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‘Woman, the Hope. Dr. Russel Wallace and the Future of the Race.’

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace has long passed the four-score years, but he has preserved a receptive mind, and brings a ripe experience to bear on the questions of the development of the race. Moreover, he does not wrap up his meaning in involved scientific language, but sets out his ideas concerning past development and future possibilities in words which may be followed by the ordinary reader without difficulty. As social environment determines the actions of most individuals without alteration in their character, and as this inherent character is handed on to offspring, Dr. Wallace considers that only when our social system is so reformed as to offer suitable conditions will any progressive improvement in character be possible. In support of the contention that human character has been stationary from the dawn of civilisation, the examples of the great moral teachers of early times are put in evidence, with extensive quotation from an Indian Epic of 1500 B.C. and from Vedic hymns. Dr. Wallace points to the explorations of Layard and Rawlinson, with the light they have cast on civilisation of the past, by the discoveries of whole libraries of cuneiform writings. Some most interesting pages treat of Egyptian civilisation as presenting definite proof of the attainment of high scientific knowledge at the very dawn of history. He combats most vigorously the statements made by two or three modern historians that the Pyramid of Gizeh was a mere tomb, and rehearses some of the main reasons adduced by Mr. R. A. Proctor showing that the Great Pyramid of King Cheops was a magnificent monument of science, furnishing “the finest transit-instrument ever constructed for naked-eye observations.” All this is set forth as tending to show that, while we are the heirs of the accumulated knowledge of the ages, “it is quite possible and even probable that the earliest steps taken in the accumulation of this vast mental treasury *required more thought and a higher intellectual power than any of those taken in our own era.*”

The Eighteenth Century saw advance, slowly begun, in material civilisation, with great change in economic environment following with the invention of labour-saving machinery, the use of steam-power and the consequent increase in the production of wealth. Came, too, the vast textile factory organisation with the terrible “slaughter of the innocents” under the iniquitous child-labour system, and the continual tinkering of the various Factory Acts in its train.

“It is one of the great defects of our law that deaths due to preventible causes *in any profit-making business* are not criminal offences. Till they are made so it will be impossible to save the hundreds, or even thousands, of lives now lost owing to neglect of proper precautions in all kinds of dangerous or unhealthy trades. However costly such precautions may be, expense should not be considered when human life is risked; and the present state of the law is therefore immoral.”

Thus the veteran scientist leads up to a most crushing indictment of modern conditions, where he finds “millions still struggling in vain for a sufficiency of the bare necessities of life.” Insanitary dwellings, life-destroying trades, adulteration, bribery, gambling, increasing moral degradation, the vast burden of armaments, “an almost total absence of morality as a guiding principle among the governing classes”—all these point to a state of Society rotten to the core, and a social environment the worst the

world has ever seen. Whether these extreme statements be accepted or no, let us go on to see wherein Dr. Wallace finds light for the future.

We are living under a system of universal competition; its remedy is universal co-operation, or economic brotherhood must supplant economic antagonism. The monopoly of the few must give place to freedom of access to land and capital. Inheritance by the State in trust for the whole community must replace the inheritance by the few of the stored-up wealth of preceding generations.

Here are the scientist's prescriptions for salvation, and you gasp at the thought of the staggering upheavals certain to arise on the road to accomplishment. It is to be "Right about! March!" "It is time we changed our methods, which are fundamentally wrong, radically unjust, wholly immoral." In face of such a prospect, where can be the light that leads? It is here. "The well-established laws of evolution as they really apply to mankind are all favourable to the advance of true civilisation and of morality."

Starting with natural selection among animals, we are led in masterly fashion to Darwin's "Origin of Species," and the phenomenon of the immense variability of all common species, to natural selection as applied by breeders for improvements for man's special purposes, up to man himself, where Darwin proved "by a series of converging facts and convincing arguments that the physical structure was in all its parts and organs so extremely similar to that of the anthropoid apes as to demonstrate the descent of both from some common ancestor." But, with man, that subtle force mind became of infinitely more importance than mere physical structure.

And now there is revealed to us the root cause which Dr. Wallace finds as having made the higher intellectual and moral nature of man practically at a standstill since the dawn of human history. *There has been no selective agency to increase it.*

Darwin established two methods of evolution—by "Natural Selection" and by "Sexual Selection," the latter being roughly described as a struggle of the males for possession of the females, thus tending towards the transmission of more valiant qualities. "Natural Selection," which served to mould animal forms into harmony with their environment, has ceased as an improving factor in the progress of man. Hence the proposals of the Eugenists, with the attendant danger of the selective work of experts. Let a state of Society arrive when free selection can take place, when woman is possessed of the independence which social co-operation will bring about, and "*numbers of the worst men among all classes who now readily obtain wives will be almost universally rejected.*"

"The survival of the fittest is really the extinction of the unfit; and it is the one brilliant ray of hope for humanity that, just as we advance in the reform of our present cruel and disastrous social system, we shall set free a power of selection in marriage that will steadily and certainly improve the character, as well as the strength and the beauty, of our race."

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace follows up this line, so that it is clear writ that in woman lies the star of hope for mankind. At the age of ninety Dr. Wallace has given to the world a book which no thoughtful man can afford to miss.

A. G. Linney.

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*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2015.