ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE.

The nineteenth century seems to close finally with the death of Alfred Russel Wallace, for in him were typified many aspects of its thought and achievements. Scientific discovery and the apotheosis of the intellect blended with gropings into other than material planes; a habit of estimating and following movements singly, without embracing contemporaneous tendencies; an awakening to the destitution caused by our industrial system, with no adequate remedy; the growth of a mild philanthropy and sentimentalism, together with invective against the very conditions most tenaciously upheld; and a view of mankind tinged with pessimism—these characteristics might be applied to the man as to the century.

Wallace's contributions to science could scarcely be over-estimated; and they are considerable even without the results of what has been called the creative vividness with which the idea of natural selection came to him after reading Malthus's 'Principles of Population.' His natural history expeditions to South America and his work in the Malay Archipelago, leading to the establishment of the "Wallace line," which divides that region into two parts having completely different zoological characteristics, gave him a prominent place in the scientific world. So accustomed are we to the ideas of evolution and natural selection that we scarcely realize the effect produced by that theory. Yet the impression made by Darwin and Wallace was as startling and roused as much antagonism as Galileo's "È pur si muove."

The great contemporaries of Alfred Russel Wallace, many of whom were his friends, were distinguished by a certain rigidity of thought exemplified in Spencer's philosophy. They laid all Nature under law, and instituted the intellect as supreme: the ratiocinative method was the only gateway to truth. These giants of the Victorian Age laid a basis—and a sound one—on which their followers might build; without such a foundation of concrete facts subsequent erections would have been worthless. Wallace, by outliving his contemporaries, yet not grasping later philosophies, became a transitional figure, endeavouring to ascertain knowledge of a beyond, and entering fields unexplored by them. Yet the verdict of the present day is, we think, not with him in accepting spiritualism as the alternative to materialism. Not in that direction lie the solution and speculation of the twentieth century; rather are they indicated by the trend of M. Bergson's creative evolution. It was left to this eminent French philosopher to initiate a non-teleological system, and his conception of intellect as a deposit of the evolutionary process, and of evolution as making its road as it progresses, is a development of the nineteenth-century mechanism. But it also makes mechanism and finalism untenable, and is the antithesis to the scheme of a designed universe.

Wallace is said to have "rebelled against the mechanistic philosophy" of the older men of science who denied a creative power, but his idea of a Master Engineer directing the Universe is also mechanical, for it merely adds a hand to direct the machine which remains. He differed from Darwin in this belief in an "organizing and directive Life Principle" and an "Ultimate Purpose," as he did in his theory of sexual selection and other minor points.

Further, the mind of Wallace did not possess the synthesizing quality in a philosophic sense. and therefore his evaluations are liable to exhibit a lack of proportion. This is evinced in many of his later theories. They are the result of observations insufficiently balanced. Here, for instance, is a sentence from 'Social Environment and Moral Progress':—

> "Taking account of these various groups of undoubted facts [certain social conditions], 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 the world has ever seen."

This view is not typical of Socialism, yet Wallace believed himself to be a Socialist. Rather was he a social reformer, as his panacea of free bread and various other suggestions in 'The Wonderful Century' (1903) and 'The Revolt of Democracy' (1913) proclaim him. If some of his principles were Socialistic, the method of procedure he advocated for their application was not. However, the interest he felt in social problems, his studies in that direction, and his earnest and sometimes valuable suggestions, together with his presidency of the Land Nationalization Society for thirty years, are sufficient to stamp him as more than a man of science. But he was not a politician, nor had he grasped the function of government, for he quotes W. T. Stead (to whose mind in its versatile and enthusiastic aspects that of Wallace might be compared) as saying that

> "what we insist upon now is, that we declare war against every form of want, poverty, and industrial discontent, and that the Government must lead the way and set the pace."

But Governments do not initiate: they progress in the direction of the pressure exerted by the governed, and legislation follows ineluctable demands.

But Wallace felt the sense of comradeship with mankind, and with a wholehearted and courageous devotion to science, he combined an intense desire to improve social conditions. Of his magnanimity, humblemindedness, and simplicity of character it is not necessary to speak; his friendly contention with Darwin and his Autobiography have made them well known. His lasting contributions to knowledge and thought belong essentially to the last century; the present one pays homage, but passes on, using and developing what he gave.