

## TOPICS OF THE DAY

THE SITUATION IN INDIA: "CANADIAN ELECTORATE": EUROPEAN CIVILISATION: CABBAGES AND POLITICAL EDUCATION: RECENT BOOKS ON CANADIAN HISTORY.

FOR the past year or so, I suppose, many Canadians who, like myself, "have never been East", have been trying to grope to an understanding of the situation in India. During the war Indian loyalty amazed the world; then, suddenly, discontents appeared; and those of us who have watched and listened at a distance, studying maps, histories, reports, and eagerly questioning educated men who have lived many years in India, instead of feeling that we are learning, have felt increasingly the greatness of our ignorance. One occasionally comes upon a book or a person professing to know "exactly what is the matter with India"—books and persons bearing little stamp of intellectual honesty. But the impressive books and persons—Mr. C. F. Andrews, for example, a Christian missionary who is also a man of culture, sympathy, imagination and political discernment; Sir Reginald Craddock, author of *The Dilemma in India*, a book most useful to students of politics, whether India interests them particularly or not; Sir Rabindranath Tagore, poet and sage, and oracle of healing wisdom,—such men point to no ready and easy way out of the Indian difficulties; they denounce no one, no set of people, no Government, as blameworthy for the present difficulties; their only stern words in fact are reserved for doctrinaires, whether Indian or British.

India—if it be not considered a little too cold and detached so to speak of it—is a fruitful subject for political study. Its history during the past four hundred years shows how commercial relations grow into political relations; how the flag follows trade as well as how trade follows the flag; that in modern times, as in the days of Herodotus, the great fortunes are to be made in trade with remote countries in exotic products; that such lucrative trade awakens the cupidity of other nations, that it finally remains in the hands of the states which are politically minded, and that after a few generations the motives of individual citizens in the imperial state are very mixed. Foreign detractors call the imperial people hypocritical, but the fact is that the minds of Englishmen,

like the minds of imperial Athenians of old, are very confused about their own motives. The wiser and more honest of them admit that their early traders were little different from pirates, but say that later the trade became more settled and honest. "Otherwise," they argue, "in competition with Portugese, Dutch and French, our traders could not have survived." Others, again, will contend: "India was an open prize to Europeans; we fought the Europeans, and drove them out; to the victors belong the spoils." Still others will point to the peace and settled government which India has enjoyed under British rule, and under British rule alone, and the benefits of western science the British have brought to India,—which, as they maintain, outweigh the mischiefs of western disease and materialism, and compensate for the thin and warped notions we have spread among a few of her people (out of many millions) of European institutions and religion. Many others view India as a property where their sons and nephews have a career in store for them. To others it is a point of military and imperial honour that India must not be given up; they refuse to talk of the matter politically or philosophically. Finally, there is that type of civil servant, with "all his sisters and his cousins and his aunts", who thinks that a Hindu or a Sikh is a "nigger", who should occasionally be kicked to keep him in order. A few of these cousins were to be seen in Victoria, B. C., a year ago, at the reception of Tagore. Tagore himself, they thought, was all right,—he had received a knighthood. But if any of the Sikhs living in Victoria attempted to get into the hall, to listen to the distinguished Oriental,—the ushers saw red at once.

We may be sure that these various motives, to be seen now, had progenitors when our Indian rule was in the making. But not even these motives are so various and complicated as the situation in India itself. Vast, teeming, a multitude of races, languages and creeds; ancient in culture and tradition, but with a population multiplied by the introduction of European irrigation and hygiene; divided fiercely against itself, not merely vertically, by race, language and creed, but horizontally by caste; gashed in the past by many a northern conqueror, and wrenched into segments and sects by creeds from Arabia, Persia and China; and now, in the last few decades, troubled by the imposition upon its agricultural way of life of an ever-increasing industrialism, and the ever-accelerated chatter of young so-called intellectuals who have learned European political jargon in European universities—would such words as these describe "India"? Perhaps, if the many peoples of India were like the many peoples of Western Europe, whom Canadians

