

The Strangeness of the Times

(Rev. J. T. Ferguson, D.D.)

It is a curious feature of the present day that human society seems to be subject to cross-currents of opinion and sentiment, the movement of which perplexes the sanest judgment. The London Spectator recently discussed the question whether the human race could simultaneously go mad, and pointed to the immense unrest of the nations in justification. It is better to cherish the hope, and if possible the belief, that what we see are stirrings of a larger life and the preparation for nobler conditions. But meanwhile the history of the Twentieth century gives only an insecure basis from which to make forecasts of the future. A clever French prophetess at the beginning of this year recalled that she had foretold that 1911 would prove the Twilight Year for mankind, and she declared that the present would be the Black Year for the nations. Mid-summer is now with us, and it can scarcely be said that the colour of courts has been altogether sombre. It looks rather as if twilight were still lingering, and anxious eyes peer wistfully in search of indications of what is to be.

Peace and War.

During the present century there have occurred together an apparently powerful movement towards the promotion of universal peace and an immense assiduity on the part of governments in preparation for war. The reign of King Edward VII, it was hoped, would go down to history as the reign of an eminent peacemaker, and yet the results of the policy associated with his name can scarcely be regarded as having altogether tended to the securing of peace in Europe. Lord Rosebery speaks dismally of the

drawing near of what may prove to be an Armageddon and in London premiums of insurance against the risk of war between Great Britain, Germany and France are said to be rising. The same decade which saw the issuing of the Czar's rescript regarding disarmament saw his armies engaged in a struggle of perhaps unprecedented dimensions with the forces of the Japanese Empire. And scarcely had Europe recovered her equanimity after the seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when most of the Western European nations were within an ace of being called to arms in connection with the dispute about Morocco. With the friends of peace and arbitration meeting in congresses and conferences, and the world deluged with pamphlets proving the unprofitableness of war to any nation, the Italian government suddenly declared war against the Turkish Empire, and plunged its own suffering people into an incalculable expense in the endeavour to conquer the Turkish troops and occupy Tripoli. The friends of peace gasped as they witnessed this act of aggression, and the Italian people are likely to groan as they reap its consequences. The struggle for sea-power is keeping the shipbuilders busy among the maritime nations, and Great Britain, through Mr. Winston Churchill, speaks words of warning and defiance to Germany just as if no peace congress had met at the Hague and "meek-eyed peace" had taken her journey into a far country.

The Socialistic Trend v. Individualism

Turning in another direction the mind is fascinated by the energy and