CHAPTER XVII

THE NEAR EASTERN QUESTION: THE SECOND PHASE

1921-1922

THE failure of the Treaty of Sèvres and of the subsequent Conference was followed by disastrous results. It led for one thing to the insertion of a fresh wedge into the solidarity of the Alliance. Relations between France and Britain, by no means always smooth, sometimes, as has been seen, strained almost to breaking point, now developed fresh points of difference in the Near East. Relations between Great Britain and Italy were similarly affected. Conscious of the impotence of the Government in Constantinople and of the growing strength of Mustapha Kemal in Asia Minor, the representatives of both France and Italy took advantage of the presence in London of delegates of the National Government at Angora to negotiate with them, independently and without the knowledge of the British Foreign Minister, agreements affecting interests of their own in Asiatic Turkey.

The action of the French Government, when in due course it was made known to the British Foreign Office, was defended on the ground that Mr. Lloyd George had been informed verbally by M. Briand, if not of the actual details at least of the general lines on which he was proceeding—a method of conducting business which it was admitted in these days of stress sometimes superseded the efforts of the old diplomacy. The defence was not one which was calculated to appease Lord Curzon who, not unnaturally, saw in it a striking illustration of the evil results following upon the employment of unorthodox methods, and particularly of indepen-

dent action by others, in matters falling strictly within the ambit of the Foreign Office.

The matter proved of little actual importance for, as events turned out, neither the French nor the Italian Agreement was ratified by Mustapha Kemal's National Assembly at Angora. And, commenting upon the matter at a later date, Lord Curzon remarked that, as for the pro-Kemalist policy of the Italian Government, he was able to point out " with a certain amount of sardonic satisfaction " that it had proved a dismal failure, inasmuch as, while the Agreement had been repudiated by the Turks, the Italians had found themselves in so perilous a position at Adalia that they had been obliged to withdraw from that port.

Nevertheless the fact that these things had been done was not without significance; for it showed that on the slippery ground of the Near and Middle East distinct divergence of aim had opened out between France and Italy on the one hand and Great Britain on the other. It showed also that where their own particular interests were concerned, the Governments of these two countries were prepared to make terms with the Government in Angora, whether such terms did or did not conflict with the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres to which they had been signatories, and without deeming it necessary to take the Foreign Minister of their principal Ally into their confidence.

Later in the year Lord Curzon found himself faced with a definite Franco-Turkish Agreement, negotiated, once again, without his knowledge, by a well-known French Parliamentary leader, M. Franklin-Bouillon, and known thereafter as the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement. M. Franklin-Bouillon had been described, when his visits to Angora had first attracted attention, as a private person travelling in Asia Minor for purposes of his own, and later on as having some sort of an official mission to negotiate on behalf of the French Government with regard to French prisoners, the protection of minorities in Cilicia and other matters incident to the evacuation of that area by French troops. To an Agreement of a purely local character little exception need, perhaps, have been taken. But when, after its signature on October the 20th, 1921, it was communicated to the Foreign Office, it certainly appeared to cover a very much

wider field. It wore, in fact, much more the appearance of a separate Treaty of Peace entered into by one of the Allies with an enemy Government without consultation with the rest. Among other things, it appeared to restore to Turkey a large and fertile tract of territory, including places of great strategic importance in relation to Mesopotamia, which, although by arrangement among the Allies under the Mandate of the French, had nevertheless been conquered by British arms; places, therefore, which could not, without the violation of solemn engagements entered into by the principal Allies, be bartered away in the absence of their consent. It led to important correspondence between the French and British Governments, the former of which admitted that when peace was finally concluded the various agreements which had been entered into, including the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement, would require to be adjusted with a view to taking their place in a general settlement. Harmony was thus outwardly restored. But the episode was one which left behind it an unpleasant taste, and the divergence between French and British aims in the Near and Middle East, though brushed aside, in fact remained.

