

The New Reason.

By R. H. H.

TO gauge the mental ballast, motive power and equipment of the newly-launched century might indeed have tried the acumen of the philosophic observer, had not the inner activity of the Nineteenth Century perceptibly lulled towards its close. We are now experiencing a moment of comparative equilibrium, of relaxed strenuousness, due, apart from natural reaction, to the passing-out of so many of the great figures round whom the currents of thought swirled in not distant years of hot partizanship and controversy.

It is a time of fallow in the production of giants, but the very absence of great figures allows of a clearer general outlook. Thus viewed, the signs of the times indicate that the twentieth century has dawned on a new age of reason—a widespread reason estimating the phases, problems, and situations of life at their true value, and bringing with it that mental balance defined by Emerson as the true "culture."

In the year 1901 we see the dogmas of material science crumbling away no less than the dogmas of theology. The tendency of the age is towards consolidation of religious beliefs, leading ultimately to a universal religion based on the broadest principles. Towards this end, paradoxical as it may seem, our foreign missions are helping by mingling Western light with the truth underlying the great Oriental religions. The dross will fall away from both systems, and truth remain.

The undoubted renewal of vitality of the churches—a century-end phenomenon which has puzzled many thinkers—cannot be ascribed to a strengthening of creeds. Rather is it due to the churches bringing themselves gradually abreast of current thought, to their unconsciously following the vanguard pioneers, and remodelling with the times. This fact may not be very

marked in the letter. It is in the spirit that the change has chiefly taken place. The truth is obscured less and less by accretions, and lo! the churches rejuvenate; the gradual transformation of dogma fills the religious edifices.

On the other hand, the purging by science of *her* proud dogmas, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, is but another phase of the new reason. The iconoclasts of the so-called atheistic type had their function, and performed it right bravely, but theirs is not the new century. Materialistic dogma is heavily discounted in 1901. The God-thirst in man has broken the newer bonds as it did the old.

The opposite extreme—modern spiritualism—after filling its counterpart, is now being more correctly estimated. The cult of the disembodied spirit steadily gives way to a broader psychical science which recognises that spirit intercourse and "phenomena" have but scant bearing on the rise of the individual and the nation here and now. The *embodied* spirit, strong in his consciousness, yields nothing to the *disembodied*.

Evolution in all aspects triumphs in 1901. Economic evolution is nowhere. The enlightened social reformer has, too, dropped some of his dogmas. "Surplus value," as a fetish, is dead, and social salvation by legislative enactment is no longer preached as a panacea. It is increasingly recognised that disease of the body corporate, manifesting itself by eruptions and general ugliness, cannot be radically cured by skin treatment, but only from within outwards. The paralysing theory of heredity, as evolved by latter-day material science, loses its terrors in face of the recognition of the creative and constructive essence of the life principle in man, whereby the individual moulds his own conditions and environment.