

THE WONDERFUL CENTURY.*

This curious and remarkable book is one to be recommended to the notice of all thoughtful readers, but hardly to be discussed in detail in the pages of a literary journal. Subjects are broached in it which must be decided by science, by sociology, and by political experiment, and round which prejudice no doubt very often masquerades as opinion. Dr. Wallace's plan is seen in his division of the book into two parts, the first dealing with the successes of the century, the second with its failures. It is a wholesome plan. The average smugness with regard to modern England is neither wise nor healthy. No one is better fitted to deal with the great scientific and industrial advancement since 1800 than Dr. Wallace; and for concise and accurate accounts of these up to this date, the book must remain of permanent value. It is a matter for congratulation that this summary has been made for us by a master, and not by a mere maker of popular handbooks. As to the other part, the discussion of the failures, it is Dr. Wallace's private confession of faith. Were all who are discontented in some degree with modern progress to write of the shortcomings of the century, there would be very little agreement in the lists. We are very individual in our grumblings. This writer complains that phrenology is neglected, that hypnotism is hindered, that vaccination is enforced, that militarism is on the increase, that greedy commercialism is rampant, and that the cry of the hungry is still a reproach to the prosperous. Dr. Wallace is clear-spoken, courageous, uncompromising. When he suggests "free bread" as a remedy for starvation, he forestalls the usual objection by the frank assertion, "Better a hundred loafers than a thousand starving." We know where we are with him. He forces us to argument, and in doing so, must force some of us to think.