

HOW TO DEAL WITH NATIVES OF S. AFRICA.

BY ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

DR. WALLACE, our most eminent Socialist, contributes to the *Independent Review* of November a brief but lucid and forcible paper on "The Native Problem in South Africa." He has never studied the Kaffir, but he has had considerable opportunity of observing natives. He says:—

Forty years ago I had the privilege of enjoying the friendship of Sir James Brooke, and, during more than a year's residence in Sarawak, of observing the mode and results of his beneficent and sympathetic rule over antagonistic native races. A little later I spent several months in North Celebes, in Java, and in East Sumatra, where I had full opportunity of noticing the effects of the judicious rule of the Dutch, almost wholly exerted through native chieftains. For nearly twelve years I travelled and lived mostly among uncivilised or completely savage races, and I became convinced that they all possessed good qualities, some of them in a very remarkable degree, and that in all the great characteristics of humanity they are wonderfully like ourselves.

His general principle is that where the natives largely outnumber the whites,—

We should always retain our guardianship of those natives in order to protect them from the oppression and cruelty which always occurs when a young, and mainly wealth-seeking community has absolute power over them.

But he is no negrophilist, nor does he claim that the black and white men should be treated as politically equals. He says:—

On a calm consideration of the whole problem it must be admitted that the former point of view—that of inherently superior and inferior races—of master and servant, ruler and ruled, is the most consistent with actual facts and perhaps not the less fitted to ensure the well-being, contentment, and ultimate civilisation of the inferior race. It is also by no means incompatible with a just treatment of the native, with sympathetic interest in his welfare, and with the grant of a considerable amount of self-government; and it is for the purpose of suggesting how this latter may be effected that I am venturing to make a slight contribution to this very thorny subject.

He would treat Zululand like Basutoland, and remove it from the control of Natal. But his most important suggestions relate to the Transvaal and Orange Free State:—

The first and most obvious thing to do is to give to the natives in every district of each Colony one or more chiefs or magistrates of their own race, chosen from the native clergy or schoolmasters or any other adequately qualified individuals. These native magistrates should sit with the ordinary magistrates, and in all cases, criminal or civil, where both natives and Europeans were concerned, would act as the official protector or advocate for the native in the interests of justice, and for the purpose of putting the native point of view before the European magistrate or judge, who would alone be responsible for the decision of the court.

In the case of disputes between or crimes by natives, in which no whites were concerned, the native magistrate would hear and decide the matter according to native law and custom, but modified where necessary in accordance with European law. Here too the Colonial magistrate would (at first) preside over the court, giving advice and suggestions to the native magistrate; but except in very difficult or important cases would allow the native magistrate to give the judgment of the court.

Another step of very great value and importance would be the introduction into all local authorities, such as education boards, district councils, town councils, etc., of one or more educated natives of each nationality (Kaffir or Indian) chosen to represent their fellow-countrymen, and to express their views

and wishes as to any bye-laws or regulations which they found to be oppressive and unjust.

Perhaps more important still would be the application of the same principle to the Colonial legislature itself in both chambers. The native representatives need be few in number—perhaps three or four in the lower and one or two in the upper house, the object being in no sense to place the coloured race on an equality with the white, but to provide each branch of the legislature with accurate and precise information as to how both existing and proposed laws affect the natives, how and why they feel themselves injured or oppressed by them, and thus enable modifications to be made which, though apparently of trifling importance, may make all the difference between a condition of constant irritation and one of cheerful acquiescence.