can safely hope to understand. But everything we know of Bengalis, Sikhs, Telegus and others, makes us feel that they are utterly unlike Dutchmen, Danes, Italians and so on. And so when we use such words as "political", "culture", "national" of the peoples of India, we cannot be sure that the words have the application and the implication we intend. Again, who has really explained the paradox, or plumbed the economic effects, of the hoarding of gold in India ever since the South African War? And when a Westerner says (as Mrs. Anstey says, in her recent *Economic Development of India*) that "the economic life of India is bound up with its religious life, which still preserves from remote antiquity degrading fertility cults", how intelligible is such a statement, true as it may be, to the average European reader? Would it be intelligible to the average Indian reader at all? We fight with shadows!

It might seem, then, that in recommending India as a subject for political study I am deliberately recommending it in order that political thinking may quickly reach an *impasse*. Not so. But I observe that Canadians who know no more of India at first hand than I do (that is, nothing), and perhaps not a tenth as much at second-hand, are quite as willing to formulate political generalizations about Indian politics as about other politics. And India seems to me an extreme case of difficulty for political generalization. These are the people who talk of "democracy" in Canada as though it were the same story as in the days of George Brown, and yet who cannot be unconscious that during these days thousands of utter foreigners are being enrolled as Canadian electors, to vote in the next few weeks. The Chinaman and the Syrian living in Montreal or Toronto slums; the studious Finn, bush-whacking in Northern Ontario, and writhing under exploitation; the Russian peasant on his muskeg farm in Northern Manitoba—any observer can add to this heterogeneous list, which is called collectively, and piously, the Canadian electorate!

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**A** MOST interesting essay in political philosophy is the little book recently published by the Oxford University Press and called *What is European Civilisation?* This is the gist of some lectures delivered three years ago in the Geneva School of International Studies by Professor Wilhelm Haas, of the Technical College at Charlottenburg, Germany. Though a technical scientist himself, Professor Haas realises the dangers of an age being utterly absorbed in technical science—and chiefly the danger of man making himself the slave of the machines which he has created, and of ignoring "life, everything which makes Nature many-

coloured, lovable, familiar". Some readers may feel that the author's analysis of European development is too German, too methodical and systematic, and others may think he falls too easily into mysticism, especially when he lauds the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. But he shows a masterly grasp of the essential unity of European thought from the sixth century B. C. onwards; like Archimedes, Kepler, Coulomb and Liebig, he sees everywhere the mathematical basis of science, and with all this he shows a delicate insight into the relation between the mainsprings of man's thought and the political forms under which he lives.

The following are some of his introductory remarks:

The present form of European civilization is based on technical science, which in turn is based on pure science. . . . Technical science began its triumphal progress at the turn of the last century, simultaneously with the great increase of the total population in Europe. It is the only means of supporting an ever-growing population. Technical science did not create capitalism, which existed beforehand: but it stimulated the initiative of the individual to exploit its many evident possibilities; and by breaking down the existing monopolies, privileges and prejudices of tradition and the feudal order, opened the way to wealth and economic power for all those possessed of energy and enterprise. The spread of democracy is closely bound up with the development of technical science: by their very nature, technical products and technical achievements cannot remain the monopoly of the few. Differences in the standard of living tend to disappear: there is a general demand for a share in all luxuries; men are brought closer together both in space and spiritual intercourse, and psychological conditions are created favourable to democracy. Finally, the influence of technical science on art is unmistakable.

He goes on to show that technical science has created a completely new kind of object, the machine. This has infinitely enlarged man's power and his interests; true, it is only the extension of Greek thought, which "had the courage to recognise and affirm the multiplicity of the universe, and at the same time the energy and daring to examine it soberly by means of scientific conceptions, to discover its principles of order". On the other hand, in this extension (which the Greeks, he says, deliberately rejected for themselves) "utility has become the general standard of value":

The Greeks alone attained to the intellectual freedom necessary to release mathematics from experience, and from practical application. . . . Of course Euclidean geometry, which also contains the elements of arithmetic, was applied to material things. But this discovery was only possible because the spiritual eye was not held spell-bound by utility, but yielded to the creative impulse towards free speculation and a disinterested knowledge of Nature. . . . But the new kind of knowledge turns Nature into a dead

object, with which we spiritually have nothing to do, and can have nothing to do.