It was not, indeed, denied that such sympathy as the French people had entertained for Greece had been alienated by the action of her people, following upon a plebiscite taken on December the 5th, 1920, in recalling the ex-King Constantine to the throne. And there can be little doubt that from this time onward Turkey's pretensions were increased and her attitude stiffened by the belief that French sympathy was on her side. On the other hand the Prime Minister of Great Britain had never disguised his pro-Greek leanings. It was generally assumed that it had been at his suggestion that the Greeks had been invited by the Paris Peace Conference to land troops at Smyrna. And, during the London Conference held early in 1921, Lord Curzon, attempting to steer a course midway between the Scylla of French and Italian support of Turkey and the Charybdis of his own Prime Minister's enthusiasm for Greece, had found his position a sufficiently embarrassing one. "This afternoon we meet at St. James's Palace to hear the Greeks," he wrote on February the 21st. "The Prime Minister is as convinced a Venizelist and phil-Hellene as ever, and uses all the advantage of his position as

chairman in that direction."[1] This divergence of sympathies between the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Governments of France and Italy was fraught with disastrous consequences. It encouraged each of the belligerents to carry on the struggle—a struggle which ended, as will be seen hereafter, in bringing Greece to ruin and, incidentally, in bringing Mr. Lloyd George's Government to the ground.

When it became clear that the negotiations carried on in London during the opening months of 1921 were doomed to failure, hostilities broke out once more on the plateaux of Asia Minor. And the immediate task of the Allies became that of preventing an extension of the conflagration. The task was far from easy. Undeterred by an initial reverse, the Greeks spent the summer of 1921 in preparing for a fresh offensive; and in June Lord Curzon proceeded to Paris in the hope of securing from the Allies an offer of mediation. In the event of Greece placing herself in their hands, he was prepared to meet French views to the extent of recognising the altered balance of power in the Near East due to the rise of the Kemalist Government, which he described at a meeting of the Imperial Conference on June the 22nd, as having created a body of national sentiment and of military strength which appealed as the main source of its national unity to the duty of evicting the Greeks from Smyrna. And he put before the Conference in Paris a proposal for the creation of an autonomous province, with Smyrna as its capital, under Turkish Sovereignty, to be administered by a Christian Governor with the assistance of a body of gendarmerie under European officers; all Greek troops to be withdrawn as soon as the gendarmerie were in a position to ensure the security of the province. Nothing came either of this or of any other of the proposals discussed in Paris, for the reason that the Greeks, hopeful of the success of their impending attack, refused to place themselves in the hands of the Allies.

Autumn had a sobering effect. The Greeks, it is true, indulged in official celebrations of the victory which they claimed to have won. But while *Te Deums* were being sung in the churches of Athens, public rejoicings at the success of Turkish arms were being held in Angora and thanksgivings offered up in the mosques of Anatolia.

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

"We are reminded of the battle of Jutland," Lord Curzon wrote, "which was simultaneously celebrated as a triumph in London and Berlin." The opinion of unbiassed persons was that for the time being, at any rate, the position as between the opposing forces was that of stalemate.

In October the Greek Prime Minister, M. Gounaris, accompanied by MM. Baltazzis and Rangabé, travelled to London and, after discussing the position in its various aspects with Lord Curzon, agreed to place himself in his hands. The time seemed ripe, therefore, for a further attempt to reach a settlement; and Lord Curzon drew up a list of the modifications of the Treaty of Sèvres which seemed necessary to meet the altered situation, for submission to his colleagues.

Apart altogether from the actual terms of a possible peace, the question of procedure was a matter of the utmost importance. On three separate occasions the efforts of the Powers had been rendered futile and their authority flouted; and Lord Curzon saw little advantage, consequently, in their intervention unless, having agreed upon the principles of the settlement which they desired, they were prepared to enforce them upon the combatants. And he proposed, therefore, a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, France and Italy for the purpose of arriving at an Agreement on these all important matters. Assuming that agreement was reached both upon the terms to be offered and the steps to be taken to ensure their being accepted, he next proposed a meeting of the Supreme Council in Constantinople at which the Treaty of Peace should be laid before the belligerents.

At the end of December he communicated his proposals, which had in the meantime received the approval of the Cabinet, to the French and Italian Governments; and a meeting of their respective Foreign Ministers was arranged for the middle of January for the purpose of discussing them. Yet once more fate intervened to postpone these much needed conversations, for early in January M. Briand fell and M. Poincaré stepped into his place.

