

For the REVIEW].

Russia or England?

A glance through the indexes of any leading periodical will show, probably, at least one article for every year's issue on what is generally known as "The Eastern Question."

That question, once—"Shall the Turk keep his foothold in Europe or no?"—seems to have advanced one step nearer to a final answer in assuming the form—"Who shall drive him out?"

So at least it is stated in a very interesting article in the *Atlantic* for June, in which Benjamin Ide Wheeler deals with Greece and the Eastern Question.

The writer accounts for the strong interest with which the world in general regards Greek interference with Crete, on the ground that it is but the first blow in the inevitable and, as he considers it, imminent struggle between East and West.

We may venture to suggest in passing, that Mr. Wheeler might have made his points better if he had not attempted to cover so much ground, nor drawn such hard and fast lines as he has done in history and geography. Also, he has not made it quite clear whether he considers Russia an eastern or a western power. But on the whole the article is suggestive, and in its conclusions strong; and a useful summary for those who have not time to study out for themselves all the complications of this difficult matter.

"The Eastern Question," says Mr. Wheeler, "is not a question of to-day or of yesterday. It is not a problem merely of the possession of Constantinople. It is a question which in its reality concerns the perennial antithesis between Occidentalism and Orientalism, and which in its practical statement for us and ours means this: Who is to lead, who is to champion, who is to represent Occidentalism in its inevitable conflicts with Orientalism."

The boundary line between these two influences is placed at the *Ægean* and the *Bosphorus*, and the contrast between the two is forcibly drawn between the *Time land* and the *Time-less land*.

"Over that frontier influences have gone from one to the other. Greece stood there at the gateway and whatever came from Asia to Europe came through it. It is an old rule of history that the people which has held that gate has determined the development of European civilization."

Mr. Wheeler thinks that the notion "Westward the course of Empire takes its way" is rather misleading, and uses the figure of a lamp wick thrust into the oil which it draws up to the flame, to illustrate the successive movements from west to east and from east to west. Power moved toward the sun, but only to flow back bringing with it to the western lands—knowledge.

"When the Aryan races first came in contact with the Asiatic peoples they were undoubtedly vastly inferior in cultivation and in the arts of settled life, but very soon, on more intimate contact, they absorbed the Asiatic civilization and passed it on to those behind them as by capillary attraction.

"The Greeks were the first to reach the boundaries of the Orient by the *Ægean*. Through them, when Rome pushed her empire eastward, civilization moved up the wick into Italy; the Gaul, passing over the Alps into the Po valley, drew back the dangerous oil into France; finally, the Teuton, pushing down into Italy, made it a way into the north countries, and that meant ultimately the civilization of Germany. This is the lesson of early European civilization: will, force, empire came down from the north; refinement, sense of form in life, in manners, in thought, and in the arts of settled life moved back in the reverse of their track."

This general truth is exemplified in detail by the writer,—and Greek colonization in Asia, the Persian invasions, the conquests of Alexander, are cited, and, more strikingly still, the Roman conquests in the east preparing the road by which Christianity marched into the west. And because of Rome's possession of the great gateway, European philosophy, art and Christianity—its whole civilization was Latinized. "From this may we not learn how important it has been for the civilized world of the west, who sat at the gate by the *Ægean*? For the one who controlled that gateway put his stamp on what came through it."

It is a far cry from Alexander the Great to Mahomet, but Mr. Wheeler takes the wave of Mahometan power which swept over the south and east of Europe, as the reaction from Alexander's inroads in the east.

That power which once reached through Spain to France and through Greece to the gates of Vienna, now holds only what is known as Turkey.

"The Persian Empire," we read, "survived the defeats of Salamis and Platea for five generations, so long as the Greeks could not agree among themselves as to who should be their leader; so Turkey carries in Europe because the forces of modern Occidentalism are not united under leadership. So long as the forces of Occidentalism are disunited, or merely united in a sham accord, the Turkish barrier will deny the western world entrance to Asia, but when the leader emerges Occidentalism will straightway push out over Alexander's track to the Persian Gulf and this time it will build its roads with iron. Who is to be that leader? It is to hear the answer to this question that the world is waiting now."

The data of the problem are then discussed, the political spirit of Turkey is shown to be thoroughly Oriental—the main point being that the Oriental conception of government is of something "transcendent above and outside the people and not immanent, a power within the people." This being the case there is an