

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL.¹

THE century now drawing to a close can be characterized in no way better than by saying that it has been a century devoted to the study of nature. Whether we look at the spirit that has animated the choicest sons of the century, or at the achievements that stand out sharpest from the general level of their accomplishments, we see that their noblest enthusiasm has been an enthusiasm for nature, their most signal success the success of coaxing from nature her secrets and then of exacting from her a willing service. And it is not merely the Daltons and the Faradays, the Helmholtzes and the Lord Kelvins, the Darwins and the Huxleys, the Edisons and the Roentgens, that have given this age its scientific character. These are only the leaders of a mighty organized force of workers. The rank and file, their name is legion.

And as we stand near the threshold of a new century and look forward to see what it shall be, we can fortunately perceive no indication of an abatement in this scientific interest. Every victory won but whets the appetite for further aggression into the unknown territories of nature. But, while natural science will thus in all human likelihood steadily push forward her boundaries, it seems as if a formidable rival had appeared on the field, and were threatening to relegate her to a second rank as a twentieth century enthusiasm. Not that the twentieth century man will love nature less, but that he will love something else more.

¹ An Inaugural Address delivered at Cornell University, November 3, 1899, upon the author's assumption of his duties as Sage Professor of Moral Philosophy.