THE NEAR EASTERN RIDDLE

I. THE TURKISH QUESTION

By Major-General Lord Edward Gleichen

Broadly speaking, the object of the Lausanne Conference now sitting is to effect a peaceful settlement in the Near and Middle East, acceptable to all Powers concerned and leaving as few sore memories as possible behind it. In view of the conflicting interests at stake this is verily a herculean task, which besides strength necessitates both understanding and tact in the highest degree.

Let us deal here only with Turkey.

Turkey has to be given frontiers inside which to develop her new national consciousness; she must be helped by unselfish European advisers and encouraged to trade with the world, yet without being exploited by one nationality more than another; she must be led to treat her Christian minorities with consideration, as long as they behave themselves and do not intrigue against her; she must lay down a system of justice which will be acceptable to all nationalities; and she must allow passage to trading-vessels—at all events in peace time—through her Straits.

Let us try to lay down the broad lines.

Bulgaria has to be given an outlet to the Ægean for her trade, and induced to live quietly with her neighbours.

Greece has to learn that she is not such a great Power as she imagined, and that she must not rely in practical matters on the vapourings of well-meaning, but totally uninstructed, Philhellenes in the West of Europe. Her coat, in short, must be cut according to her cloth; she must be taught that she has quite enough country already to deal with, and that the sooner she brings it into order the better.

Russia must be allowed to have her say in the matter of the Straits, which, after all, are of vital importance to her; she must be prevented from obtaining an unnatural influence over Turkey, and must be restrained from taking advantage of the Conference to push her Bolshevist intrigues.

The rights of the Arab peoples must be safeguarded, whether against the Jews in Palestine, the French in Syria, or the Turks or even British in Mesopotamia.

Given goodwill on all sides, these objects in course of time will be attained. But it will require the most careful steering and the greatest delicacy of handling to avoid wrecking the ship of the Conference on the rocks of intrigue and covetousness on the one hand, and intransigence and violence on the other.

After all, things are not so bad. Turkey, whom our late Premier and other panic-mongers have consistently held up as the enemy of Christendom and as desirous of running *amok* in the Balkans, has, in spite of the ignorant and loud-mouthed deputies at Angora, no intention of attacking anyone if she can help it. Why should she? She has had eleven years of devastating war, has lost hundreds of thousands of her population and huge slices of her territory, has but a small army, and has no money. What she wants is to be left alone to exploit her new-found nationality and to settle down into a modernized State capable of holding her own, but preponderant in the Muslim world. Granting that at times she may not be going to work in the best way, still no State has ever been born ready-made, and she must work out her own salvation.

Recent Turkish demands for the expulsion of Greeks and Armenians from her territory are, of course, worse than foolish, for these hated nationalities are absolutely necessary for the development of commerce and for the most ordinary business transactions among her people; and Turkey, being an agricultural and occasionally militant, but never a trading, community, could not possibly do

without them. Nor can she do without other Christians, both as advisers in the higher tasks of government and for providing the capital necessary for her development. It is therefore clear that when she comes to grips with the real task of forming a modern State she will have to recognize that it cannot be done by Turks alone, and will have to turn to others for help.

And here it is that she will turn, eventually, to her old friend England. Turkey is already getting tired of France, whose professions of amity, she is beginning to see, were mostly based on the desire for concessions and financial exploitation on the hardest of terms. Nor did the Turks, as soldiers, approve of the French (and Italians) clearing out of the neutral zones when threatened by a Turkish advance, and leaving ourselves to bear the brunt of a possible attack. The Turk likes an opponent that he can respect, and the British rose high in his estimation for their sturdy action on the Straits. Moreover, in a recent financial transaction, a certain concession for, say, £50,000 was offered to a French group. The French tried to get it for much less, and haggled until the Turks were tired of them. The latter then offered it to a British group, who, after carefully examining the matter, came to the conclusion that £50,000 would not be a sufficient sum wherewith to develop the concern, and offered to provide a capital of three times that amount or more. Is it surprising that the story speedily became known, and that (figuratively) there was a boom in British stock?

