

Review

IN THE EAST

The war to end war has already had two very clearly marked consequences; it has broken down the wall that shut Asia away from Europe, and it has awakened inquiry and mistrust in the minds of common men. Good may come of it at length; but it will not be the good which we intended. It may be that, in destroying the power of the two European states which stood as a rampart between us and the unknown and undesired East, we have contributed to the spread of civilizing ideas, though it should lie beyond our power to control the manner of their spreading. Hitherto we have exported civilization as a commodity to the East, now the East sees a way open by which to come and choose according to a wakening taste. The Russian has been scratched and the Tartar appears; while in all those lands lying southwardly from Russia to the Indian Ocean, where men have lived in the saddle since the days of Sargon, the fires of war smoulder or flame, not to be quenched by famine or pestilence. In the West, war is a commercial enterprise controlled by commercial interests, and waxes with the hope of gain and wanes at the prospect of loss. But in the middle East, war is a cult, the vindication of an ideal, and is kindled or quenched by causes which we cannot weigh. This difference of attitude of East and West is not contemplated in our formula of the winning value of the last dollar, a formula deduced solely from the commercial wars of the west.

The days are long past when those lands had a highly organized life to be let out by severing an artery; when Persia or Mesopotamia might be conquered and held by attachments of vital interests. National life scarcely exists there, but tribal life is strong. The land is enchanted, haunted by the ghosts of its own vanished empires; and has been the grave of every power that conquered it. Alexander swept it, from Phœnicia to the Punjab and back again, calling it his Eastern Empire, though his writ ran only in a few fortified towns, and not even there for long. Greece dates her fall from the dissipation of her national energies and the corruption of her national customs consequent upon that blazing of Alexander's ambition. When Greek sway gave place to Roman, men and treasures were poured into Asia. Battles were won and lost, reputations were made and marred; a few barren triumphs to create discord at home, innumerable slaves and the endless chain of moving legionaries, bearing an infection

from the East before which the old Ramnian integrity paled and perished; and when Rome had gone the way of Greece the tribesmen of the Oriens were back in the old haunts. Greece and Rome had dislocated their own lives to conquer the East and in each case the conquerer was ruined.

Nor did the far different ambition of the Crusaders save them from the same destiny. Hosts rose up from the desert sands and coalesced on principles to which the balance of trade gives no clue, and the conquest was voided in, the moment of its accomplishment. Since the days of the Crusaders these lands have been ravaged by conquerors whose names and memories are almost a myth, yet the old valor that made the squares of Darius and the flying columns of Miltiades, remains,—though it spend itself now in the tribal feud, which begins about a talisman and ends when the last Ma'dan falls at the last Bethel, or the last Bedouin perishes on the last grazing ground of his flock. The West is decrepit and senile and cynical, and the ancient East is young. It feeds on the flesh of kids, and fruits, and locusts; it drinks milk, and wine, and sylvan honey; it is filled with fierce life from the Sun. Behind the disconcerting simplicity on its frank eyes there lurks a quick cunning, and it laughs in its Assyrian beard at the worries of its foreign schoolmasters. If we salaam the Sheriff of Mecca and call him the King of Hedjez, he will salaam us in turn and sign our compacts, though he knows he cannot deliver the goods, and suspects that we know it, too. Presently his son appears in London, to point out that the British mandate over Mesopotamia violates the pledges given his father when the latter revolted from Turkey,—a negligible figure. I venture the guess that when next we hear of him he will be coming up from the desert in a cloud of dust to put to the sword some village that trusted in the guarantees of our protection.

Waving, as irrelevant, the ethical question involved in grabbing the homeland of a people unorganized for defence, I merely point out that we are not anywhere dealing with peoples now quite as childish as they were six years ago. Our propaganda has focused attention on European purposes. The policy of buffer states and "divide et impera" is becoming clear to them; so that, while we hold a satrap Porte at Constantinople the national spirit of Turkey is with Kernal Pasha at Angora, the Emir of Afghanistan writes to offer his army for the defence of "our brothers," and the Pan-Islamic conference is much nearer in sentiment to him than to any Western power whatever.

All of which helps to interpret a remarkable conference held

at Baku last September. The delegates, some nineteen hundred in number, from Turkey, Persia, Armenia, Georgia, Arabia, Kurdistan, China, India and Corea, were addressed by Zinoviev, President of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. It is not necessary to quote from the discourse, which dealt with the popular aspects of Communism, plainly and forcibly. One can divine that it boded no good to Capitalism, and one is not surprised that England was singled out as the special offender against whom a holy war is to be waged till the "robber's house is set on fire." Since then Soviet governments have been set up in Georgia and Armenia, negotiations looking toward the same end are going on with Persia, the hand of Kemal Pasha is being strengthened and marked unrest has developed in India.

IN THE WEST

It is the fashion in the Canadian Press to profess ignorance of the motives behind the Naval program of the United States. Against whom are they building, they ask. Now the United States cannot be more specific in their explanations than to say that they need a strong first line of defence. Against whom? Against whoso comes first.

We gain nothing by ignoring the patent fact that America has turned her back on Europe, in disgust. The degrees by which they have reached this position stand out so clear in the events of the last six years, that any man whose occupation brought him in contact with world happenings stands condemned of hypocrisy by pretending not to see. Nelson put the glass to the blind eye, and said, "I really do not see the signal, Hardy"; but, in the circumstances, the action was brave and wise. In the present circumstance it is neither the one nor the other.

America had a traditional policy of non-interference in Old World affairs. Wilson was elected to a second term because he had kept the nation out of war. He then began to coin phrases which hit the popular fancy, so that people came to regard him as an apostle of humanity among nations. Out of admiration for his utterances grew trust in his wisdom and confidence in his power to effect his aims, so that, when he declared war, the nation, though stunned, accepted the sacrifice and fought bravely for the vision of a new earth. When peace came and Wilson sailed for Europe, with his fourteen points, America felt that a glorious and unselfish work was about to be crowned and consolidated. Quite pardonably they revelled in the vision of Wilson as a lion-tamer among the wild beasts of

European diplomacy. Judge how they felt when he stood revealed as a distributor, among the jackals and hyenas, of those fragments of the prey for which the lions and tigers had no taste. "Never again," was the sentence registered; nor did the execution lag far behind. No man, in the history of America's public life, has been so utterly repudiated as Wilson.

So America will get back to domestic duties and the Munroe Doctrine, after what she regards as a too costly orgy of uplift. She will consolidate her interests with the other American Republics, and together they will say "hands off America." Is it not significant that Argentina, the most influential of the sister Republics, has withdrawn from the League of Nations, and that on a principle which does her much honor? Is it not significant that two of these Republics, members of the League, who had gone to war in disregard of its provisions, have adjusted their differences at the request of the United States? In face of all this a large section of Canadian papers seem to think they are doing their duty towards their readers if they anathematize the Hearst publications, which really express the popular sentiment, though somewhat robustly; and if they quote the oracles of another section of the American Press as representing the true inwardness of Americanism, while every event has proved them to be false prophets. This procedure only aggravates the ills which they seek to cure. They would perhaps do this country some service, and they would certainly maintain a much more dignified position, if they frankly recognized that America has repudiated the idea of a Pan-Anglo-Saxon Alliance.

