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‘Famous Scientist Dead. Dr. A. Russel Wallace, Discover of Evolution Theory.
Darwin’s Dilemma.’

Scientist, social reformer, and scholar, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace has died, after a comparatively short illness, in his pleasant home above Poole Harbour, after a busy life.

Ranking with the greatest scientists of his age, and ever famous for his connection with Charles Darwin’s researches, Dr. Russel Wallace had no advantages of birth and education. He was born at Usk, in Monmouthshire, on January 8, 1823, being descended from Scottish and Huguenot forbears. Commencing as a land surveyor and architect, he at length became a master in the collegiate school at Leicester.

The story of Wallace’s greatest discovery is the most interesting because of its human incidents. Whilst he was lying ill with intermittent fever in 1858 at Ternate, in the Malays, he thought of Malthus’s “Essay on Population,” which he had read some years previously. Almost at a flash the idea of the survival of the fittest came to him, and in an incredibly short space of time he had thought out the complete theory, and, working at high pressure, he prepared his complete essay on the subject in three evenings. Wallace conceived the plan of sending his essay to Darwin, who received it on June 18, 1858. In the covering letter Darwin was asked for his opinion, and also requested to forward the essay for a similar purpose to Sir Charles Lyell.

On receipt of Wallace’s M.S., Darwin had to admit that he had been forestalled, and in writing to Sir Charles Lyell, he said, “If Wallace had my M.S. sketch written out in 1842 he could not have made a better short abstract. Even his terms now stand as heads of my chapters.”

At this time Wallace was a comparatively speaking young man of thirty-five, whilst Darwin was forty-nine. The most honourable action was taken by Darwin. He referred the whole matter to his two friends Lyell and Hooker, and even offered to place on one side his own contribution; but the latter decided that Wallace’s essay should be sent to the Linnean Society in conjunction with a summary of Darwin’s conclusions. It may be recalled that in 1860, after Darwin’s “Origin of Species” was published, he wrote to Wallace: “I admire the generous manner in which you speak of my book. Most persons would, in your position, have felt some envy or jealousy. How nobly free you seem to be of this common failing of mankind.”

Early in life, Dr. Wallace seems to have accepted the orthodox views regarding revealed religion, but in later life this belief was relinquished. In its place he accepted Spiritualism, which he considered the only sure foundation for a true philosophy, a pure religion. Wallace was an ardent sociologist regarding Socialism as the panacea for the ills of mankind. Long before Mr. Henry George expressed his views, Dr. Wallace was a land nationalizer, and his book on the subject, published in 1882, set forth the necessity of the State ownership of land. From this position he did not budge, and in his declining days he hailed with the keenest satisfaction the proposals submitted by Mr. Lloyd George, whom he eulogized as “a wonderful man—a wizard.”