Provided that certain things happen, we shall not have very long to wait for a revival of British trade in the Levant, nor for British influence to make itself again felt in Constantinople. But the proviso is important. It is that we must treat the Turks with far-sighted sympathy in their efforts to enter into the comity of nations. Troubles there are bound to be. The Turkish fez is beginning to fit too tight, and with an unlimited belief in their own powers, the Angora assembly are likely to give trouble

before they quieten down. But, given that they show a desire for our friendship—as they will—and given that they make no preposterous demands, a little sympathy will go a long way. The Turk thinks a great deal of us, and a little personal hospitality and courtesy dispensed, and a few friendly letters, will effect more than many protocols.

Finally, regarding the religious question, it must be remembered that Turkey does not represent a fanatical Islam. Religion plays but a small part in their scheme of modern nationality. The Khalifate has been an appanage of their royal dynasty for the last four hundred years, and they are, consequently, determined to retain it for political purposes, in order to secure the control of the Muslim world. But although appeal has often been made, ere now, to Islam in order to stir up enmity where required against Christian nations, the Muhammadan faith is not so much ensouled among the Turks as among, say, the Arabs, and their present rulers are quite modern enough to see that their State cannot be based on the Muslim faith alone.

II. THE NEAR EAST

By Lieut.-Colonel A. C. Yate

During the four years' duration of the Great War one bond of unanimity held sway; it was the determination of each group of belligerents to issue victorious from the struggle. Once the Armistice was proclaimed, that bond of union lost its power. The United States of America, for instance, very soon made it clear that she meant to cut herself clear of all European complications. National politics are proverbially and even excusably selfish, but the conduct of the United States, both before, during, and after their participation in the war, was a signal proof that blood is *not* thicker than water. And, after all, what percentage of the blood of the population of those States is British? Canada keeps Brother Jonathan well at arm's

length. Platform oratory persistently proclaims that brotherhood of Briton and American, but there sentiment ends and business begins. Throughout the war America had a strict eye to business, and that eye has lost none of its strictness since the Armistice. Very recently Mr. Child's insistence that, where American commerce goes, American naval power must be able to follow, has been acclaimed as proof of the will of the United States to associate itself with the policy of the Allies with regard to the Ægeo-Euxine Straits; but it will probably be found that this expression of policy commits Mr. Child's Government to no responsibility.

We are here, however, to consider not the Near West, but the Near East, and at this moment the pivot upon which the future of the Near East turns is Turkey. At the close of the year 1918 the Allies, and amongst the Allies most conspicuously Great Britain, seemed to hold the destinies of Turkey in the hollow of their hands. Did anyone then doubt that the future of Constantinople and the Straits was entirely at the mercy of the Allies? And within the last few months it was Kemalist Turkey that seemed almost to hold the Allies in the hollow of her hand.

As far as we can judge—and admittedly we have but little solid knowledge to guide our judgment—it is the Lloyd-Georgian policy that paved the way to that disunion among the Allies which gave Kemalist Turkey that opening of which it so astutely and effectively took advantage. There are men whose names live in history as those of saviours of their country and nation, and I take it that that of Mustapha Kemal will live as such.

When the Allied Conference first met in Paris, it was the personal magnetism and eloquence of M. Venizelos that stirred and won the hearts of its members, and so paved the way for that aggressive policy in Asia Minor, the failure of which Greece is to-day deploring. I have before me a letter from an unofficial but expert witness of the scene which is a silent tribute to the Demosthenes of his

day. It is perfectly conceivable that the British statesman who at a most critical moment of the war stepped in to guide his own country to victory, should see in Greece an instrument for permanently reducing Turkey to powerlessness. Time has shown that his political acumen was at fault; and indeed, the moment that Greece threw over Venizelos and brought back King Constantine should have been warning enough for him. I have heard even a Turk say that, if Constantine had been wise, he would, the moment that his nation recalled him, have abandoned the policy upon which Venizelos had embarked. How much more essential was it that a British statesman should stand aloof from anything in which King Constantine played a leading part! It has long been hinted, and it is now generally admitted, that the Lloyd-Georgian policy as regards Turkey and Greece had the approval neither of his Cabinet nor his Army Council. Venizelos we all know, but what was the secret of the influence of Sir Bazil Zaharoff? That remains a theme for uncharitable surmise.

