

THE WONDERFUL CENTURY.*

In 1848 Mr. Wallace, in company with the late Mr. H. W. Bates, went to South America, and his four years there resulted in *Travels on the Amazons and Rio Negro*. Later he spent eight years in the East, traveling, as before, thousands of miles, and collecting innumerable specimens. *The Malay Archipelago*, issued in 1869, was the valuable record of this expedition. Between the publication of these natural history classics, in 1848, Mr. Wallace sent to Darwin a memoir on Natural Selection, and this was read before the Linnean Society, together with passages on similar lines from a MS. by Darwin, which so early as 1844 had been communicated to Dr. Joseph Hooker. It was thus shown that Mr. Wallace had formulated at a later date indeed, but quite independently, the master theory which has since revolutionized science. Darwin published his epoch-making work, *On the Origin of Species*, in 1859; and, though he and Mr. Wallace from the first parted company in regard to the full application of the theory to Man, their names must ever be associated as discoverers, just as in another field are those of Leverrier and Adams. — *London Literary World*.

WE have heard, and are likely to hear, a great deal of the "successes" of the wonderful century now drawing to its close; but it is not every man who has the discernment and the candor, not to say the courage, to speak of its "failures." To the failures more than one half of Mr. Wallace's book is devoted, and we must think that this second portion is, on the whole, the more important and impressive of the two. The improvement in modes of traveling, the multiplication of labor-saving machinery, the new applications of light, the enlarged field of physical science, the establishment of the hypothesis of evolution, and the advance of chemistry are all familiar themes; and Mr. Wallace, learned as he is and skillfully as he writes, hardly increases the knowledge of well-informed persons with regard to the progress of the century in these directions. He might have added a chapter on the amazing movement which has taken place in medicine and medical science.

When, however, we turn to his six chapters on the failures of the century, we are led into a new field of thought, and Mr. Wallace proves himself to be a very serious teacher. The most important of these six chapters, as it is by far the longest, is that devoted to the subject of vaccination, which Mr. Wallace denounces as a delusion, and the penal enforcement of which he characterizes as a crime. More than one hundred pages are devoted to his argument, and the argument is supported by extended statistics and illustrated by a series of diagrams which reinforce his arguments to the eye in the most effective way. The point of his figures is that smallpox at its worst is much more

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limited, and far less fatal, than a number of other diseases; and that, scientifically speaking, vaccination not only does not afford a protection against smallpox, but sows the seeds of far worse evils than the one it claims to prevent. Statistics are not always safe to follow, even though figures do not lie; but we must confess that Mr. Wallace has constructed an argument which it will be hard to answer.

The other "failures" of the century, in his opinion, are the neglect of phrenological science; the popular opposition to hypnotism and psychological research; the maintenance of standing armies and of the military spirit, of which latter we have had such notable illustrations the past year, and in opposition to which the proposal of the Russian Czar was such a signal step; the growth of avarice and the passion of personal aggrandizement; and, finally, "the plunder of the earth," as Mr. Wallace characterizes the destruction of forests and the exhaustion of mines of coal and precious metals.

Some persons will call all this pessimistic, and say that the author is an old fogy who does not move with the times, who has been left behind, and who belongs to the class of fossils; and who, though he may look over into the next century, is not worthy to enter into it. But there are others who will feel that the great English scientist and philosopher looks below the surface of things, that he takes far-reaching views of life and progress, that there is great truth in his reservations and strictures upon some of the positions taken and the movements involved in what is called modern civilization, and that the "failures" of the century which he points out, with the dangers enveloped in them, are indeed a very serious offset to the boasted advances and acquisitions which we are so fond of measuring.

This book should have the thoughtful reading of all persons who are disposed to take sober and well-proportioned views of things, and who are willing that congratulations should be tempered by the just acknowledgment of what is to be regretted.

The portrait of Mr. Wallace, which serves as a frontispiece, is a reminder of the late Professor Asa Gray of Cambridge. There is also a full index.