The crisis which resulted in this change in the Government of France was a clear indication that the French people had instinctively realised that the rift which had opened between the two countries

over Silesia during the previous summer had not after all been closed but had, on the contrary, widened. The crisis itself was, in fact, due to a sudden realisation on the part of the French that the policy of M. Briand, which was directed towards closer co-operation with Great Britain, was not in reality the policy which they desired to pursue. For some time past this trend of French opinion had been gathering force. Silesia in the summer had been followed by the Washington Conference in the autumn; and the Washington Conference, whatever it might be thought to have achieved, was regarded by the people of France as having been for them nothing but a humiliation.

Such, then, was the atmosphere in France when early in January 1922, the Supreme Council met at Cannes. No one knew better than Mr. Lloyd George himself how essential it was to the success of his own programme that M. Briand should continue in office. And to that end he was at last willing to offer him the Treaty of Guarantee that France had so long and so urgently desired. In face of these greater issues, the Near Eastern question became for the British Prime Minister a troublesome matter which must by one means or another be got out of the way. At Cannes, therefore, the hard facts of the situation were placed with complete candour before M. Gounaris. A settlement of the Near Eastern question, he was informed, had been made a condition of the proposed British Treaty of Guarantee to France. This at least might be accounted unto Great Britain for righteousness by the statesmen of Greece. But—and here was the naked and bitter truth realised at last, seemingly, by the British Prime Minister—no settlement of the Near Eastern question was possible unless the Greek forces were withdrawn from Smyrna. British feeling for Greece, Mr. Lloyd George went on to explain, while fundamentally unchanged, had lost something of its fervour as a result of the return to power and to the affections of his people of the ex-King Constantine. In these circumstances they could expect no active assistance from Great Britain if they decided on a renewal of war with Turkey; and unless they were prepared to fight it out alone he advised them to place themselves unreservedly in Lord Curzon's hands.

No concessions to M. Briand, however—not even this advice to

Greece nor the accompanying promise of the Treaty of Guarantee—were to prove sufficient to avert the crisis. In the eyes of all France Mr. Lloyd George had become the embodiment of everything that they most disliked in the British people. He was regarded as the most sinister advocate of a pro-German and pro-Russian policy, and as the personification, consequently, of the particular characteristic which they traditionally imputed to the inhabitants of Albion. It needed nothing but a sign that at Cannes M. Briand was running in harness with Mr. Lloyd George to ensure his downfall. "Ah, Briand," exclaimed one who occupied a prominent position in the political life of France, on the eve of the French Premier's departure for the Riviera, "vous êtes déjà allé à Canossa. Prenez garde que vous n'alliez pas à Cannes aussi!" And it is at least a plausible supposition that, in the state of nervous tension in which the French public watched events at Cannes, it was in the photographs of the French Premier meekly accepting instruction from Mr. Lloyd George in the art of swinging a golf club, which were published broadcast in the Press, that they found the sign which they sought. At any rate, events in Paris following closely upon this display of enterprise on the part of the pictorial Press, necessitated M. Briand's abrupt return to the capital. In spite of his appeal, which had all the appearance of success, for the continued support of his colleagues and the Chamber, he decided to tender his resignation. And before the delegates at Cannes had time to realise what was taking place, M. Briand had been supplanted by M. Poincaré.

From the Riviera Lord Curzon hurried back to Paris and on January the 16th was received by the new French Premier. He went straight to the heart of the Near Eastern problem. At Cannes only a day or two before, he explained, M. Briand and the Italian Foreign Minister had accepted his proposals as a suitable basis for discussion. How soon would M. Poincaré be prepared to take up the threads where they had been dropped? Would the following week be possible? It was scarcely possible to overstate the urgency of the matter. The Italian Foreign Minister awaited only a summons at the end of the telegraph line. It was not too much to say that the whole peace of the East was trembling in the balance.

M. Poincaré was not to be hurried. He was on the contrary

exasperatingly deliberate. In one respect he resembled Lord Curzon himself—he entertained an abiding passion for his pen. It has, indeed, been said of him that "if statistics and tabulated data were the sum of human existence, and the rules of geometry and algebra the bases of all human knowledge, Poincaré would certainly be the greatest public man of his generation."[1] And it was entirely in keeping with his reputation that he should have decided that before he could undertake to discuss the matter he would draw up his observations on Lord Curzon's proposals in writing.