Meantime the Islamic storm was brooding and waxing mightily. The two countries in this world that perhaps owed most to Great Britain for their financial and commercial development and their administrative progress, India and Egypt, were alike agitating for increased independence. The result we see to-day. Egypt is independent, and to the Indian claim of "India for the Indians" marked concessions have been made. The fact is that to-day, throughout the world, the races which for a century or more have been content to submit themselves to the control and guidance of races of the Caucasian type, are now claiming emancipation and equality.

The Indian in India and the Dominions, the heterogeneous races of Africa are developing the self-assertive characteristics which are the product of Western education and of contact with Western peoples. Mr. Robert Williams, when he lectured to the Central Asian Society on the "Cape to Cairo Railway," and on the influence which

European civilization and enterprise were exercising on the African native, made it perfectly clear to his British audience that the time was not far distant when the African, like the Indian and Egyptian, would claim independence and equality with the Aryan. A quarter of a century has elapsed since Japan repudiated "capitulations," and to-day Turkey does the same.

And what of the Arab? I heard my fellow countrymen, and those men of experience in Asiatic races and affairs, discussing four or five years ago the future of Mesopotamia. There was a general belief that the superfluous population of India would overflow into the long-neglected plains of the Tigris and Euphrates and revive the agricultural prosperity of the era in which Assyria, Babylonia, and Chaldæ flourished. A little further experience of the Arab has taught us that, if we try introducing Indian colonists, the Arab will neither welcome nor tolerate them. Both Britain and France, as soon as normal peace throughout the recently warring world had been declared, issued a joint proclamation which seemed to assume a docility on the part of the Arab which that Arab declines to endorse. Both Britain and Gaul have by this time realized that there is on the part of the Arab a spirit of and passion for independence with which they must both reckon.

The fact is that the four years which have elapsed since the Armistice was declared have worked almost miracles in the way of opening our eyes and proving to us that it is not Europe that is going to work out the salvation of the Near East, but the Near East which is, in an ever-increasing measure, going to work out its own salvation, and, in so doing, play its part in shaping the destinies of a world which, in point of civilization, is gradually approaching a more or less uniform standard. There is no doubt that railways have exercised a great levelling influence, and it may be reasonably inferred that motor transport and aeronautics will greatly extend that influence.

Arabia almost up to the present time has maintained its

exclusiveness, but the Great War has made serious inroads upon its isolation. Not to mention the railways, an air route now connects Baghdad and Cairo with Europe, and a direct air route from Cairo to Karachi, straight across Central Arabia, has been projected. Mr. Philby has penetrated to points never reached by Doughty, Palgrave, Burton, Niebuhr, or Leachman, and, if opportunity offers, he hopes to penetrate still further. It is hardly to be conceived that the Arab can go back to his more or less primitive pre-war state. When one meets men of the stamp of the Emir Abdulla and his Prime Minister, who have recently visited London, one feels that the influence of Western Europe has definitely made its mark, and that Arabia cannot stand aloof from the civilization which encircles it.

My own belief is that the days of Bolshevism are numbered, and it is evident that it is not only Europe, but Asia, that has closed its doors to the admission of such a curse as it has proved itself to be in Russia. Persia and Afghanistan exclude it, and the Khanates of Central Asia have fought hard against it. As for Turkey, it must be clear to all that with the Entente and Greece hostile, and the Central Powers powerless, the Angora Government had no choice but to temporize with the Bolshevist in Russia. But there can be no stability in alliance between Turkey and Russia. Their rivalries in the Black Sea and the Caucasus will inevitably be revived. Even now at the Lausanne Conference we see M. Tchicherin adopting an attitude with regard to the Straits which aims at Russia's advantage only, and is not in accord with Turkish views. Once the Turkish Empire is re-established, and as such recognized by the Great and Little Ententes, by the United States and by Japan, the political relations between Russia and Turkey will resume the form which they had in the days of the Czars, and Turkey will certainly extend no sympathy to Bolshevism.

It must be most sincerely hoped that the result of the Lausanne Conference will be the definite delimitation of the

Turkish Empire on the east—*i.e.*, along the western frontier of Persia, Kurdistan, and Mesopotamia. It is in the British interest that the Arabs should be given time and quiet to firmly establish and perfect as far as may be their own system of government, to form and train an army of defence, and to open up commerce. Given that and the maintenance of quiet in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Persia, and Afghanistan, and a salutary check placed on Bolshevist intrigue and ambition in the Caucasus, Trans-Caspia, and Turkistan, there is reason to believe that the prosperity of the Near East will react advantageously on the welfare of the British Empire.

