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‘Studies Scientific and Social.’

Two interesting and instructive volumes, published by Messrs Macmillan and Co., bring together a number of articles which Alfred Russell Wallace, LL.D., D.C.L., F.R.S., has from time to time contributed to well-known periodicals. He has ventured to call them Studies, because he points out “the larger part of them deal with problems...to which I have devoted much time and thought.” The subjects dealt with are of a varied character, and the author’s position in the scientific world enables him to speak with some authority on such matters, for instance, as the modern theory of evolution, geological and physical theories, and educational, political, and social questions. Since their original publication many of the articles have been considerably modified or enlarged, and in some instances copiously illustrated. In “Earth Studies” for example, the illustrations lend a special charm, and particularly so with regard to “Inaccessible Valleys.” The Doone Valley, according to the story, would, the writer suggests, provide on a small scale all the features which characterise an inaccessible valley, but as visitors to the spot are aware Mr Blackmore drew largely on his imagination. The particular features of the wonderful Yosemite Valley occupy the major portion of the chapter, wherein is pointed out the total inaccuracy of the popular view that every rook-walled valley or deep Alpine gorge has had its origin in some convulsion of nature. “The Permanence of the Great Ocean Basins” having been discussed Mr Wallace, writing on “Our Molten Globe,” remarks that “the internal heat gives us the possibility and even the promise of an inexhaustible source of heat and power at such a moderate distance that we may some day be able to utilise it.” Following the earth studies, which include an instructive article on “The Ice Age and its Work,” subjects appertaining to descriptive zoology, plant, and animal distribution are considered, and then a number of chapters are devoted to the theory of evolution. In “The Origin of Species and Genera,” the writer seeks to show what is really meant by the origin of species by means of natural selection, and discusses the subject so that not only the naturalist but any intelligent reader may follow him. He seeks further on to prove that acquired characters are not inherited, being in this respect opposed to the opinion of Darwin, who was firmly convinced of the heredity of acquired characters. Some anthropological subjects are well illustrated, and the first volume concludes with the problems of instinct and human selection. In the former of these Mr Wallace pays a tribute to Professor Lloyd Morgan’s work, “Habit and Instinct,” remarking that “biologists owe him a debt of gratitude for his most interesting and suggestive volume.” Introducing the subject of Human Selection, he states that, in one of his latest conversations with Darwin, the latter expressed himself very gloomily on the future of humanity, on the ground that in our modern civilisation natural selection had no play, and the fittest did not survive. The attitude of several writers on the subject are considered, and, referring to that of Grant Allen, Mr Wallace says: “To me it appears that no system of relations of men and women could be more fatal to the happiness of individuals, the well-being of children, or the advancement of the race than that proposed by Mr Grant Allen.” Mr Wallace is more hopeful as to the future than was Darwin and others, and his sympathies are very like those of Edward Bellamy in “Looking Backward,” which is reviewed to some extent. He concludes—“When we allow ourselves to be guided by reason, justice, and public spirit in our dealings with our fellow men, and determine to abolish poverty by recognising the equal rights of all the common citizens of our common

land to an equal share of the wealth which all combine to produce—when we have thus solved the lesser problem of a rational social organisation adapted to secure the equal well-being of all, then we may safely leave the far greater and deeper problem of the improvement of the race to the cultivated minds and pure instincts of the men, and especially of the women, of the future.” The contents of the second volume are divided into the following sections—educational, political, the land problem, ethical, sociological, and each will be found to contain good readable articles, full of novel suggestions. Such for instance are “Museums for the people,” and “American museums,” while in “How best to model the earth,” the writer shows how interesting and of what educational importance a good model might be. He suggests that a globe 167 feet in diameter would be worthy of the attention both of the scientific and commercial worlds. Can the tropics be permanently colonised by Europeans, and particularly by men of the Anglo-Saxon race? is a question which Mr Wallace has set himself to answer in “White men in the tropics,” and in giving an answer in the affirmative he relates some of his own experiences and a little autobiography. “How to Civilise Savages” may be commended for its sound judgment and advice, while among the political articles he deals with the important subjects “Coal, a national trust,” and “Depression of trade, its causes and remedies.” His views on disestablishment and disendowment, with a proposal for a real National Church of England, are worthy of careful consideration, as also are his opinions on the land problem, and some aspects of ethics and sociology. This indication of the varied contents of the work will give some idea of Mr Wallace’s versatility, and with the subjects treated in so able a manner, the two volumes of “Studies, Scientific and Social,” may be thoroughly recommended to readers of a thoughtful turn of mind.

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The Alfred Russel Wallace Page, Charles H. Smith, 2015.