Again:

Just as the relation of man to Nature has altered, so has his attitude to himself, and in a similar way. The individual of the scientific period is losing more and more the power of being able to feel himself as a centre of energy. In proportion as he learns to understand Nature theoretically, and succeeds with the help of technical science in controlling it, he loses the belief that there are powers in himself of which he can and must make use.

This last would seem to be a pessimistic note, but the author is by no means a pessimist. He expressly censures Spenglerian philosophy, and is assured that a new era is opening for European civilisation. The great change he sees, characteristically, in the change which has come over science itself, in the recent vitalistic conceptions in biology, in the new mathematics and the new physics, and in other departments. He asks:

Now what does this mean? Not that the fundamental idea with which the European mind turned to the organization of Nature is incorrect. But it disproves the necessity of holding rigidly to the fixed ideal of the machine, and proves that mathematical science is capable of many developments. In spite of this, or rather on that very account, progress in the knowledge of Nature is possible.

A VERY interesting discussion of topics kindred with these recently took place in the Conference of Canadian Universities, held in the University of Toronto. In the more general discussion: "What is a Liberal Education?" two papers of wide philosophical range were read on the subject, "The Humanism of Science", and other papers were read on mathematics, and the mathematical basis of science. Informal discussion on these subjects led to some very interesting statements about the new physics. These papers, and many others concerned with education in university and school, as well as a digest of the ensuing discussions, will presently be published in the form of the *Report of the Fourteenth Annual Conference of Canadian Universities*. Copies of it may be had, gratis, on application to the Secretary of the Canadian Universities Conference, McGill University.

NOT a few Free-Traders of my acquaintance have expressed the keenest pleasure at the impost recently laid on fresh vegetables coming into this country. They think it has furthered the political education of Canadians greatly. In the first place,

there has been no doubt as to the effect of this tariff. In all the cities of Canada the price of vegetables has gone up. Now many tariff advocates in Canada have for a generation or more had the hypocrisy, or the ignorance (it hardly matters which), to tell us that the prices of commodities which were subject to a tariff were not necessarily increased by the tariff etc. etc. . . . Every one knows the pious rigmarole. The rigmarole now has its answer. And again, if the dearness of imported early fruits and vegetables causes consumers to hold off buying, and so furnishes a "better market for the later Canadian product"—which is another way of saying that this later product will fetch higher prices—the city-dwelling advocate of tariffs on manufactures will now have his eyes painfully opened to the fact that a tariff is a form of class legislation.

Curiously, it is the farmer whom Canadian legislators have last thought of protecting, though European statesmen, from 594 B. C. onwards, have known that the agricultural classes need, in the nature of things, to be cherished as against all other classes, because of the inevitable disadvantages under which they labour.

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WE frequently hear it said that as yet no real history of Canada has appeared. And I suppose that this cannot be gainsaid. But I am struck with the growing excellence of the historical monograph among us. For many years I have been calling attention to Professor Chester Martin's *Lord Selkirk's Work in Canada*,—a great subject, well handled. *Early Days in Upper Canada*, by W. A. Langton, which appeared a few years ago, was a charming work, and a solid contribution to our knowledge of the settlements about Peterborough of a century ago. H. H. Langton has now in his book, *Sir Daniel Wilson*, produced a delightful portrait of an early President of the University of Toronto, and has also illuminated an important part of our history. And other biographies and essays could be mentioned. Perhaps I should not omit to mention the dull, but for the economic historian exceedingly useful history, *The Townships of Darlington and Clarke*, by the late Professor Squair. What an improvement these books are on the flatulent volumes that used to be held up to the admiration of young students a quarter-century ago! And, aside from their intrinsic interest, one cannot help thinking that such books are paving the way for the future genius who is to write the History of Canada.

C. S.