IMPRESSIONS OF AN INDIAN DELEGATE AT GENEVA

By Sir P. S. Swivaswami Aiyar, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.

A brief note of the impressions left on the mind of an Indian delegate by the third session of the Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva may not be without interest. The writer had not attended the previous meetings of the Assembly, and had no very distinct notions of the character of the body or of the subjects that were to be brought up for its decision. The agenda, which had been provisionally drawn up and circulated, threw but scanty light on these questions, and included subjects like Esperanto, intellectual co-operation, and others which suggested serious doubts as to the practical character of the session. One or two of his friends in the official world told the writer that the Assembly was rather a costly debating society. Add to this the fact that the most important questions immediately affecting the peace of the world, like the problems of the Near East, German reparations, the indebtedness of the Allies to each other, and the financial plight of Austria, were not to be found in the agenda, and were being dealt

with by the Council of the League or by the five Great Powers, and you can easily account for the rather disparaging notion which several of the new delegates had formed of the Assembly of the League. When the report of the Council for the last year came up for discussion in the Assembly, speaker after speaker poured forth encomiums and congratulations on the work of the Council and the League. They were so laudatory as to suggest the possibility of an unconscious exaggeration of the importance of the body of which the speakers were members. But a diligent perusal of the contents of the report and impartial observation of the work accomplished by the Assembly during this session have removed all lingering traces of scepticism, and inspired a faith in the reality and possibilities of the League.

Apart from the spectacular aspect of the Assembly, which comprised over fifty States of the Old and the New Worlds, and drew together delegates from all quarters of the globe, from China to Peru, and Norway to Paraguay, the moral significance of the gathering could not be missed even by a casual observer. The reluctance of the United States to join the League, and the absence of Germany, Turkey, and even of Russia, detract in some measure from the sphere of usefulness of the League. But making full allowance for these drawbacks, which it is to be hoped are of a temporary character, the League marks an epoch in the history of international dealings. For the first time in history the civilized States, whether small or large, have agreed to meet on a common platform and deliberate on questions of policy and administration affecting the peace and well-being of the world. A sentiment of democratic equality pervaded the atmosphere of the Assembly. The smallest State has the same opportunity for hearing and the same vote as the largest. Petty Luxembourg has the same voting strength as mighty France. It may even be open to question whether a system of representation which gives equal votes to countries irrespective of their popula-

tion and resources may not be attended with some danger of sacrifice of the interests of the many to those of the few. The possibility of any such risk is obviated by the peculiar constitution of the League, not, however, without a parallel in political constitutions. The constitution of the Council assures a permanent position to the more important Powers. Moreover, the decisions of the Assembly do not *ipso facto* become binding upon the member States without ratification by them.

Some misunderstanding seems to exist with regard to the precise relations between the Assembly and the Council of the League. While the Council is undoubtedly the executive organ of the League, it would be a mistake to suppose that it derives its authority from the Assembly and should therefore be entirely subordinate to it. On the other hand, the suggestion would be well-founded that the Council owes its existence and authority to the same fundamental document—the Covenant of the League of Nations—to which the Assembly owes its origin. According to this view, though some of the members of the Council may be elected by the Assembly, the Council is not a mere creature of the Assembly, and the limitations on its powers and functions would have to be gathered from the articles of the Covenant rather than the bare will of the Assembly. The wiser course for the Assembly is not to embark upon any attempt to make a scientific demarcation between its own powers and those of the Council, but to trust to the natural process of adaptation and evolution. No conflict has so far arisen between the Council and the Assembly. While the Council has shown a spirit of readiness to take the Assembly into its confidence in large matters, the Assembly has also displayed a disposition to trust the Council in the exercise of its powers with fairness and impartiality. The solicitude of the Council to please and placate even the small States is manifest in the distribution of its patronage, and in the disposition to find seats for the representatives of the small

States as chairmen or vice-chairmen of the numerous committees and sub-committees.

