

THE LOST SON OF DARWINISM.

A LAMENT OVER MR. A. R. WALLACE.

Samtiden's most interesting article this month is a paper from *Freie Bühne* by Wilhelm Bölsche, entitled "The 'Lost Son' of Darwinism," applying the term to Alfred Russel Wallace, erstwhile the apostle of that doctrine, but which he has now nearly, if not wholly, apostatised.

It is not only in the arts, says the writer, that *fin de siècle* beings are to be found. On all sides they spring up—a strange, defeated army, with not enough strength to move forward, and not enough courage to turn back. There are sympathetic beings amongst them who, with brilliant words on their bloodless lips, delude and cheat themselves as to their position and strength. And innocent victims they are, all of them, when it comes to the point, for in the crucial moments of life it is oftenest the most sensitive who is the first to be crushed.

The typical Darwinian *fin de siècle* figure is Alfred Russel Wallace, once the founder in part of the natural selection theory and now the critic of Darwinism, cutting into the most vital parts of the doctrine. That he has turned this somersault is due to the fact of his having turned spiritualist. While striving to retain his natural selection theory, he seeks to prove that the higher intelligences and deeper feelings of the mammalian species *Homo* have been brought into existence by the special interference, on his behalf, of some higher invisible powers, and that it is to this interference we owe those sentiments of reverence, patriotism, unselfishness, parental and filial love, etc., which constitute what is called the soul. This theory being naturally and completely antagonistic to the Darwinian doctrine, which acknowledges no special spiritual interference in the laws of Nature since the first Divine breath of life, Wallace between his two stools comes to the ground, and lies there, a curious compromise between Darwinism and Spiritualism.

Wilhelm Bölsche, as a thorough-going disciple of Darwin, criticises, with something of amusement, Wallace's new book on "Darwinism," of the fifteen chapters of which he declares fourteen to be solid scientific work only; in the fifteenth the author, so to speak, wrecks his ship in port. The article is comprehensive and strong, with a touch of sarcasm levelled between whites at Wallace. The sharpest is, perhaps, that with which it closes—"The tiny-brained bird who sacrifices herself for her young is merely the result of natural selection; but Wallace, the human being with the gigantic brain, who risks his health and strength in the fever miasmas of the Malay Archipelagoes, for the sake of science—he is the result of spiritual interference in the laws of natural selection."