

THE REVOLT OF DEMOCRACY

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The Revolt of Democracy by Alfred Russel Wallace

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ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE

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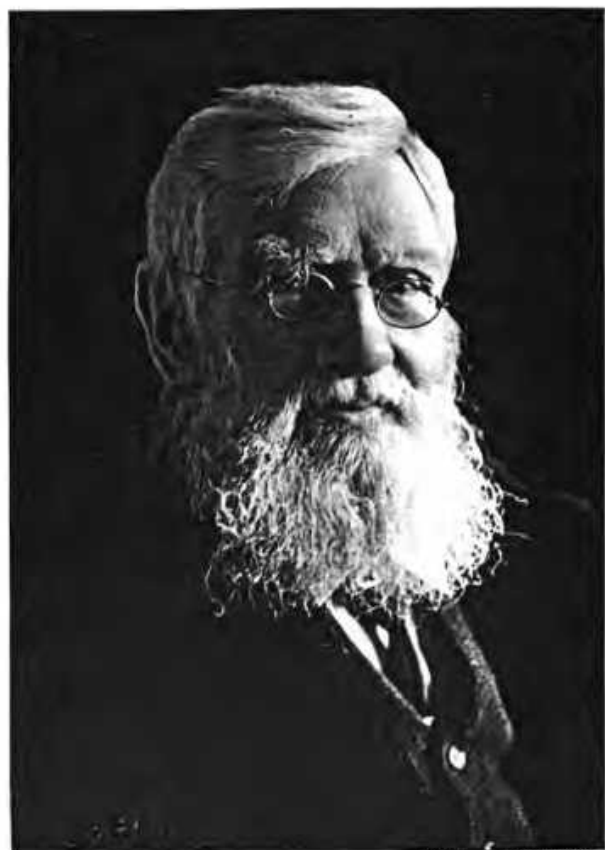


Photo: Reginald Haines

Alfred R. Wallace

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PROPERTY OF THE
CITY OF NEW YORK

The Life Story of the Author

LIKE a watchman on a lonely tower, with keen vision and responsive mind and heart, Alfred Russel Wallace has observed more change and development of scientific and social opinion and a higher advance of the tide of knowledge across the shores of human speculation and ignorance than any living scientist. Yet, unlike that solitary watchman, he himself has been, and is, an active pioneer of scientific revelation. For a long time he was the voice of a system of truths so far ahead of the attainments of his generation that to his contemporaries much of his teaching seemed rank heresy and almost blasphemy; but, like a true prophet, he has had not only the patience but the opportunity given him to see most of his discoveries and his teachings incorporated into the stately palace of truth.

When he was born in 1823, our world, as we know it to-day (a composite thing of multitudinous energies thirled to the service and utility of mankind) had scarcely come into existence. He has seen the formidable

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and mysterious powers of electricity enslaved to the service of the ordinary affairs of daily life, and has watched with glowing interest the coming of the motor-car and the flying machine. He has lived under five British sovereigns, has witnessed the spread and development of railways, and the adoption of steam for navigation, the supersession of the wooden walls by the steel bulwarks of Britannia, and other changes beyond record in the practical application of scientific discoveries. When he was a boy, photography was a plaything, the electric telegraph a mere experiment, the penny post unknown, the newspaper a luxury of the few, the material world, as a whole, a vast and impenetrable wilderness, continent separated from continent by wide-stretching seas, traversed only by daring spirits.

He has seen the material world of mere geography shrink till now it can be girdled by the commonest message in a matter of minutes; he has seen the newspaper in every home, the simplest word of love carried the whole empire over for one penny, the criminal and the out-cast treated more like sinners to be redeemed who are often "more sinned against than sinning."

To have seen so much is to make any man a centre of human interest. To hear the now aged naturalist tell of what his life has been awakens vivid response even in the heart of the

The Life Story of the Author

most apathetic. But to know that all the while he was no shirker in life's upward march, but himself a profound thinker, a ceaseless searcher, a sagacious discoverer, and that most of his theories and opinions, which had been scouted by thinkers for many years, are now sound and current coin in the treasure-house of true science, is gratefully to acknowledge him as one of the greatest sons of his age and a shining benefactor for all time.

His father, Thomas Vere Wallace, a briefless lawyer, was also an experimenter. He had a family of nine children. It was little satisfaction that the number of the Muses was the same, for the Muses were not confronted by the problem of bread-and-butter which perturbs a human family. He was not of a practical turn of mind, and his private income was not sufficient to provide for the necessities of his children. But he was a man of literary taste, and he embarked upon a venture of a very speculative nature, namely the publication of an Art Magazine, which wellnigh exhausted what means he still possessed. He therefore had to leave London, and transferred his household goods and gods to the town of Usk in Monmouthshire, where he tried the new experiment of economy. Here Alfred, the last but one of the nine, was born, and here he spent the first four years of his life, with no need to go outside of his own house for a plentiful supply of playmates. In 1828 the