

The Past and the Coming Year.

The coming year promises to see in the United States a more marvelous period of commercial and industrial development than even that of the year 1902. The prediction may be safely made that American trade with the East will be doubled during the next twelve months and the United States will become the dominant power of the Pacific ocean. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that within the next decade the empire of trade and commerce will pass from the Atlantic to the Pacific shores.

Having in mind the vast strides taken by our country in comparatively a few recent years, what the volume of our commerce will be in another quarter of a century it would be foolish to predict, but it will be enormous. That the influence of America and the American people throughout the world will have increased, so that they will have become not only the great commercial nation of the world, but the greatest in political rank and power and influence and responsibility can scarcely be doubted by those who have an abiding faith in the energy and wisdom and integrity of the American citizen.

The producing powers of the United States are still in their infancy. Compare our producing area with that of the well-developed and well-tilled countries of Europe and it will be apparent at a glance that in the matter of agriculture we may and shall increase enormously the products of the soil, not only in increasing the actual product per acre, but by bringing under cultivation many millions of acres which are now non-productive.

In the matter of mines and minerals our production and productive powers have scarcely begun to show their possibilities. In all the great articles which enter into manufacture—the products of the mine, the forest and the field—we are the world's greatest producer and likely to continue so indefinitely. We have more of coal, more of iron, more of copper, more of timber, more of cotton, more of all the requirements which enter into the processes of the manufacture of articles required by the world at large, civilized or uncivilized, than any other nation. We have the skill and energy with which to turn these into manufactures, by far the greatest railway system of the world to carry them to the water's edge and a great ocean on either side to float them to the waiting millions of the world.

This is a review of what we have done in the past, and only by it can we measure or attempt to measure wonders in the way of inventions and discoveries the next few years may have in store can only dimly be guessed at. A great thinker and inventor has said of the future news-

paper: "We may, and I believe shall, have news transmission by air waves into phonographic instruments which will repeat the news of the day and record it at the same time, so that people may listen or may read as they prefer. The great force of the future is electricity, and it is in its infancy as yet. It will be used to obviate all unnecessary waste of nervous tissue, and the phono-air-wave newspapers of

which I speak will certainly be transmitted some day direct from the brains of their producers without any such manual labor as writing and without even the need of speaking them aloud."

In reviewing the record made during the past year by United States soldiers it must be remembered that while the implements of war have been vastly changed by modern in-

ventions, and modern weapons can be used at much greater distances and with more destructive effect, yet the principles of war have not changed, although skill, science and strategy to some extent take the place of valiant leadership and physical strength, and courage, in successfully using the destructive weapons of war of the present day.

During its varied experience of the

last few years on most extended fields of operation the United States army has maintained its reputation for loyalty, intelligence and valor. There have been a few instances of surprise and ambush of small detachments, but whenever it has met the enemy under ordinary circumstances it has achieved an unbroken record of success. What its future may be it is impossible to prophesy, but it is fair to

predict that it will be as commendable as its past has been glorious.

So far as money is concerned, it is reasonable to suppose that the rates of interest will vary but little in the absence of unforeseen circumstances, such as war, etc. While we continue to sell our products to Europe and get large returns, we will be compelled to seek a market for our money. The result will be the enormous development of our own resources, mineral, agricultural, including wool, cattle and cotton, and the reaching out for markets in Japan and China, South America, and in fact all of the markets that have been monopolized by England, Germany and France. Having great natural advantages over our European competitors, we will eventually rout them from these fields of trade.

The rapid growth of the great schools of applied science in the universities of America has been one of the most notable features in the educational history of the past thirty years. To this more than to any other cause is due the overshadowing success of American manufactures and commerce. Higher education is coming more and more to mean development of the highest practical effectiveness. Without abundant and thorough technical training good articles cannot be produced in competition with the world. Navies, tariffs, trusts and other devices cannot take the place of expert knowledge.

The past year has been remarkable for a sudden and a practical advance in the marvelous history of the wireless telegraph. The scientific achievement which had been dreamed of for nearly half a century, and only within late years had shown itself something better than a dream, has given the most definite and the most encouraging evidences of its claim to be regarded as one of the world's greatest accomplishments in the domain of practical science. Something of the same kind, although in a lesser degree, may be said of the attempt to construct a flying machine, that project which had its beginning, so far as we know, in the realms of classic fable, and may have had its beginning for aught we know in days long before the gods of Greece had ever come to be classified and worshiped.

It is not too much to say that whatever may come of this ever-renewing enterprise, the year saw the most practical evidence of its possibility yet given to the world. The year cannot boast of any great triumphs entirely its own in the realms of literature and art. Its literary and artistic firmament has not indeed been clouded, but no new star of the first magnitude, no blazing comet even, has arisen on the field of mortal vision.



Christmas Decorations.

Ax and knife have been doing their vandal work in the fair woods to provide us with the pine and fir, holly, laurel, bay and mistletoe. Why? Because of the Christmas season; because of the festival of rejoicing.

But why these green things? Why the gifts on the branches of pine? Why the holly about the windows, that it may be seen from without, and the laurel over the hearthstone? Why above all and the center of all, these green and living growths, the mistletoe bough?

Christmas seized upon these things for the celebration of the festival not because they were green, but because of the power that held them green, that kept them alive, that preserved in them the beauty of life, notwithstanding the snow and sleet, the wind and chilling rain and the withering blast.

In the gracious protection that was granted to these children of the parish a great and beneficent power was seen to be employed.

Those who celebrated the Christmaside wanted the benefit of this power for their own protection and preservation, so they took to themselves the emblems of it—surrounded themselves with them, brightened their homes with them and rejoiced amid their branches.

