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I.—Literary.

AMERICA AT THE SUMMIT OF THE CENTURY.

The last century should always be the best, and its closing decade the greatest. This is pre-eminently true of the century fast drawing to a close.

God is not writing books now. The canon of scripture was complete when the aged St. John penned the last line of his gospel. God is not working miracles now. There is no longer any need for the display of the supernatural. But God is just as busy as ever. His name does not appear, but his presence is everywhere. His hand is unseen, but omnipotent, shaping the destiny of the world and fore-ordaining still whatsoever comes to pass. "The world is not made, but making," some one says. God is as alert as he was in the days of the old theophanies. Was he in the world in the days of Abraham, and Moses, and Elijah, and Paul? God is not less gloriously and triumphantly in the world in the last years of this imperial nineteenth century.

It has been a century of unsurpassed industrial improve-

ment. Labor saving machinery makes one man equal to a thousand. "Arms and a man I sing," must be changed to "tools and a man I sing." Steam and electricity have transformed the modern industrial world. It has been a century of marvelous scientific achievement and political progress. Monarchy yields to the growth of republican ideas. The last throne has crumbled in the western hemisphere, and the love of liberty is prophetic of the ultimate universal triumph and establishment of representative government. The century has been no less remarkable for its religious activity. Mighty movements have been inaugurated that already touch the ends of the earth. It has been the century of the Young Men's Christian Association and of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. Never was the Bible studied more closely. Never was it subjected to such severe critical tests.

To crown all, it has been the great missionary century. There have been successive Pentecosts, when the holy fire fell and the old time power was evident in the conversion of thousands. Men are thinking about God as they never did before. The realm of fiction has surrendered to this spirit of the times, and the most widely read novels are those that throb with great religious problems.

The last years of the century are going out in the blaze of events as startling in their character as they must be widespread in their influence. The great Chinese Empire, after more than 3,000 years of national continuity, seems on the brink of dismemberment. Russia is forging across Siberia for the Eastern Sea, and has reached her goal at Port Arthur. The last vestige of Spanish power has been swept from the Western hemisphere, and her hold weakened, if not entirely broken, in the Pacific. Great Britain has conquered the Khalifa and acquired the Soudan, English speaking people have learned that they are friends, and must confederate for the world's good. The Powers have at last spoken out, and ordered the Sultan to withdraw every Moslem soldier from Crete. The Czar of Russia has asked for a conference looking to the disarmament of nations, and the arranging of terms for universal and lasting peace.

What does all this mean but that God is building here

on the summit of the century a throne of unsurpassed privilege and unexampled power? It is a great time in which to live. It is a royal era for national greatness and opportunity.

Whatever the outlook may be to the citizens of other countries, the vision which breaks upon American citizenship, as it looks backward and forward from the top of the century, is as fair a picture as the lavish hand of a generous God ever painted on the sky of a nation's hope.

In the book of Esther this question occurs: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14.) The book is one in which the name of God does not appear, but God himself is evident everywhere. As history unfolds the march of events, the sublime and majestic tread of divinity is witnessed. The hand of God is not seen, but its omnipotent grasp is felt, shaping the destiny of nations and foreordaining whatsoever comes to pass. Three elements exist in the situation called up by the interrogation—an oppressed people, a beautiful and influential woman, and a great opportunity.

The oppressed people are the exiled Jews. They are home sick and heart broken. The darkest hour has just been reached in the decree for their destruction secured by the knavery of that arch scoundrel and political trickster, Haman.

The beautiful and influential woman is Esther, a Jewess, whose wonderful charms of person have made her the favorite wife of Ahasuerus, the King.

The great opportunity is Esther's chance to be the savior of her people in their hour of dire distress, by interceding with the King and securing an annulment of the decree of death against the Jews. Will she do this? She is standing at the summit of privilege and power, lifted there by God's providence. Will she be true to her own people and her old faith, or forget both in the intoxication of her new glory?

Just there old Mordecai speaks some plain words to the child of fortune. He reminds Esther of her strange promotion from peasant to Queen, indicates that this was God's work and then bids her intercede for her oppressed people. He declares that she has come to the kingdom

for this very work. God is not after honoring Esther, but saving Israel. If Esther despises her opportunity, she will be destroyed, but God will not fail. He will set her aside and elect a worthier instrument of emancipation.

Such is the picture. Move it down the stage 2,500 years. For the exiled Jews substitute certain oppressed and down trodden of the earth to-day. For Esther substitute the American nation, whose dowry of divine favor far transcends that shown the Jewish maiden. And for the throne of Ahasuerus substitute the summit of this majestic nineteenth century. Into the midst of all this let the voice of God come with the old question: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Three significant facts stand out bold and unmistakable.

