

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER

EVOLUTION AND CHARACTER

IN his book on "The Wonderful Century," published ten years ago, Alfred Russel Wallace, the distinguished scientist and co-discoverer with Charles Darwin of the theory of Evolution, asserted his conviction that, in the matter of mechanical discovery, the human race had made more progress in the nineteenth century than in all the preceding eighteen centuries. It is somewhat difficult to reconcile this statement with the attitude he takes in his latest article on "Evolution and Character" in The Fortnightly Review. He has evidently grown more pessimistic. He declares now that it is doubtful if there has been "any considerable improvement in man's average intellectual and moral status during the whole period of human history"; and he says further:

"In comparing a savage with a civilized race, we must always remember that the amount of acquired and applied knowledge which we possess is no criterion of mental superiority on our side, or of inferiority on his. The average Zulu or Fijian may be very little lower mentally than the average Englishman; and it is, I think, quite certain that the average Britain, Saxon, Dane and Norseman of a thousand years ago – the ancestral stocks of the present English race – were mentally our equals. For what power has been since at work to improve them? There has certainly been no special survival of the more intellectual and moral, but rather the reverse....When we consider further that the effects of education and the arts are not hereditary, we shall be forced to the conclusion that we are today, in all probability, mentally and morally inferior to our semi-barbaric ancestors!"

The Romans and the Greeks, Mr. Wallace reminds us, looked down on their ancestors with just as much contempt as we look down on Kaffirs and Red Indians. It is quite superficial to conclude that because people are in a savage or barbarian state as regards knowledge and material civilization, they are necessarily inferior intellectually or morally. "I am inclined to believe," says Mr. Wallace, "that an unbiased examination of the question would lead us to the conclusion that there is no good evidence of any difference in man's average intellectual and moral status during the whole period of human history at all corresponding with differences in material civilization between civilized and savage races today.... There is good reason to believe that some of the lowest savages today (perhaps all of them) are the deteriorated remnants of more civilized peoples."

MENACE OF YELLOW JOURNALISM

One of the severest and keenest indictments of yellow journalism ever written has lately appeared in The American Magazine from the pen of Prof. W. I. Thomas, of the University of Chicago. He takes the ground that the yellow papers published and spread broadcast in our American cities today are "a positive agent of vice and crime," making for all kinds of immorality. Our failure up to the present time to regard the yellow press as an immorality and to take steps to exterminate it is due, he thinks, in part to the fact that we have been reluctant to lose a time-honored faith in the printed page, and in part to the slowness with which we carry generalizations into practice. In connection with this last point he writes:

"Moral exactions never, in point of fact, reflect the most advanced states of consciousness. Our practices run behind our judgments by a generation or two, but that we do slowly and surely carry our generalizations into practice is indicated by the fact that

society has since the beginning been constantly changing the content of its commandments, and practices which at one time were not the objects of moral judgment (slavery, polygamy, blood-vengeance) have come to be classed as immoral. At the present moment there is a focus of consciousness containing commandments in the making. In it are located questions of political graft, monopolistic manipulation, the tyranny of labor, patent medicine fakes, impure foods, the race question, the woman question, and the question of the yellow journal. These are now being agitated and revalued by public opinion and the legitimate press, and when we have made our reconstruction we shall have some new commandments and some new crimes; and among them will be: *Thou shalt not have the perversion of truth for a gainful occupation.*"

Professor Thomas' first and fundamental objection to yellow journalism is based on its appeal to what he calls the "hate attitude" in men. This attitude exists in all [R4431 : page 211] of us. It dates back to the days when human beings spent most of their time killing animals or fighting with their fellow creatures. It partakes of the nature of impulse or appetite, and is almost as blindly elemental as hunger itself. During centuries of civilization this hate instinct has been modified and controlled, but under the surface it slumbers yet. A murder trial, a prize fight, a slanderous bit of gossip, an exciting game, have still the power to call it into play.

In the light of these facts, says Professor Thomas, it becomes plain that the yellow journal owes its existence to the persistence in men of a primitive feeling of essentially anti-social character, and to the fact that a revival of this feeling brings a sense of pleasure. He continues:

"Pleasurable shocks may be classified with some reference to their social significance. We have, first, the emotional interest of the reflex type represented by the whole gamut of competitive games from marbles to chess, which are pleasant, recreative and valuable – to the child, [R4431 : page 212] in developing a normal organism, and to the adult (in a society where the division of labor prevails),

in taking the strain off certain overworked nerve centers and equilibrating the organism. A second form of shock is associated with horrors, misfortunes, detractions and slanders. Railroad wrecks, fires, murders and domestic scandals are types of this interest, which, as in games, is primarily of the nature of a blind reflex. Artistic presentations, of which tragedy is an example, are conflict situations of a generalized and reflective type, presented with such technique and perspective as to give an added significance to life. Scientific and business 'pursuits' are really of the hunting pattern of interest, involving the same emotional strains as the chase, though the emotion is subordinated to the reflective processes involved."

– *Current Literature.*

TURKEY ASKS JEWS TO COME

Offers to Confer Full Citizenship Upon Immigrants on Arrival.

"They shall *bring* all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations." – Isa. 66:20.

The Jewish Morning Journal gave out recently a special cable dispatch from Constantinople saying that the Turkish Government had invited the Jews of Russia and Roumania to settle in Turkey, agreeing to remove all restrictions and to grant full citizenship to them. Here is the text of the cablegram:

"Ahmed Riza, President of the Chamber of Deputies visited to-day Hahm Pasha, the ritual head of the Jews in Turkey, and on behalf of the Turkish Government extended an invitation to the Jews of Russia and Roumania to migrate to Turkey. As proof of the good faith of the Turkish Government Ahmed Riza informed Hahm Pasha that the Government would abolish all restrictions against Jewish immigration, and, what is still more significant, will confer full citizenship on Jewish immigrants immediately on their arrival in Turkey."

AN UNSECTARIAN PRESENTATION

Dr. H. S. Pritchett, President of the Carnegie Foundation for the advancement of teaching, speaking recently on Leadership in the Colleges, said: –

"Church membership is no test as to whether a man is a religious man or not; nor is it any criterion by which religious men may be chosen. The constant use of this criterion has served to impose upon young men both in and out of college the idea that the obligations of the religious life are binding only on those who have assumed membership in religious organizations. No more unhappy impression could have been created. The obligations of the religious life are the same upon every human being. The idea that he can escape the working out of the great laws which the Maker of the Universe has set up by declining to belong to a human organization is a grotesque one, and yet this is an idea common among young men. I believe, therefore, that the man of sincere religious life, outside any formal organization, has a notable opportunity today for religious leadership in college, and that he escapes some of the limitations which lie in the way of his brother who is part of a definite religious organization. No man has the right to evade the duties of leadership or of service by reason of his belonging to, or of his not belonging to a religious organization. To advance such a claim is like insisting that a man is not an American unless he belongs to the Republican or the Democratic party."
