

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.

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Many of the Churches of Britain and America are proposing to celebrate the close of the nineteenth century and the opening of the twentieth by raising a large Special Fund for church purposes. The movement has not originated in any concerted action of these Churches; though doubtless the example of the Churches which were first in the matter has had influence upon those which moved later. This project will necessarily be regarded with much interest; and its success will, in some measure, bear witness to the vitality of the Christian faith in our day. Failure, in the case of any Church which has undertaken to raise a Commemorative Fund, is much to be deprecated, and would probably have a depressing effect upon the life and work of such Church. It cannot be doubted that, before committing themselves to this enterprise, the Churches have carefully considered the matter in all its bearings, and that they desire to proceed in it as a service to the Lord.

The twentieth century is to us a "terra incognita." What it may evolve is known only to Him who knows all things. But we can hardly doubt that the century about to enter will be marked by a continuance, perhaps an increase, of the marvellous activity of the human mind which, in so many provinces, has increasingly characterized the progress of the century now closing. In science and invention, in manufactures and commerce, in education and missions, the mighty movement of the nineteenth century will surely be carried forward; and many

growths of the years which we have seen will be ripened by the century which is at hand. The divine purpose in regard to the world will hasten on towards its accomplishment.

The record of the nineteenth century is now almost completely unrolled. In comparison with preceding centuries we often hear it called a remarkable, a wonderful, century. We cannot well, it may be, compare centuries and eras with one another, so as to measure their relative importance. They all enter into God's plan, and are so linked together that each should be viewed as part of a whole. The history of the world will, when completed, be seen to be a unity. Periods of time which seem dull, colourless, eventless, will appear not less necessary than those which are crowded with great deeds and issues. Yet it is certainly right—as it is inevitable—that we should be impressed with the remarkable features of our century. It were, indeed, sinful and stupid should we not take account of God's hand in the events and movements which have passed before the eyes of ourselves and our fathers during these prolific years. For whether or not we are right in saying that the privilege of living in the nineteenth century is greater than that of having lived in any preceding period of the world's history, it may be confidently affirmed that there never was a time in which men have more earnestly wrestled with the great questions and problems which interest the race.

Our reference to the characteristics of our century must be of