Here was a promise of the very delay that Lord Curzon was above all things anxious to avoid. Delay had been fatal in the past and had been a main cause of the humiliating position in which the Powers had long been floundering. Now, thanks to the season of the year, a little time had been vouchsafed to them in which to repair previous errors. Snow lay deep on the plateaux of Asia Minor, and while snow lasted the hope of a settlement lived. But January was already slipping by, and an exchange of Notes such as M. Poincaré contemplated might absorb weeks of precious time. By March or April climatic conditions would favour a resumption of hostilities, and with fighting once more in progress what hope would there be for the methods of diplomacy?

But M. Poincaré was adamant. Of one thing he was absolutely certain, and that was that at the present time French public opinion was strongly opposed to Conferences. And he held French public opinion in extreme respect. Conversations were the most he was prepared to contemplate, and these not until the whole question had been exhaustively explored by means of written Notes.

If in other respects the interview was disappointingly infructuose, it at least left Lord Curzon in no doubt upon one point, and that was, that in no circumstances was M. Poincaré going to do anything that savoured even remotely of rendering assistance to the Greeks. And when in due course the Note promised by him reached the Foreign Office, Lord Curzon, realising that with the fall of M. Briand the prospect of agreement in face of the Near Eastern menace had become infinitely remote, cancelled his intended visit to Paris. And while a further exchange of written commentaries was taking

[1] By Mr. F. H. Simonds in "How Europe made peace without America."

place between Downing Street and the Quai D'Orsay the Italian Government fell, thus placing a further obstacle in the way of the long delayed conversations.

In the meantime the position of the Greek army was steadily deteriorating and the coffers of the Greek treasury were becoming exhausted. Attempts which had been made for some months past to raise a loan in London had been unsuccessful, and on February the 15th M. Gounaris penned a letter to Lord Curzon, which, because of the use which was subsequently made of it, acquired an undeserved notoriety. After referring to the delay to which the promised conversations between the Allied Powers had been subjected, the Greek Prime Minister set out the factors which were tending to alter the military situation to the disadvantage of his country, laying special stress upon the inability of the Greek Government, in the absence of immediate financial help, to meet the necessary expenditure on the upkeep of the army, and commenting pointedly on the steady increase in the supply of military equipment and munitions which was reaching Mustapha Kemal's forces.

> "Not to mention the war material which he has been able to procure from Soviet Russia, we cannot but note with painful surprise the attitude taken up in this connection by the Allied Powers, by whose side the Greek army participated in the war which Turkey had declared not against Greece but against the Allies. Certain of these Allied Powers have gone so far as to supply the enemy with arms and munitions to be used against their Ally in the great war."

To redress the balance three things were essential; (i) reinforcements to neutralise the growing Turkish superiority in mere numbers, (ii) fresh supplies of war material, and (iii) immediate financial aid. The first of these Greece could supply herself; for the other two she must look elsewhere. But unless all three were promptly provided, the Greek Command considered that any offensive movement on the part of the Turks would expose the Greek army to very serious danger. In the event of no such assistance being practicable, the Greek Command had asked that orders might be given for a withdrawal of the Greek forces while there was yet

time to take the initiative, before being forced to it by the development of the situation.

Having thus set forth the position in detail in his letter to Lord Curzon, M. Gounaris proceeded to address Mr. Lloyd George, repeating in an abbreviated form the substance of his Note to the British Foreign Minister, explaining that lack of financial resources and shortage of war material must expose the Greek army to grave danger as soon as the campaigning season set in, and asking the favour of an interview before his early return to Athens. To this latter request Mr. Lloyd George was unable to accede.

In Lord Curzon's eyes, the state of affairs disclosed by M. Gounaris added yet one more cause for regret at the delay which had been forced upon him by M. Poincaré, and provided a further reason for insisting an early resumption of the conversations which had been broken off at Cannes. In early action by the Allied Powers lay, in his opinion, the best hope of staving off disaster; and after expressing the hope that the military position in Anatolia was "less immediately critical" than M. Gounaris feared, he urged that the wisest course was unquestionably "to expedite the diplomatic solution of the anxious position in which all were placed."[1] An Italian Ministry having now been formed, he had hastened to propose a meeting in Paris within the next few days. On the question of the withdrawal of the Greek forces he ventured no opinion, since this appeared to be a matter for the Greek authorities themselves. Nor was it necessary for him to do so, since M. Gounaris had already telegraphed on February the 28th authorising the Greek Command to proceed immediately to such measures preliminary to withdrawal as they might consider necessary for avoiding danger to the army.

