

or Asia, and had we no knowledge of the fossil forms, we might have been quite at a loss to account for their peculiar distribution. The fossil remains of the Tertiary rocks, both animal and vegetable, present us with many instances of this kind.

In his recent work Wallace has done a great service to science, and indeed to humanity, by showing the entire untenableness of the idea that a land connection existed in recent times between Australia and Africa—that hypothetical “continent of Lemuria” of which Haeckel has made so much use as the supposed home of his “alali,” or speechless men, the missing link between man and the apes. The theory of the former existence of such a continent was based on certain resemblances of the animal population of Africa and Madagascar to that of Australia and the Indian Islands. The great depth, however, of the intervening sea, as well as the faunæ of its islands, preclude the supposition of any continental connection; and the history of the animals in question, so far as known to us, favors the belief that they entered independently into Africa and Australia from the great Palearctic region, in which they existed in early Tertiary times. A similar explanation applies to a few forms of plants common to South Africa and Australia. Lemuria thus becomes a mere “survival of a provisional hypothesis which affords what seems an easy solution of a difficult problem, and has received an appropriate and easily remembered name.” It is to be feared that it does not stand alone in this respect among modern scientific hypotheses. Failing Lemuria, however, the doctrine of the “descent of man” becomes more difficult than before. This hypothetical continent was connected with the habitats of our supposed earliest simian ancestors, the lemurs, and also with the countries in which we find the lowest types of man, as well as with those regions in southern Asia to which historical affiliation traces the origin of the earliest nations. Thus it formed a very convenient region to which to refer anxious inquirers after the “missing link,” and Haeckel did not hesitate to affirm that from this perished continent “the distribution of the various species and races of men probably took place over the surface of the earth.” What new discovery or “provisional hypothesis” will take the place of Lemuria remains to be seen. In the mean time we have no reason to be-