

of Social Hygiene" and Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace's "Social Environment and Moral Progress." The former work was discussed at length in these pages several months ago. Dr. Wallace's volume, just published, is of even greater importance. The author's position as co-discoverer with Darwin of one of the most momentous theories in the history of thought, his venerable age, his wide scientific knowledge and deep philosophic insight, lend to his utterances an authority such as could be claimed by no other living writer.

On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, celebrated recently, Dr. Wallace startled his journalistic interviewers by the statement that there has been no perceptible advance in morality throughout the entire historical period of mankind, that the present social structure is radically defective from top to bottom, and the present social environment the worst in history. There are many who would like to dismiss this indictment as the fatuous wail of a superannuated pessimist; but to do so would be merely to demonstrate one's own fatuity. From such a source, it constitutes a challenge to civilization that demands the closest and most impartial examination. In the book now published, Dr. Wallace outlines the historical and scientific data upon which are based his conclusions as to the past, as well as his hope for the future.

In the first section of his volume, after establishing definitions of such terms as morality, moral progress, character, etc., the author devotes several chapters to suggestive historical evidences which have led him to conclude that "There has been no definite advance of morality from age to age, and that even the lowest races, at each period, possessed the same intellectual and moral nature as the higher. The manifestations of this essentially human nature in habits and conduct were often very diverse, in accordance with diversities of the social and moral environment. This is quite in accordance with the now well-established doctrine that the essential character of man, intellectual, emotional, and moral, is inherent in him from birth; that it is subject to great variation from individual to individual, and that its manifestations in conduct can be modified in a very high degree by the influence of public opinion and systematic teaching. These latter changes, however, are *not* hereditary, and it follows that no definite advance in morals can occur in any race *unless there is some selective or segregative agency at work.*"

What this required selective agent is, and how it will automatically come into action when society is sufficiently purged to give it play, we are told later on.

The five chapters which conclude this Historical section are given over to a specific arraignment

#### A SCIENTIST'S HOPE FOR HUMANITY.\*

Among all the phenomena of this revolutionary era of ours, nothing is more striking than the ever-increasing significance of science as a factor in the upward struggle of humanity. At a time when idealism, worn with the futile striving of centuries, had almost begun to despair, she finds within her hands a sturdier staff than any she has yet leaned upon; at a time when the voices of faith had all but deserted her, she catches a clearer and more heartening word than any that has before reached her ear. Her old enemy has taken on the guise of a savior. Science, the despised and the rejected, is laying the solid foundations beneath her tottering dream-towers, and is giving her at last a definite hope for the future.

To any who are skeptical of this "serene evangel of science," as it has just been happily termed,† we earnestly commend the reading of two books—Mr. Havelock Ellis's "The Task

\* SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT AND MORAL PROGRESS. By Alfred Russel Wallace, O.M., D.C.L. New York: Cassell & Company.

† By Dr. F. B. R. Hellems, whose article under this title in the May "Forum" is the most thoughtful and significant magazine contribution of the month.

ment of existing social and economic conditions. It is in substance just such an impeachment as the Marxians have been hurling at our heads for decades; yet rarely has even the most devout Marxian attained to Dr. Wallace's vigor and thoroughness of denunciation. Social development during the nineteenth century is thus summarized:

"We see a continuous advance of man's power to utilize the forces of Nature, to an extent which surpasses everything he had been able to do during all the preceding centuries of his recorded history.

"We also see that the result of this vast economic revolution has been almost wholly evil.

"We see that this hundredfold increase of wealth, amply sufficient to provide necessities, comforts, and all beneficial refinement and luxuries for our whole population, has been distributed with such gross injustice that the actual condition of those who produce all this wealth has become worse and worse, no efficient arrangements having been made that from the overflowing abundance produced *all* should receive the mere essentials of a healthy and happy existence.

"We have seen huge cities grow up, every one of them with their overcrowded, insanitary slums, where men, women, and children die prematurely as surely as though a body of secret poisoners were constantly at work to destroy them.

"We see thousands of girls compelled by starvation to work in such an empoisoned environment as to produce horribly painful and disfiguring disease, which is often fatal in early youth, or in what ought to have been, and what might have been, the period of maximum enjoyment of their womanhood. And to this very day no efficient steps have been taken to abolish these conditions.

"We see millions still struggling in vain for a sufficiency of the bare necessities of life (which in their misery is all they ask), often culminating in actual starvation, or in suicide, to which they are driven by the dread of starvation. Yet our Governments, selected from among the most educated, the most talented, the wealthiest of the country, with absolute power to make what laws and regulations they please, and an overflowing fund of accumulated wealth to draw upon, do nothing, although more people die annually of want than are killed in a great war, and more children than could be slaughtered by many Herods.