From the time of his receipt of M. Gounaris's Note, one dominant idea occupied Lord Curzon's mind—to secure the agreement of the belligerents to an Armistice, to be followed by the peaceful evacuation of Anatolia by the Greek forces. And it is easy to understand his feelings of exasperation when into the main stream of his diplomatic effort there suddenly flowed one of those cross currents from which the Foreign Policy of Great Britain with her world-wide interests and responsibilities can never be certain of being free.

[1] Letter from Lord Curzon to M. Gounaris, dated March the 6th, 1922.

EASTERN QUESTION: SECOND PHASE

The presence in England of the Greek Prime Minister, combined with the absence of any visible attempt on the part of the British Government to reach a settlement of the Near Eastern trouble by diplomatic means, gave rise to mischievous rumour. And in India rumour, once started, sped rapidly from mouth to mouth in the mosques and bazaars where Moslems congregated, that it was in contemplation to render Greece such financial and material aid as would enable her to impose by force upon the Turkish people a peace which would shatter dreams to which the valour of Mustapha Kemal's army had given rise. The rapid spread of rumour to this effect fanned into open flame once more the smouldering embers of the Khilafat agitation.

As custodians of the interests of seventy million Indian Moslems, the Government of India had steadily urged upon the Home Government their view of the extent to which this factor in the case should be borne in mind by those charged with the negotiation of a peace with Turkey. And, perturbed by the menace of a renewal of grave Muhammadan unrest, the Viceroy forwarded to the Secretary of State yet one more strongly worded representation on the subject, together with a request that he might be authorised to publish it. On March the 4th, without consultation with any of his colleagues and without seeking the sanction of the Cabinet, Mr. Montagu telegraphed his consent.

With negotiations of extreme delicacy on this very question about to take place in Paris where, as Lord Curzon was only too well aware, not the least of his difficulties would be to overcome the strong pro-Turkish leanings of the French Government, this unauthorised publication of the similarly pro-Turkish pronouncement of the Indian Government came as a tremendous shock. How greatly his feelings were outraged is abundantly clear from the tone of the letter in which he set forth the grounds of his complaint to Mr. Chamberlain, as leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons :

> "Look at the position in which it has placed me. I am about, by desire of the Government, to enter into negotiations of the utmost difficulty in Paris in which the dice are already

loaded heavily against me and in which my chances of success are small. Just at this moment, on the eve of the Conference, my pitch is queered, my hand is shattered, by the declaration from a branch of the British Government, claiming far more for the Turks than even in their wildest moments they have dared to ask for themselves, or than it is possible for any British statesman to concede. When I argue to Mustapha Kemal or to Poincaré about Adrianople or the Straits they have merely to brandish against me this fatal declaration. I have now no desire to go to Paris at all. I conceive that my mission is doomed by the act of one of my colleagues to certain and inevitable failure. . .

"If the policy of H.M.G. is the policy of the Viceroy and Montagu, then let Montagu go to Paris in my place, and fight to obtain Adrianople and Thrace and the Holy places for his beloved Turks. He will then have the failure which his own action will have rendered inevitable instead of thrusting it upon me. I shall be glad if you will show this letter to the Prime Minister at once. It is written in bed, hence the pencil. I would ask for a Cabinet this morning to discuss the matter, were I not too ill. But matters cannot rest where they are, for in that case I cannot undertake my task."[1]

The Prime Minister was only a little less angry than Lord Curzon, and Mr. Montagu's resignation became inevitable. It is but fair to his memory, however, to state that, whatever the lack of judgment which he displayed in assuming responsibility for the publication of so confidential a Despatch, and however great the embarrassment that he consequently caused to the Foreign Minister on the eve of negotiations of supreme importance, his action did have a very marked effect in laying what, from the comfortable distance of Whitehall, Lord Curzon characterised as "a factitious agitation," but which, to those in India who were called upon to cope with it, had all the appearance of a movement fraught with the possibility of very real trouble.

