



**NOTES OF THE MONTH.**

POSSIBLY no attitude is wiser, or more conducive to the maintenance of calm and dispassionate disposal of affairs in the present national crises, than to realize that God is the God of nations as of men.

1896 opens in international unrest. Wars and rumors of wars, massacres, oppressions within and between the various countries, ring in the New Year with harsh clamorings. The Armenian question disturbing European powers; Great Britain and the United States at loggerheads concerning Venezuela; Cuba in revolt; Canada in the bitterness of creed faction;—even to the optimist the national outlook is disquieting.

The ensuing days may bring peaceable solutions of diplomatic problems, or force further complications. But, whatever the outcome, the manliest attitude, and one that tends best toward justice and fair dealing, belongs to that government which realizes the overruling of the God of nations.

PUTTING aside all sentiment, the consideration arises, whether Christian governments that look on while helpless and unoffending people are oppressed, who assume attitudes of non-interference while justice cries for aid, shall not alike in their turn suffer in some measure the pangs of those whom they have failed to assist.

Neutrality, when decision and action is demanded, is criminal,—and as such, under the retributory laws that govern alike nations and men, it shall receive its reward. The unanswered cry of the Armenians to the great Christian nations will not go unavenged. This alone gives graver outlook unto the national complications that beset the opening year.

CONCERNING Venezuela, it is impossible to believe that an extreme issue will be forced upon two great nations—nations that are one, in all save method of government.

The possibility of war between Britain and the United States is as repugnant to our feelings as matricide or fratricide. We recoil from it as we would from civil war, which nothing but the strongest issue between right and wrong, between oppressor and oppressed, makes justifiable.

The time is past when nations might call to arms over questions of territory, tariff or trade. All Christendom realizes that such disputes may, and should, be adjusted by commission or arbitration.

For defence of life and honor, in help of the oppressed, or in resistance of unjust invasion against semi-barbarous or heathen nations, who are amenable only to force,—only such causes as these call for war. But

between Christian peoples of the same speech and blood the need should never arise.

In such a crisis as that engendered by the present Guiana dispute, the only danger arises from the extremists on either side; who may commit their governments to precipitate action.

The true patriots and statesmen in such exigency are not those who shout defiance, but those who labor for honorable and creditable peace.

THERE is little to say that has not already been said concerning this sudden disturbance of international relationship.

Press and pulpit are mightier than premier in deciding the affairs of a nation. These forces make the temper of the people, whereby every statesman, whether he will or not, is in some manner influenced.

And in these days of hot news and swift-varying moods, every twenty-four hours reveals a change of attitude and a fresh aspect of the case, in the columns of the big dailies.

No slow diplomatic negotiations nor waiting for concerted action, hampers the press, and as a consequence the question is threshed out in a brief space of time, every possible light having been thrown upon it, every side issue considered; so that within a week the subject, however momentous, is exhausted there is no possible fresh point of view.

All that remains is to review the situation, and pronounce judgment as impartial as individual bias permits.

It would be amusing—if it were not so serious a matter—to note the rapid changes of tone concerning this Venezuelan dispute, in the leading journals on both sides of the water, during the wordy fracas.

The editorials of the most aggressive papers, from day to day, form a series of gradations worthy of pictorial representation. This is especially true of the American journals, whose tone is, by temperament, less moderate and conservative than the English ones. The Canadian papers generally have adopted a much steadier and more dispassionate tone from the first. Yet Canada is chiefly concerned, since her territory would be the theater, in event of active hostility.

That is precisely the mistake Americans make, and have always made, concerning Canada. They fail to gauge aright the strong reserve power of her people.

ON the question of annexation—which has certainly an indirect influence in the present issue Americans have judged Canada's passive attitude by the words of the few, rather than by the silence of the many.

Canadians, unlike Americans, are not a verbose people. With a few notable exceptions, the men who talk are those whose opinions are least regarded, and whose views are not representative.

There was never greater error than to construe Canadian conservatism and reserve as indifference or weakness. It is because their convictions lie deep enough to be beyond the swerving of a breeze, that Canadians preserve so calm a surface. Storms of words may beat about them with no disturbing effect, but when the time for action comes, they are ready.

The contrast between the two nationalities in this respect is so marked, that it is hardly to be wondered that Americans fail to measure Canadian strength and Canadian conviction aright.

THE fact that two Chicago millionaires, P. H. Armour and George W. Pullman, were mailed infernal machines last week, goes to prove that the life of a millionaire, even though he be a philanthropist, is beset with risks. It has not yet been revealed whether the affair was a stupid plan to extract money, or whether chance revealed a serious plot against the lives of these men, but in either instance, the dangers to which men of great wealth or high office are subjected, is once again made manifest.

Three of the greatest forces of evil in the world to-day are the desperation of hunger, greed for money, craving for notoriety; they are the diseases that burn into the hearts and brains of men, making of them maniacs or villains.

IN this connection, and at the close of the year, a retrospective glance shows an appalling amount of crime against life during the past twelve months—in murders of a particularly violent and repulsive type, as well as in the epidemic number of suicides. Never was life more lightly esteemed nor more violently thrust out into darkness; never were deeds more atrocious perpetrated for more inadequate cause. Men, greedy for money, deliberately plan to take the life of those who should be nearest and dearest in order to obtain it; men and women, disappointed or disheartened, rush into suicide.

It is one of the most solemn and momentous aspects of modern days, this light esteem of human life. Is it possible that the rapid loosening of old-time religious beliefs has aught to do with it; that a material hell and the doctrine of eternal punishment has been in the past a wholesome deterrent; and that the dread of something after death is a restraining necessity to those who are governed by no higher laws?

'Tis worth while to look into the matter.