The first is the fact of America's greatness. We have known this ourselves for some time, but the world is now waking to the discovery, and learning that we are great; not because we have long rivers and wide plains and tall mountains and large lakes and limitless resources and the tendency to brag; but we are great in ideas and ideals, great in the quality of our citizenship, great in the boundless reserve force of our manhood and womanhood, great in the motives that sway our policies and in the conditions that secure our friendship.

The war with Spain revealed us to ourselves as well as to others, and the result has been to give America a position of supreme influence in the councils of the nations.

That this is not mere assumption is amply proven by the tone of the press of both Great Britain and the continent. An influential German newspaper speaks as follows:

"The conclusion of peace, which ends the Spanish-American war, marks a new epoch in history, not only for the United States, but likewise for Europe. The United States has taken an important step toward the exclusive control of the American continent; it has also reached beyond that and claimed its share of the world's affairs. Thus far there is not the slightest cause to regret the development of this power. We believe, on the other hand, it is a cause of rejoicing to all mankind. * * * The American national character wins when compared with that of other nations."

Whether we desire it or not, our country is to the front on the stage of international affairs. A second fact is that Christianity is the real basis of America's greatness. This is not mere assumption, but the conclusion which any fair-minded student of American institutions and people must reach.

This is a Christian nation, founded in faith and growing in the light that falls from the open page of the book of books. The sanctity of the Sabbath and the authority of the Bible are as much a part of the patriotic American citizen's creed as "equal rights to all and special privileges to none."

The century closes with a conspicuous demonstration of the Christian character of the nation. If this war has been characterized by one sentiment more than another, it is that most Christian sentiment that "the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please themselves." It was not for gain, nor for glory; not because the government is a republic, and American soil and climate enviable, but because the American conscience was dominated by Christian ideals, that American soldiers planted the stars and stripes on Cuban soil. What strange victories! It was to be expected that America would win in the end, but who would dare to prophesy for American valor such bloodless victories as the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Manila and Santiago? It reads like some miracle chapter from the history of the ancient Israelites, when the armies of heaven fought against the enemies of God's elect. Perhaps someone asks, "Do you believe that God is responsible for the difference in the loss of life on the American and Spanish sides during the last war?" I would answer by saying that I believe God had as much to do with this war as with any war. He had as much to do with the defeat of Spain at Santiago as he did with that of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. God is still in the world. "The world is not made, but making."

There was a Christian flavor about the whole campaign, which could not be destroyed by the political favoritism that is largely responsible for the fearful abuses that have existed in military camps. Many of the officers were de-

vout Christians and carried their religion with them into the war.

"Don't swear, boys; shoot!" said Col. Wood to his Rough Riders as they stormed the enemies' fortifications. In the midst of the war President McKinley issued a proclamation of thanksgiving and a call to prayer. It was in perfect accord with the motive and spirit of this entire war when Captain Phillip, of the battleship Texas, called his men together at the close of the fight, and said: "I wish to make confession that I have implicit faith in the officers and crew of the Texas, but my faith in you is secondary to my faith in God. We have seen what he has done for us in allowing us to achieve so great a victory, and I want to ask you all, or at least every man who has no scruples, to uncover his head with me and silently offer a word of thanks to God for His goodness to us."

America's greatness is the product of her faith in God. This is the message of our latest struggle. It is the people that make a nation great, and the faith of the people determines their character. Latin republics have, to a large extent, proven failures. A gentleman from Brazil said to me last summer: "The greatest disaster that has ever befallen Brazil was when Dom Pedro left the throne. Brazilians lack the character that must go with a republican form of government." As the outward restraints of law are diminished, the inward restraints of conscience must be increased. The highest type of manhood is essential to the life of a republic; and the greatness and stability of the republic of the United States is a tribute to the Christian character of its citizenship.

The third fact that is conspicuous at the summit of the century is America's opportunity. It is the chance to use her mighty strength and growing influence for those who need it most. It is the opportunity to befriend the weak and deal deadly blows to tyranny and wrong. It is the privilege of standing supreme and regnant for liberty, emancipated manhood, and God's eternal truth.

Definitely it is the opportunity to uplift and help the weak who have recently been brought to our door.

