

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

SCIENCE.

ANYTHING from the pen of A. R. Wallace is sure of a hearty welcome from scientific men, and the two volumes of *Studies, Scientific and Social*,¹ which have just appeared, will undoubtedly have a large circle of readers. The work consists mainly of reprints of articles from reviews and periodicals; but, as they extend over a period of thirty-five years, and some of the periodicals are not easily accessible, it is a great advantage to have them in this more convenient form. The essays are on a great variety of subjects: those on plant and animal distribution and on the theory of evolution are perhaps best known, but the political and sociological studies are well worthy of the attention of public men. Many of the topics which are now occupying public attention have at one time or another formed the subject of essays by the versatile author. On the question of the permanent colonisation of the tropics by Europeans, for instance, Mr. Wallace speaks with the experience which a residence of twelve years in tropical climates has given him, and he is distinctly of opinion that such colonisation is possible. This agrees with the conclusion arrived at by Mr. T. M. Donovan in our columns, who quoted Queensland as an example of a tropical country where the bulk of the work is being carried out by white workmen. On the possibility of increasing the produce per acre of our English land Mr. Wallace has much to say. It is estimated, on the basis of the yield from allotments and small holdings, that by means of a system of peasant cultivation an increased produce of £200,000,000 a year could be obtained from the land in Great Britain. The author advocates the nationalisation of land and the reform of the House of Lords, beginning with the exclusion of the bishops. The article on how to civilise savages contains some remarks about missionaries which are worthy of the attention of our diplomatists, who will in all probability be shortly engaged in forcing the unwilling Chinese to receive an increased number of zealous but tactless missionaries.

The views of the author on the ice age and the glacial erosion of lake valleys are well known, and show an intimate knowledge of the

¹ *Studies, Scientific and Social*. By A. R. Wallace. London: Macmillan & Co. 1900.

subject. With regard to our molten globe, however, we do not agree with Mr. Wallace that a hole bored through an extensive ice-field at all resembles the orifice of a volcano leading to the molten interior of our globe. In the former case the crust may be a few feet in thickness, and the liquid beneath it has abundant opportunity of escape in a lateral direction, while the crust of the earth is at least eighteen miles thick, with no means of escape for the molten mass below except the volcanic apertures. Calculation will easily show that an extremely minute contraction of the earth's crust would suffice to produce the enormous force manifested in volcanic eruptions.

There are numerous subjects of interest in these two volumes to which space will not permit us to refer. We can recommend the work to all scientific men.