The smaller States, and even the larger ones, are naturally anxious to avoid the erection of a super-State which would necessarily involve an encroachment upon their sovereign rights. This is one of the many reasons why the decisions of the League must, for a considerable time at least, continue to lack the support of physical sanctions, and why Lord Robert Cecil's idea of an international police organization appears to me to be outside the pale of practical politics in the immediate future. The Covenant of the League wisely lays stress upon unanimity, or, at any rate, the assent of a very large majority of its members, and prefers to rely on economic weapons for the coercion, where necessary, of recalcitrant individual States. The employment of physical force can be resorted to only in the last instance, and should be the outcome of a special resolution and concert rather than the automatic consequence of a preordained police administration.

Turning now to the personnel of the Assembly, its members were men with a high sense of responsibility, and animated by an earnest resolve to promote the objects of the League by giving of their best. It would be invidious to single out any names, when there were so many good men and true, and so many men of ability and ripe experience. The name of Lord Robert Cecil must, however, rise to the lips of everyone who watched the proceedings of the Assembly. A man of varied interests and broad outlook, of deep sympathies and humanitarian instincts, there was no subject, whether it was the reduction of armaments or the cultivation of Esperanto, which failed to draw forth his copious enthusiasm and energy.

The volume of work turned out by the Assembly and its committees forms a record of which it may well be proud. No one could have failed to be struck with the absence of narrow parochialism among the delegates, with their spirit of give and take, their solicitude to reach unanimity, and

their spirit of caution, which led them to postpone decisions rather than adopt hasty and perhaps erroneous conclusions.

Questions specially affecting India, or, for the matter of that, any country in particular, were of course few. The question of opium traffic was originally raised in a form which involved the possibility of serious injury to Indian fiscal interests without corresponding moral benefit to China. But the resolution as passed by the Assembly avoids any such risk. By far the most important resolutions passed by the Assembly were those relating to the reduction of armaments, the protection of minorities, and the financial succour of Austria. The resolution on the reduction of armaments was very elaborate and comprehensive, taking note of all the factors involved in the policy, and it marks a milestone in the arduous march towards the goal of peace and goodwill among the nations. The impatient idealist may not be satisfied with the conclusion, but the practical politician will welcome the resolution as a necessary first step to the attainment of the ideal.

The resolution on the protection of minorities was drawn up by Professor Gilbert Murray, the representative of South Africa, and though primarily intended to deal with the rights of minorities in those States which have incurred obligations under the recent treaties, it contains a clause exhorting States not bound by such treaties to accord to minorities within their jurisdiction the same measure of justice and fairplay as the other States. Coming, as it did, from the representative of South Africa, and passed, as it was, unanimously by the Assembly, it is a valuable expression, albeit of a pious character, of the sentiment of the Assembly. During the discussion of the resolution on the administration of the mandated territories an important question was raised by the writer of this article with regard to the legal status of the "C" class mandated territories. The discussion of this point was rendered necessary by a pronouncement of General Smuts in South West Africa that the "C" class territories were annexed to the man-

datory States in all but name. The view enunciated by General Smuts is pregnant with far-reaching consequences, and it is gratifying to note that it was not shared by the Permanent Mandates Commission. The distinguished South African statesman seems to have relied upon the language of Article 2 of the "C" class mandates. But this is identical with that of Article 9 of the "B" class mandates, as to which he admits that the territories held under them cannot be regarded as practically annexed to the mandatory State. Article 22 of the Covenant treats all these territories as a sacred trust of civilization to be administered as trust estates. Though these territories were originally vested in the Allies, they divested themselves of the territories and created a trust of which the trusteeship was vested in the League of Nations. Hereafter it is the Council of the League that is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the peoples in these various territories. The methods of administration in the three classes of "A," "B," and "C" mandated territories may be different, but in every case the peoples of the territories are the beneficiaries. Two propositions of law are clearly beyond question. One is that a trustee, or an agent of a trustee, cannot treat the property of the beneficiary as his own and annex it to his own properties. It follows that the inhabitants of the "C" class territories do not become nationals of the mandatory State, but preserve their own distinct national status. The other proposition is that a mandate is essentially revocable, and if the mandatory fails in his duty he may be relieved of his charge by the trustee, who is ultimately responsible for the management.