What shall be done with the West Indies, the Philippines, and certain islands in the Pacific—annex, protect, or

desert? The political problem presented is one thing. I have no desire to discuss that, although I see nothing in the project of larger national responsibilities to throw the nation into a spasm of nervousness. Nations grow strong as men grow, not by self-indulgence but by helping to bear the burdens of others. For two hundred years the little Netherlands, with four and a half millions of people, have peacefully and prosperously ruled the thirty four million inhabitants of the Dutch Indies. Surely 75,000,000 sovereign Americans can take on 8,000,000 Philipinos without swamping the old ship of State.

But I am concerned not with the political, but with the moral problem involved. Will America, standing at the summit of privilege and power, aid the weak and be true to her ancestral faith or forget both in the intoxication of her new glory?

The problem is wider still. The future of the race is at stake. Shall human history develop toward liberty and enlightenment or toward narrowness, intolerance and absolutism?

It is America's superb opportunity to throw her matchless influence full on the side of things that have made her great, and swing the race into line with the march of Christian civilization.

Will she do it?

The honest, patriotic mind that candidly considers the three facts mentioned will be forced to certain conclusions. The first is that for the present, at least, America is God's candidate. God is pressing her claims. She has been put to the front to champion divine policies. If so, she must be loyal to God. She must trust him more unreservedly than ever before. Sometimes the candidate of a political party betrays his constituency. That is black and infamous, but through political trickery the traitor may escape the doom he merits. But when a nation called of God to be his representative in the parliament of mankind betrays its trust, its doom is sealed.

America must be more intensely Christian than ever. It is a crisis with us as well as with these island people we are asked to befriend. The summit of the century becomes a hill of decision, and the God of nations speaks to America

as never before and says: "Choose you whom ye will serve." How shall she meet the voice of her destiny?

"Yet rise to answer, chafing in thy chair,
With soul indignant stirred and flushing brow.
Thou art God's candidate, speak soothly now,
Let every word anticipate a prayer."

America must be the savior of the weak. The only way to keep what we have is to give it to others. The only way we can save ourselves is by saving others. The message of the hour, so it seems to me, is that America must be a savior in a very definite and particular way. We cannot give our soil and climate, but we can give that which has made us—our Bible, our Christ, our faith. If Christianity is the real basis of America's greatness, then the best thing we can do for any nation is to give it Christianity. It is a new call to the evangelization of the world which God is sounding at the summit of the century. That splendid volunteer army that mustered with the fervor of true patriotism and marched to the speedy deliverance of the oppressed Spanish colonies must be followed by another, which goes in the name of the Lord, and which shall constitute the true army of occupation. Its work is the building of homes and civilization.

It is—

"The legion that never was listed,
That carries no colors or crest;
But split in a thousand detachments,
Is breaking the road for the rest."

Here is the latest motive to missions—self-preservation. We must conquer or be conquered. The fight of ideas goes on. God will not fail. If we betray him, he will set us aside and elect another from whom deliverance will come.

"Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Here, on the summit of the century, the voice of God's providence is proclaiming in thunder tones to the Christian Churches of America "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." From a throne of privilege and power builded upon all the achievements of the cen-

turies that are behind us, there must go forth the noblest endeavor the world has yet beheld for the cross of Christ and the evangelization of the race. God is face to face with the American Christian as never before, and charges him in the sight of heaven and earth to be true to his sublime and unparalleled opportunity.

But the other day the world was reading of the wild enthusiasm of the Mahdists' soldiers for their cause and leader. At a certain juncture in the battle of Omdurman, Emir Yacoule, the Khalifa's brother, with a company of dark horsemen at his back, galloped straight into the enemies' front. Then wheeling they rode furiously down the English line, flashing their scimiters and shouting defiance, while the deadly fire, pouring into their flank and rear, rapidly decimated their ranks. Retiring to an eminence, the surviving horsemen gathered around their leader and his standard, and sullenly faced again the foe. Then across the plain there came a great cloud of white-clad footmen, brandishing their huge spears and hoarsely screaming the name of Allah. They ran at full speed towards Yacoule's standard, while rifle and Maxim fire and shell from the field guns mowed them down like grass before the scythe. Rallying at last around their leader, they proudly faced death, shouting defiance until not one was left standing.

Shall Christian heroism be less loyal and Christian faith less fearless? Surely, we can do as much for our God as the Moslem for his.

May we catch the spirit of our Divine Leader who laid down his life for us, and teaches that we should lay down our lives for the brethren.

The kingdoms of the world must become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. The victorious step of divinity is in the movement of the world's events, God is marching on. Let us fall into line and keep step with our Leader.

"In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures
You and me.

As he died to make men holy, let us die to
Make men free,
While God is marching on."

Nashville, Tenn.

JAMES I. VANCE.