With this sensational and unfortunate episode disposed of, Lord

[1] Letter dated March the 9th, 1922.

Curzon turned his attention to his negotiations once more. On March the 16th and 18th he saw in his study at 1 Carlton House Terrace, which had witnessed so many fateful gatherings, the representatives of the Constantinople and Angora Governments who were then in London, and promised that he would endeavour to secure the evacuation of Anatolia by the Greeks, provided always that the Turks would accept an Armistice as an essential preliminary condition. A note of his conversations was submitted to the Cabinet, whom he met on March the 20th; and the French and Italian Governments were urged by him to join in insisting on an immediate truce as a first condition of successful mediation. No one, indeed, could have worked harder or more wholeheartedly to secure a settlement which should be just and honourable to both disputants. Throughout the ten sittings of the Paris Conference, held on March 22nd-25th, he took the lead; and the Pronouncement issued at its conclusion, in which the results of their labours were made known to the world, was the work of his own pen. "Sitting as we are doing for six or seven hours in the day with barely time for meals," he wrote on March the 25th, "I only have a moment to say that the Conference is ending far better for us than I had deemed possible, and that I shall come back with a plan which I think it quite likely that the Turks may ultimately refuse, but which will approve itself to the public opinion of the world as a just and generous solution."[1]

The main provisions of the settlement, to which he had secured the adhesion of M. Poincaré and Signor Schanzer, were the progressive retirement of the Greek forces from Anatolia under the supervision of Allied officers; the formulation, in the first place, by an inter-Allied Conference, of a new code for the protection of minorities in both Greece and Turkey; the execution of this new code of International Law to be entrusted to the League of Nations; an invitation to the League of Nations to co-operate in finding a solution of the Armenian question, with the object of obtaining for the Armenian people the satisfaction of their traditional aspirations for a National Home; demilitarised zones on both shores of the Straits and a zone of Allied military occupation, embracing the

[1] Letter to Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Chamberlain.

Gallipoli Peninsular as far as Rodosto on the Sea of Marmora; an International Straits Commission to control the navigation of those waters; the reversion of Constantinople to Turkey and the creation of a demilitarised zone of considerable extent, circling the city and serving as a cushion between the city and that part of Eastern Thrace assigned to Greece; the speedy abolition of conscription in Turkey and a strict limitation of the strength of any future Turkish force recruited on a voluntary basis; the grant to Turkey of increased financial control, and a modification of the Capitulations.

The materialisation of this carefully thought out settlement depended upon one thing—the acceptance of an Armistice. That was the foundation upon which the superstructure was to be erected. The Pronouncement which had been issued represented the plans and drawings of the architects—no more. Until it was known whether those primarily concerned would consent to the foundations being laid, the builders could not get to work. They were never even called in, because after an ominous delay the Angora Government declined to call a halt to their military operations. And, though the Greek Government signified their acceptance of a truce, it is more than likely that their action would not have been ratified by the Greek people. The publication of the Pronouncement with the outline of the suggested settlement excited, indeed, a storm of passionate indignation which swept tumultuously over the country. Single copies of a Greek newspaper which came out with a headline in huge letters, consisting of a single word of opprobrium applied to the Allies, sold for as much as ten drachmas. In the Greek Chamber M. Gounaris was vehemently assailed by the Opposition, whose spokesmen declared that Mr. Lloyd George had stated officially that victorious Greece deserved more even than the Treaty of Sèvres had given her. Once more, therefore, Europe looked on while Greece and Turkey prepared to rekindle the fires of destruction on her borders; and not for the first time the representatives of the Powers who had won the war stood by, wringing their hands in impotent ill-humour at their failure to extinguish the conflagration.

It has seemed desirable to narrate, somewhat fully, the story of these abortive negotiations on account of the misapprehensions

as to the part played in them by Lord Curzon which subsequently arose. To this reference will be made in due course. It is not necessary to deal at any length with developments during the summer of 1922 which followed on the failure of the Paris Conference of March, for Lord Curzon was prostrated by illness and was unable, therefore, to take any leading part in them.

