

November 8, 1913

“GRAND OLD MAN” OF SCIENCE DEAD.

Dr. Russel Wallace, Who Was
Darwin's Only Rival.

LIFE ON MARS?

Science has lost its “grand old man.”

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the greatest of all modern scientists—co-originator with Charles Darwin of the theory of natural selection—died yesterday at his home at Wimborne, Dorset, in his 91st year.

His researches and theories will go down to posterity as the most serious and important of all attempts to raise the veil that enshrouds the vast abstract thing which men call the “Universe.”

“REASON FOR THIS WORLD.”

We are all capable of infinite progression.

None are so bad as to be incapable of advancement.

I believe that the reason for the existence of this world and the explanation of the problems that puzzle us are that the earth and its struggles and pains are essential to the development of the highest spiritual natures.

In Dr. Wallace was represented the unusual combination of scientist and spiritualist, and this saying of his bears on his belief in the existence of consciousness apart from material organism.

Born in the quiet little Monmouthshire town of Usk, Dr. Wallace early in life spent four years in the Amazon region of South America, but, losing all his records in a shipwreck, he paid a visit of eight years to the Malay Archipelago.

On his return in 1869 he published in two volumes his famous work, “The Malay Archipelago,” which to this day stands as the finest informative book on the then comparatively unknown country.

How he came to evolve the theory of natural selection practically at the same time as Darwin is, perhaps, the most fascinating event of his life.

It was in 1858, while suffering from an acute attack of ague at Ternate that it suddenly occurred to him that the "positive checks"—to use the words of Malthus—which tended to restrict the growth of communities must act even more effectively on the lower animals.

There suddenly flashed on me (he afterwards wrote) the idea of the survival of the fittest, and in the two hours that elapsed before the ague fit was over I had thought out the whole of the theory.

Wallace lost no time in putting the result of his inspiration on paper, and he conceived the idea of sending it to Charles Darwin, asking for his opinion.

DARWIN ASTONISHED.

Darwin, who had been thinking out the same idea for years, was astonished at the coincidence.

I never saw a more striking coincidence (he wrote to Lyell). If Wallace had my MS. sketch written out in 1842, he could not have made a better short abstract!

So all my originality, whatever it may amount to, will be smashed, though my book, if it will ever have any value, will not be deteriorated, as all the labour consists in the application of the theory.

In his book "Darwinism," published in 1889, Dr. Wallace showed a notable difference of opinion from Darwin in reference to the mental powers of men.

Wallace's researches into branches of science were innumerable. To name but a few of his variety of subjects, he was an authority on:—

Botany.

Biology.

Ethnology.

Vegetarianism.

Spiritualism.

Phrenology.

Anti-vaccination.

One of the most interesting of Dr. Wallace's beliefs was that our own world is the only world in the universe which is humanly inhabited. He was utterly opposed to Professor Lowell's theory that the planet Mars is inhabited by a race of supermen.

He argued that our own planet occupied an almost central position in the visible universe, and therefore was probably the centre of the whole material universe.

Dr. Wallace explained his belief in spiritualism in the following words:—

I am not able to believe that the mental and moral nature of man has been developed out of the lower animals wholly and solely by the same natural processes that developed his physical structure.

In spite of his advanced age, Dr. Wallace maintained to the last a keen interest in the social and political questions of the moment.