It is the spirit of these living growths that appeals to us when all the rest of inanimate nature appears to be sleeping under the mantle of winter. Before Christmas was, the spirits behind the green were believed in by an imaginative people, and the great festival adopted them.

The ancient Druids believed in the spirits of the holly, of the laurel, of the bay and of the great green trees that formed the walls and living arches of their temples. To them these things were peopled with sylvan spirits that loved the growths and kept them green by protecting them from winter frosts. They took the branches within their dwelling, believing that the spirits would follow and there exercise their protecting care.

Among these spirits they believe none to be more powerful or capable of bringing greater blessing than those of the mistletoe. Blessed the man and maid who met beneath the mistletoe bough.

These beliefs have gone from the world, but we cling to the emblems of them, and rejoice amid them at the Christmas celebration.

And therefore we deck our houses to-day with the symbols of the simple beliefs of a long past age.

A New Year.

It was New Year's Eve; a mild, breezeless night swathed and muffled in a mantle of salt fog which dimmed the glare of the electric lights on either shore, changing them for the time into nebulous globes of luminous beauty, and hung like a soft gray curtain around the big ferry boat that, shrieking hoarse warnings of its menacing presence, was plowing its way heavily through the black water of San Francisco bay.

Only one passenger was braving the dampness of the open forward deck, and he sat on the side next Goat Island, just in front of the churning wheel, with his coat collar turned up and his hat pulled down over his eyes, and murder—self-murder—in his heart.

The world had gone wrong with him in every way. He had wasted his small patrimony in dissipation, and when it was gone the woman who had helped him scatter it had thrown him over for another victim. For the last

week he had been drinking heavily to "drown his sorrow," but not succeeding he had come to the benumbed conclusion that the next best thing was to drown himself. For this reason he was sitting on the Goat Island side of the ferry boat and waiting—dominated by the ghastly whim which had sent so many others overboard at that same spot—until the wheel paddles should beat along the oar of the well known "graveyard" by the bay.

The saloon door opened and a girl and an old man, both laden with bundles, came out—the man with a rancher's sun-brown face, stooping shoulders and toil-hardened hands, the girl, plainly his daughter, tall, straight and comely after the wholesome, honest country fashion.

"Why, Jim!" she exclaimed with frank friendliness; and then: "How oddly things happen! This is the first time I've come down to the bay since I came back from Nevada, and here you are, that none of us have seen or heard of for over three years!"

She looked with sudden comprehension at his worn face, his somber eyes and his tremulous hands, and then as he raised his hat and turned to leave she caught his sleeve with timid, entreating fingers.

"Come and begin the New Year with us," she said. "The city has not been kind to you, but the country always was. You will grow back to your old self up in the foothills, and afterward—if you care to stay—there is work in plenty."

He looked down at her upturned face and the insistent voices that had all day been calling him from the bay's always yearning "graveyard" grew fainter and died into silence.

"Come with us," echoed the father, and the light pressure of the girl's fingers on his arm held him captive.

The train shuddered into motion, and then, moving faster and faster through the crosslights of the deserted pier, bore the three away toward the beckoning promise of the New Year.—Florence Matheson.

New Year Superstitions.

With the exception of All-Saints' Day there is no time in the whole twelvemonth about which so many superstitions cluster as New Year's. Some form of divination to foretell the future is practiced in almost every land on January 1. This, of course, is practically the case with young people who desire to know whether they will get married during the coming year or soon thereafter.

In the country districts of England and Germany there is a tea and coffee test which is most satisfactory. A teaspoon is balanced carefully on the edge of a cup. Then tea or coffee, as the case may be, is dropped into it, drop by drop. Every drop that the spoon will hold without losing its balance means another year before the wedding. One or two large drops will usually upset the spoon, and so this is a very popular way of looking into the future, especially with maidens who are reaching mature years.

The Boy's Frankness.

It happened over in a city mission last year, and it made such a sensation in its own way that it bids fair to become one of the Christmas classics of the neighborhood.

They were having the Christmas tree in the Sunday school room, and the beautiful green cone-shaped fir was ablaze with lights, glittering with gay decorations and loaded down with tokens of affection.

Jimmie Smith, a freckle-faced youth of some eleven winters, sat with some of his chosen companions on a bench just in front of his parents, nearly in the center of the hall. The Smiths—these particular Smiths, at least—were comparatively recent additions to the church family, but they had already achieved a mild sort of popularity among their new acquaintances, for they dressed well, apparently lived well and were, seemingly, in every way "nice people to know."

Their gifts to each other on this public occasion had been expensive and elegant enough to fill the minds of all present with respectful admiration, in some cases shadowed by a faint cloud of envy. Mrs. Smith had received a flashing solitaire diamond ring from her loving lord, and had presented him with a gold match safe and a silver paper cutter; and soon after the name of their only son and heir was loudly proclaimed by the stentorian-voiced young man who played the part of an Aaron for the rubicund and smiling dispenser of presents.

A good-sized morocco case was young Smith's regard for plowing his way to the tree. "Jimmie Smith, from his father and mother," the young man read from the card attached as he handed the gift to the boy, who, grinning widely, hurried back to his seat.

"Hully gee! Mebbe it's a baseball!" suggested one of the "Dauntless nine" as a crowd of small boys closed in around their extremely interesting looking covering. But it wasn't. It was a large solid silver, gold-lined mug, with Jimmie's name ornately engraved on its glistening front. Truly a fine present for any boy, but Jimmie some way didn't seem to appreciate it.

Quoth he loudly and clearly: "It's the same darned old mug that Uncle Frank gave me when I was a baby! I don't see what in time you two old folks wanted to fool me this way for!"

And some way the glories of the diamond ring and the gold match safe and the silver paper cutter seemed far less dazzling after that innocently indignant little speech.