"And while all this goes on in the depths, where—

'Pale anguish keeps the heavy gate,  
And the Warder is Despair'—

a little higher up, among the middle-men distributors of the necessities and luxuries of life, bribery, adulteration and various forms of petty dishonesty are rampant.

"And higher yet, among the great Capitalists, the merchant Princes, the Captains of industry, we find hard taskmasters who drive down wages below the level of bare subsistence, and who support a more gigantic and widespread system of gambling than the world has ever seen.

"And, finally, our administration of what we call 'Justice' (and of which we are so proud because our judges cannot be bribed) is utterly *unjust*, because it is based on a system of money fees at every step; because it is so cumbrous and full of technicalities as to need the employment of attorneys and counsel at great cost, and because all petty offences are punishable by fine or

imprisonment, which makes poverty itself a crime while it allows those with money to go practically free.

"Taking account of these various groups of undoubted facts, many of which are so gross, so terrible, that they cannot be overstated, it is not too much to say that our whole system of society is rotten from top to bottom, and the Social Environment as a whole, in relation to our possibilities and our claims, is the worst that the world has ever seen."

As an editorial in the "Call" or the "Clarion," all this might be dismissed with the old phrases sweet in the mouth of privilege and selfishness. But as the deliberate utterance of the foremost living scientist of our day, it is rather more difficult to dispose of.

The second part of Dr. Wallace's volume is labelled "Theoretical," and deals almost wholly with the workings of the evolutionary law, in particular reference to social progress. We are shown how natural selection, which through the ages has moulded the infinitely varied animal forms into harmony with their environment, is in the main nullified or neutralized in its effect on the human organism by man's reasoning faculties. Thus it is that the higher nature of man, both intellectual and moral, has remained practically stationary throughout history, owing to the lack of a selective agency adequate to increase it. Such an agency is available in sexual selection, which if given free scope in a normal social environment would "elevate the race to whatever degree of civilization and well-being it is capable of reaching in earth-life." Sexual selection will be the prerogative of woman, and therefore woman's position "in the not distant future will be far higher and more important than any which has been claimed for or by her in the past."

"While she will be conceded full political and social rights on an equality with man, she will be placed in a position of responsibility and power which will render her his superior, since the future moral progress of the race will so largely depend upon her free choice in marriage. As time goes on, and she acquires more and more economic independence, *that* alone will give her an effective choice which she has never had before. But this choice will be further strengthened by the fact that, with ever-increasing approach to equality of opportunity for every child born in our country, that terrible excess of male deaths, in boyhood and early manhood especially due to various preventable causes, will disappear, and change the present majority of women to a majority of men. This will lead to a greater rivalry for wives, and will give to women the power of rejecting all the lower types of character among their suitors.

"It will be their special duty so to mould public opinion, through home training and social influence, as to render the women of the future the regenerators of the entire human race."

The old "biological argument" so often used *against* the suffragists will be a weapon not altogether safe to handle after this!

But sexual selection can never become operative until we have cleansed the Augean stables of our present social organization. The *root-causes* of evil must be attacked and vanquished, —coöperation must be substituted for competition, and economic brotherhood for economic antagonism; we must see to it that private monopoly of land and capital, as well as private inheritance of wealth, is done away with. All remedies for existing conditions, Dr. Wallace concludes, may be condensed into one general proposition :

“That it is the first duty (in importance) of a civilized Government to organize the labor of the whole community for the equal good of all; but it is also their first duty (in time) to take immediate steps to abolish *death by starvation and by preventable disease* due to insanitary dwellings and dangerous employments, while carefully elaborating the *permanent* remedy for want in the midst of wealth.”

And his final word to the reader is this :

“The well-established laws of evolution as they really apply to mankind are all favorable to the advance of true civilization and of morality. Our existing competitive and antagonistic social system alone neutralizes their beneficent operation. That system must therefore be radically changed into one of brotherly coöperation and coördination for the equal good of all. To succeed we must make this principle our guide and our pole-star in all social legislation.”

Any summary of such a far-reaching argument, in space so scant as this, must of necessity be almost hopelessly inadequate. But perhaps we have faintly suggested something of the book's unique significance in correlating the seemingly diverse paths of biological and economic progress, — in lending the sanction of science to the struggle for freedom which millions of men and women are carrying forward throughout the world. It comes with an authority too high to be impugned; it conveys a message of too grave import to be ignored. Not to read and earnestly ponder such a message is little short of a sin against the future.

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