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OUTLOOK OF THE CLOSING YEAR.

THE far off outlook is not in doubt. Christ shall reign. Right shall triumph. The Christmas song of Peace on earth shall be realized. That grand consummation is the keynote of prophecy and promise from Moses to the Seer in Patmos.

It is the nearer future that is ark with mystery, affording a happy hunting ground where prophets can roam with none to say them nay. None can speak with authority. With all it is but opinion, and each is entitled to his own interpretation of the signs of the times. Among these signs at present are "wars and rumors of wars"; the latter especially plentiful.

The world's body politic, like that of Isaiah's Israel, is full of wounds and bruises. Rarely is it free from some sore spot. There are "strained relations" between Britain and France, Britain and Germany, Britain and the United States, France and Germany, Germany and Russia; affording excitement to a sensation loving world, material for vivid despatches and alarmist editorials, keeping armies awake with expectancy, and nations on guard, prepared and preparing for conflict.

There are wars as well as rumors of war. Japan and China have recently made peace; France has just conquered Madagascar; Cuba is a scene of strife; the republics of South America are seldom all at peace; while Britain is often called to establish law and order by force in some of the world's remoter regions.

These wars and rumors, in lessening measure, will probably continue for many years to come. Disarmament by the great powers does not seem to be in the near future, while occasional outbursts of strife, the growing pains of a bettering world, are not all in the past. But the probability, almost certainty, is, that while there may, as at present, be rumors of war among the world's great powers, the wars will as now be confined to the weaker or semi-barbarous nations, or to their correction, perhaps sometimes oppression, by the stronger ones.

Two things will increasingly tend to prevent war between any of the world's great powers.

(1) There is the increasing injury that even the victor would suffer. National interests, commercial and otherwise, are becoming more intertwined. Each passing year finds the nations with greater interests abroad exposed to danger; while with growing naval armaments, an enemy though finally defeated, would be able to inflict greater injury. Each great nation is becoming stronger for war, and, at the same time, more vulnerable and susceptible to injury, and victory would be purchased at an ever increasing cost.

(2) On the other hand, each year tends to lessen the results of victory and make it a barren triumph. The jealousy of other peoples, their anxiety to preserve the balance of power, to prevent any one nation from attaining undue strength by weakening another, even now hinders in large measure the conqueror from absorbing the conquered, as in former times; and their great armies and navies, ever ready to enforce their will upon any one of their number, makes their words effective. Japan whipped her huge neighbor helpless, but when the work was done she had to be content with what other powers permitted her to take.

These two causes, the injury that even the victor must suffer and the barren results of triumph, are constantly becoming more potent, and each year that the great powers continue at peace, and every addition they make to their fighting strength, lessens the probability that anything like a widespread war among them will ever again shadow our world.

"A general European war" has long done service as an alarmist cry, and it may do so for many days to come, but there is little fear that it will ever be realized. The powers have too much to lose and too little to gain to make it a reality. Each wishes to keep its great strength intact in order to preserve its rank and influence among the nations. No one cares to exhaust itself in a barren strife, and to be obliged in consequence to take a second place beside others that have been looking on, and to be thus obliged to listen to the terms they may dictate.

Though the world's great armaments are burdensome, a year of them is less hurtful than a