

India After the War

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Nineteen months have passed since the outbreak of the war, and ever since its commencement, many politicians, journalists and other enlightened and leading men have given a free rein to their imagination and indulged in much interesting speculation as to the future map of Europe. The entry of Turkey on the arena of war introduced a new and important element into the terrible conflict; and since then, speculation has also been rife as to the fate of the ancient Turkish Empire. The tendency to penetrate into the future, with a view to ascertaining beforehand what the workings of Divine Providence may probably be, is an eternal element of human nature; and it is but natural that men with any pretensions to knowledge and insight, should try to anticipate, according to their lights and perhaps according to their wishes and preconceived notions, the probable course of history. That the present war is one of the greatest events that have ever taken place in the world's history can hardly admit of doubt; and, like all great events, it is, of course, bound to have far-reaching effects upon the future development of the human race. But what those effects will be, precisely, lies in the womb of Time. A disturbing factor which might upset all reasonable calculations, is the fact that nations, like individuals, are in the habit of leaving things half done. To-day, the Allies seem determined to carry on the war to a finish, and to destroy Prussian militarism for ever. But there is no knowing whether the vicissitudes of war and even the sheer ennui that Time brings on may not abate that determination a little, or that the inevitable strain of war may not lead the combatants to conclude an unsatisfactory peace. Moreover, the situation is complicated by the fact that the policy of Russia does not seem to be as purely defensive and disinterested as that of England and France, and that, consequently, she may get intoxicated with victory and make, at the time of settling the terms of peace, demands that would, perhaps sow the seeds of future trouble. The question of Turkey will also have to be handled with great wisdom and self-restraint. No one will question the truth of Mr. Asquith's remark that the Ottoman Empire has acted as a "blight which for generations past has withered some of the fairest regions." The Young Turks have no doubt committed an act of egregious folly in playing into the hands of Germany and allowing themselves to be drawn into the war, though, in justice to them, it must be admitted that their suspicions of Russia are not quite unwarranted. However, the destruction of the Turkish Empire itself will give rise to a new and serious problem, which cannot fail to be a source of infinite trouble in the future. But it is significant to note that the Indian Mohammedans, in their loyalty to the British Crown has not been shaken in the least by the ill-advised action of Turkey. The issues that the war has raised are thus intensely complicated, and I may be pardoned for a little misgiving that the ultimate results of the war may, unfortunately, not turn out to be as satisfactory as we all expect them to be at present. I hope I am wrong in my hypothesis.

I feel all the greater hesitation in thinking that the present war will bring in a millenium, because I notice a certain narrowness of outlook in the utterances of British statesmen regarding the issues and the results of the war, and the consequent absences, valueness, or inadequacy of recognition of the effects that the war may reasonably be expected to produce upon the future of the Asiatic nations. European statesmen do not yet seem to have fully realized that the pivot of the European situation lies really in Asia, that a satisfactory solution of the international problems of Europe depends, in the long run, upon a satisfactory solution of the problems of Asia. In the final analysis, the present war has been waged by Germany because she desires to acquire, in the fullness of time, supremacy in Asia, which will bring her, in its train, supremacy in the whole world. She feels that her superior merits and powers as a nation justly entitle her to the first place in the world, which England enjoys at present, and which she owes to her supremacy in Asia. Russia, too, is not free from similar ambitious designs, as witness her policy in Persia and China. So long as Asia is looked upon as a field for exploitation by the white races, and so long as the Asiatic races are kept

away from their legitimate inheritance, it is futile to expect cessation of mutual jealousies, suspicions and bickerings among the powerful European nations. They will go on warring with one another until their ultimate objects are fully accomplished, or thoroughly frustrated. It is the subjection of Asia that has made them enemies, and they will not become friends so long as the subjection lasts. This true motive power of European conflicts has not received full recognition at the hands of most European statesmen, with the result that they have not yet been able to realize the full significance of the present war, or the proper ways and means whereby the chances of war in the future may be minimized.

Whatever may be the reconstruction of the map of Europe, as a result of the war, to an Indian it will have failed of its full purpose, if it does not lead to the establishment of better relations between India and the British Empire. India is nobly doing her duty by the Empire in the present crisis, and she is doing it in a way that has justly evoked the unqualified admiration and appreciation of her rulers. One cannot but be struck by the fact that it was not in India, but in the self-governing South Africa, that sedition reared its head owing to the war. The unanimous rally of the Indian people for the defence of the Empire is in striking contrast with the rebellious spirit displayed by a section of the Boers in South Africa. It is gratifying to note that universal praises have been showered upon the Indian people for their magnanimous attitude in the war. And it is no less gratifying to observe that some of the leaders of opinion in England have had the fair sense and frankness to declare that the noble and chivalrous conduct of India in the war ought not to go unrecognized. And yet an Indian cannot but note with some regret that responsible British statesmen who direct Indian policy should not have realized the full import of India's enthusiastic support of the British Raj in the present crisis. For instance, we missed in Lord Crewe's address to the young members of the Indian Civil Service, that comprehensive grasp of the rationale of the Indian attitude which we had a right to expect from a statesman of his stamp. His Lordship said that "it is to the quality and character of the Indian Civil Service that we must look for the key to India's present attitude of loyalty and devotion." Now, we all freely recognize the high quality and character of the Indian Civil Service, and it is quite true that if the administration of India had been marked by inefficiency and oppression, the attitude of India would not have been characterized by such splendid loyalty and devotion. But to attribute India's present attitude wholly and solely to the merits of the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy is to ignore some of the deeper and nobler springs of that attitude. India is thoroughly loyal to the British Raj at the present juncture, not because of the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy, but in spite of it. That bureaucracy has no doubt been efficient, so far as the every-day work of administration is concerned, but more often than not it has proved an enemy of India's progress. Mr. Roberts, the Under-Secretary of State for India, indeed struck a higher and truer note than Lord Crewe, when he said that "a partnership in spirit with us on the battlefield could not but alter the angle from which henceforth we could regard problems of the Government of India. . . . Common endeavor in these days will enable India to realize that she is occupying and is destined to occupy, a place in the Empire worthy alike of her ancient civilization, the valor of her fighting races, and the patriotism of her sons." These sentiments are undoubtedly pitched in a higher key, but their defect is that they are marked by a certain vagueness which, however, proper in the mouth of a responsible statesman in ordinary times, is a little irritating at the present juncture. We have had plenty of noble sentiments expressed by British statesmen ever since the commencement of British rule; what we want is not the stone of such sentimental platitudes, but the bread of definite assurances and practical action. Such sentiments, however, statesmanlike and noble, are, after all, obiter dicta; and though they may have some influence upon the moulding of policy, they cannot satisfy the yearnings of our hearts.

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