and mental heredity I have known, raised imperfect offspring, while the Reverend John Todd was the child of a helplessly crippled father and an insane mother. Cæsar, Peter the Great, and Napoleon, were epileptics; Cowper, Alexander H. Stephens, Herbert Spencer, and even the great Darwin, were afflicted with such disabilities that eugenic prevision, if consistent, must have denied them conception, since it was not known until late in their lives what they were capable of. Blanchard, the inventor of the irregular lathe, out of which came the interchange system which has regenerated the mechanical industries of the world, would have fallen under the snap judgment of the positive expert who could

not have foretold what his life would mean. And how about Blind Tom? whose musical achievements certain late "professionals" have undertaken to discount contrary to the direct testimony of those who heard him in his time. Many years ago I made a list of the physically feeble and assumed at first mentally deficient among illustrious names, and I was almost brought to the conclusion that the world's work had been done by its invalids.

The idea of a perfect mind with a perfect body is a pleasant sentiment, but it seems to me that in cases I have known of strong physique and apparently well-balanced mental organization, the possessor was simply a complacent, happy animal, without the spur of necessity to nerve him to great deeds. Symmetry or perfection in the universe would mean no action, no endeavor, no darkness, no light, no sensation, no LIFE. It is the aspiration, the distress, the frantic effort for relief and other conditions, that bring the results.

Of course, vicious examples in criminality, cases of insanity, idiocy, and unquestioned defectives, should be, as they are, restrained by law, as should be the poisoning of futurity by syphilitic taint. But this is only at one end of the line, and as we advance towards the centre so complex will conditions be found that no safe and certain agreement can be reached.

This era is one of material advance, but of deterioration in the moral and spiritual interests of humanity. This condition has been accompanied by the rise of numerous fads, which after varying periods of attempted forced acknowledgment have lost their strength and faded away into the retiring shades of past delusions

and follies. Such, in a measure, are the conceptions of Evolution and Darwinism of a half-century ago, the attitudes of the contending medical schools of that period in relation to the attempted legal enforcement in treatment of disease; and such will be the fate of "Eugenics" as now discussed, and other extreme and absurd notions\* after they have been subjected to the cooling-off process that follows the tests of sound practical sense. The small proportion of good in all of these demonstrations in the abstract way will survive, but it is only through the arousal of the spiritual and higher intellectual qualities that results will follow in the individual or in mankind generally.†

\* Of course, I know it may be said that I do not correctly interpret the "philosophy" nor credit the motives of the eugenists; but it will be found that many of the assumed advocates of the innovation stand practically where I do: they may discourse upon it, but will stop at recommending action. I have seen the course of several of these proposed wholesale regenerative schemes, from the time Ezra H. Heywood advanced the plan of stirpiculture in his *Word* and other publications forty years ago; in the mean time various changes have been rung upon this and allied themes, notably, the onslaught of Max Nordau upon marked examples of "genius" in his celebrated volume on *Degeneration*, which I purchased and read when it came out twenty years since, and still own. I had some conference with Doctor Jelly, the well-known alienist over this book, who evidently did not attach much importance to it. It may be that the whole fabric of "psychology" will be disposed of in the future as a university president attempted to dispose of spiritualism, with the assertion that there is no such thing. The vital point is to impress the duty of raising large families upon the element that does not raise them — claimed as the best element, but showing in this evasion the real evidences of degeneration. The forces of Nature in a few generations would dispose, through competition, of the inequality between desirable and undesirable progeny.

† The writer is familiar with much of the recently printed literature on eugenics, and has wondered at the sudden revival of the old theme of twenty-five years ago, and one which casually engaged his attention a decade earlier. The recent volume of college lectures on this subject, published by Dodd, Mead and Company, which contains the substance of the contention, has been purchased and perused. Mendel's theory, or law, as it is characterized, seems to be the assumed scientific foundation for much of the

## CREMATION.

As I have diverged a little from my intended course in the plan of this volume, I will refer here briefly to another matter that engaged my interest—Cremation—at a time when its advocacy brought condemnation by those who adhered to the old method. My experience in helping to disinter the remains in the old Mechanic street burial ground effected a radical change in opinion and desire. This was in 1877, soon after the first instance of cremation in this country—that of Baron de Palm in Pennsylvania—and four or five years before that of Colonel Isaac N. Ross of Holden. Several years later a Cremation Society was formed in Worcester, but I did not join it. Before I went to Europe in 1908 I left directions for cremation in case of death in my will. My mother agrees with me in her approval of this disposition of our remains.

## MR. BROOKS'S HISTORY OF THE FANNING FAMILY.

AFTER 1900 I produced only two books of note which were printed on my private press, not referring to this volume of Time Notes. The first was *The History of the Fanning Family*, by Walter Frederic Brooks.

I had known Mr. Brooks for many years, our intimate acquaintance dating from the time of my occupation of the office in the Burnside Building, where he came in frequent consultation with me in respect to argument. The Inquirer is referred to Wallace's article in *The Contemporary Review* for August, 1908, for his estimate of Mendel. It appears that both Wallace and Darwin were familiar with Mendel's work at the time of its announcement about fifty years ago, and that it presented nothing of weight to either at that time, apparently ignoring the broad grounds of scientific investigation and fact upon which the Darwinian statement is based.