

REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

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DR. A. R. WALLACE'S LATEST BOOK

Wallace, Alfred Russel, O.M., D.C.L., F.R.S. *Social Environment and Moral Progress*. Cloth, pp. 185. New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company. \$1.25 net.

The thesis which, at the close of his ninth decade of life, Dr. Wallace presents in his recent book is that there has been no real moral or intellectual advance in the human race during the whole historical period, that there can be no progressive improvement in inherent character until some selective agency is set free to act upon it, and that that agency is now restrained from operation by the evils of our social system which is the worst that the world has ever seen. At first glance one might find here but the pessimism of age, but a careful reading of Dr. Wallace's lucid, direct, forceful argument gives another verdict. His solution of the problem of human progress by means of the survival of the fittest is not through the artificial schemes of the modern school of eugenics, but in such amelioration of the evils of our competitive and antagonistic social system as shall enable the laws of evolution to operate for the benefit of mankind.

"Nature—or the Universal Mind—has not failed or bungled our world so completely as to require the weak and ignorant efforts of the eugenists to set it right, while leaving the great fundamental causes of all existing social evils absolutely untouched. Let them devote all their energies to purifying the whitened sepulcher of destitution and ignorance, and the beneficent laws of human nature will themselves bring about the physical, intellectual, and moral advancement of our race."

The social evils, to which Dr. Wallace devotes a trenchant pen in summing up the increasing moral degradation of the times, are the industrial servitude of large numbers of women and children, unsanitary and crowded dwellings, deadly trades, the injustices of law, the high cost of its processes, adulteration, bribery, gambling, and other results of the passion for wealth which seeks its end by economic antagonism, monopoly, and social injustice. When civilized government performs its most important duty, that of organizing the labor of the whole community for the equal good of all, these evils will cease. In this beneficent social order woman, set free from industrial burdens and political inequality, will have a higher position than any which has been claimed for her, and its responsibilities she will nobly fulfil. The women of the future will become the regenerators of the whole human race, and the intellectual and moral inheritance of later generations will gain in ever-increasing value.