The summer of 1922 was, indeed, a melancholy one for him. To the chronic weakness in his back and leg was now added a severe attack of phlebitis, which kept him chained to his bed at Hackwood from the end of May to the middle of July. During this time he carried on much of the work of the Foreign Office from his bed. But it was obvious that there were many duties falling to the lot of the Foreign Minister which could not conveniently be discharged from a bed of sickness; and at the end of May, when it seemed likely that his recovery must be a matter of time, Mr. Lloyd George proposed that Lord Balfour should take his place for the remainder of the Session. To this Lord Curzon agreed, though he was morbidly sensitive to any suggestion that the state of his health might render his retirement from so onerous a post desirable. "I accepted," he jotted down in pencil on a sheet of paper. "Balfour had not the least intention of supplanting me and only consented as an act of kindness." But he was not so certain that the intentions of the Prime Minister were purely disinterested, and he added to his note a disturbing surmise as to what might be in process of being planned —"But when the Session ended, and the Foreign Office and public had become used to my absence and its cause, Balfour was to retire and" A or B or perhaps even C "was to take my place."

His recovery was retarded by worry over such possibilities and by his old enemy insomnia to which such thoughts gave rise. Nothing that might possibly prove effective in inducing sorely needed slumber was neglected. Even hypnotism was given a trial, and there is a touch of the old humour in the description which he penned of the solitary attempt which was made to exorcise insomnia by this means.

> "Yesterday was a woeful night. He (the practitioner) discoursed for the best part of an hour about his method, the

conscious self, the sub-conscious self and Heaven knows what. I said, 'Tell me only what you propose to do.' He offered to come at 11.30 p.m."

In due course the hypnotist returned and the séance began.

"He stood at the end of the bed, made me look at a gold ring on his finger, talked hard all the time about the certainty that I would have a quiet night, a tranquil night, restful sleep, no more worry, the sub-conscious self fulfilling itself; then told me to close my eyes; went on chattering; declared I could not open them (which I found not the slightest difficulty in doing); announced that in half a minute, one minute, two minutes I should be fast asleep, and finally after half an hour of this foolish chatter, left me far more wide awake than when he came. However, I did my best, kept my eyes closed, thought of nothing, gave full chance to the sub-conscious self, and after one and a half hours was as wide awake as at noonday—nay more so. Then I took under his instructions my drug which failed to operate at all. . . So that experiment is over. I can understand its being successful with a wounded Tommy. But with my brain all afire and resenting assurances which I knew to be a fraud, it was no good."[1]

There was the root of the trouble—his brain was always "all afire"; and rumours which now began to circulate in the Press fanned it to a devouring flame. "I dare not put anything about myself in the papers," he wrote on May the 17th, "or the *Daily Express* will continue its clamour for me to resign." And on the next day—"The *Daily Express* announces (for obvious reasons) that I am very seriously ill and that my friends are very anxious about me." He kept a vigilant eye on all that happened in London: "I was greatly tickled at Arthur's maiden speech in the House of Lords being followed by a smashing Government defeat. What will all the people say who thought he was sent there to charm and subdue the Salisbury group and to save the Government from the rebuffs which I incurred?"

July saw him still a prisoner at Hackwood and bitterly resentful

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated May the 18th, 1922.

of attacks upon him in the Press. "This morning I was thrown back by reading the two vile paras in *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, a part of their ceaseless vendetta against me. . . I am, indeed, ill-treated, for the Northcliffe people will not spare me even in my illness and seem bent on getting me out alive or dead."[1]

At Orleans, whither he went in the middle of July, the phlebitis responded to treatment and his spirits rose. "I am going out this afternoon on foot," he wrote on July the 29th, "to see the houses of the various Royal improprieties, Diane le Poitiers, Agnès de Sorel, etc., who seem to have found an attraction in this place of which I can discover no relics."[2] And early in August with his veins restored, but weak and shaken by constant pain and sleeplessness, he returned to London.

[1] This and the previous quotations are from letters to Lady Curzon.
[2] Letter to Mr. A. W. Keith-Falconer.

AT THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1923

Sitting:—Maharajah of Alwar, Duke of Devonshire, W. F. Massey, Lord Curzon, W. L. Mackenzie King, S. Baldwin, S. M. Bruce, Marquis of Salisbury, General J. C. Smuts, W. L. Warren, Viscount Peel, W. T. Cosgrave.