

towards an Oriental despotism has exhibited itself. The tendency hitherto has been rather in the opposite direction, and has resulted in the highest degree of local autonomy which any political organisation has yet developed. The apprehension then that Imperialism necessarily involves a loss of civil liberty would seem to be due to a failure to appreciate the fact that empires may be of many kinds; and to the same confusion of thought is probably due the cognate apprehension that Imperialism necessarily tends to militarism.

Still, so strong and deeply felt is this apprehension, that the cry of our anti-Imperialists against militarism and aggression is fast becoming one of those pernicious catchwords which do more than any false argument to obscure political issues. We have had too many of them in recent years to be ignorant of their dangerous effects. Where such phrases once enter reason flies out of the window, and it is incumbent upon every earnest man to do his best that the great Imperial questions with which we are now confronted should not be darkened by any similar cloud.

The great political fact of the world, to which the closing years of the century have floated us, is undoubtedly the increasing clearness and vigour of the movement which is grouping the peoples of the earth into a few great empires. So far as the study of the past will shed a beam for us into the future, it seems to reveal to us that the system of nations has had its day, and that a system of empires has begun. If this be so, we cannot escape the task of deciding what our attitude to that movement is to be. All parties must accept the fact and take their lines of relation, and, above all, they must take them with open eyes, so far as human reason will permit, and beware of phrases falsely axiomatic, that are not incontestably true.

Let us, then, try to consider how much of truth and how much of falsehood is contained in this insidious phrase, "militarism and aggression." In the first place, what does it