# CHAPTER XX

## THE CONFERENCE OF LAUSANNE

### 1922-1923

THROUGHOUT the series of events recorded in the preceding chapter preparations for the Peace Conference went steadily forward. On Wednesday, October the 18th, the day before the fateful meeting at the Carlton Club, Lord Curzon was busy with the draft of a long letter to M. Poincaré in which he put forward his proposals on the subject. At his suggestion, and with the cordial assent of the Swiss Government, Lausanne was agreed to as the seat of the Conference. Some delay in its assembling was inevitable in view of the domestic crisis in England, and the date suggested by M. Poincaré, namely, October the 30th, was changed first to November the 13th and ultimately to November the 20th.

On one matter Lord Curzon insisted, viz., that, before the meeting of the delegates at Lausanne, a definite agreement should be come to between Great Britain and France, and if possible Italy also, on the main provisions of the Treaty which they proposed to negotiate. He could not contemplate with equanimity the possibility of any serious disagreement between the principal Allies at the Conference table and in the face of Turkey and all Europe. Indeed he stated quite frankly that, in the absence of such an understanding, he was not prepared to enter the Conference at all.

A meeting was accordingly arranged, and on November the 18th he discussed all the more important points with M. Poincaré in Paris. The conversation was cordial in tone and resulted in a large measure of agreement; even if events were to prove that the statement in the official *communiqué* that it had " fully confirmed the

complete accord between the Allies in all the matters to be discussed," was unduly optimistic. Lord Curzon's personal estimate of the value of the interchange of views was a rather less sanguine one —" Poincaré, for him, was amiable. But his mind is formal, disputatious and precise, and I can hardly say that I found the warm and enthusiastic concord which he had promised."[1] Moreover he had yet to learn what attitude the new Italian Prime Minister, Signor Mussolini, intended to take up. " Soon we shall enter Swiss territory," he wrote from the special train in which he and M. Poincaré and the French delegates, M. Barrère—" for twenty-five years French Ambassador at Rome and a man of intelligence and power " —and M. Bompard were travelling. "But whether we are to meet Mussolini at Lausanne or are to continue by train or motor to Territet to meet his convenience I do not yet know. . . Anyhow there seems to be ahead another long agitated night with the whole discussion over again."[2] At Territet that evening the ground was once more traversed by the plenipotentiaries of the three principal Allies and an announcement of their agreement issued. The stage was thus set for what all devoutly hoped might be the final scene in the moving drama which had opened in the streets of Serajevo more than eight years before. At the first Public Session of the Conference, held at the Casino de Montbenon at 3.30 p.m. on November the 20th, this hope was eloquently voiced by M. Haab, President of the Swiss Confederation, in the course of his welcome to the delegates :

> " The whole world turns towards the shores of the Leman an anxious gaze in which, nevertheless, there shines a strong gleam of hope. All hearts are beating in harmony, animated by the same desire—to see your sagacity succeed in giving peace and quietude to the belligerent States, and thence to all humanity, which will thus be able to take up again its onward march towards the conquest of intellectual and economic prosperity."

There is no necessity to tell here in any detail the story of the proceedings of the Conference which dragged on for eleven weary

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 19th, 1922. [2] *Ibid.*

weeks. A full account of them was laid before Parliament and is easily accessible, consequently, to anyone desiring to acquaint himself with the long and laborious discussions which took place on every proposal put forward by the Allies. As chairman of the chief of the three Commissions to which the work of the Conference was entrusted—that on Territorial and Military questions—Lord Curzon found himself burdened with an onerous and responsible task. And it is to paint a picture of him in the part of lead in this intensely complicated drama, rather than to write the record of an historic episode, that I am primarily concerned. No estimate of his achievement is, however, possible unless the peculiar conditions under which the Treaty of Lausanne was negotiated, are understood. And a few words of explanation on the point may not be out of place.

Hitherto, the Treaties of Peace arising out of the world war had not strictly speaking been negotiated at all. They had been drawn up by the victors and imposed upon the vanquished. Only when the terms had been decided on, as Lord Curzon subsequently reminded the members of the Imperial Conference in October 1923, was the beaten enemy admitted to be told his sentence and to make the conventional protest of the doomed man. At Lausanne all was different. Here the Turks sat at the table on a footing of equality with all the other Powers. It was no longer a case of dictating terms to a defeated foe; it was a case of arriving at agreement by argument, persuasion and compromise. In Ismet Pasha and his colleagues the Allies met the representatives of a nation elated with recent victories, confident in the prowess of their army, convinced by recent experience that they had only to threaten a further resort to force to break up the unity of the Powers arrayed against them and determined, therefore, to fight every clause of the Treaty submitted to them. Even before the Conference had assembled the victorious Kemalists had stretched out their hands to grasp the spoils. The naval and military forces of the Allies had been requested to leave Constantinople; contrary to the provisions of the Mudania Convention the Angora Turks had started taking over the government of the city and had virtually deposed the Sultan who, realising that he had become little more than a passenger on a sinking ship, had

incontinently fled for safety to the welcome refuge provided by a British man-of-war. "Millerand," wrote Lord Curzon on November the 19th, on his way from Paris to Lausanne, "was as usual very frank and pleasant, and we conversed for half an hour. He was rather disturbed at our having taken off the Sultan and appeared to see in this a deep and subtle plot, I was able to reassure him about this since the first I had heard about it was from the newspapers."[1] Moreover as the negotiations proceeded it became clear that, despite the efforts which Lord Curzon had made to ensure the solidarity of the Allied front by previous consultation, there were points on which divergences existed. All of which helps to explain why the Treaty, which was at last signed on July the 24th, 1923, was not such a Treaty as could have been concluded in 1919, nor such a Treaty as was actually signed, though never ratified, in August 1920.

On November the 21st M. Poincaré left Lausanne after committing the interests of France to M. Barrère and M. Bompard; and the Conference settled down to steady work. No one knew better than Lord Curzon the nature of the task that lay before him. "I believe I was thought to have done well at the Conference to-day," he wrote on November the 21st, "showing the Turks, who were very irritating, a mixture of courtesy and firmness. It will be a long and desperate struggle."

He was, indeed, by far the most considerable figure at the Conference. Public recognition of his success at Paris when war was hanging in the balance, six weeks before, had greatly gratified him. And with indications that the Press were ready enough, if he would allow them, to do justice to his handling of a first-class and admittedly thorny international problem, he expanded visibly. The journalists of all nations gathered at Lausanne were quick to note the change. It was said of him that he had given up his taciturnity and his moody solitudes; that he shone in conversation with all and sundry and that he invited appreciative journalists to lunch. Within a very few days he had won the respect and admiration of the delegates. Those who had come prepared to criticise remained to praise. They remarked with delight the grand manner of earlier and more spacious days, yet combined with it an indefatigable courtesy which

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

prompted him to help forward every delegate, less amply equipped than he himself, along the path of the discussion. "But," as an observant onlooker noticed, "it must be along the path. Digression, so dear to the naturally eloquent in all continents, is stayed with a smile or a tactful reflection. Is the speaker in need of a name, a figure or a date? As likely as not, a murmur from the chair gives him the correct information—though not, it seems, always that which the speaker was relying on for his argument."[1] His own extraordinarily detailed and comprehensive knowledge of every subject that came under discussion was, indeed, a matter of astonished and widespread comment. Lord Curzon himself spoke modestly of the advantage which he found it. "I think such success as I am thought to have," he told Lady Curzon in a letter written on November the 23rd, "arises from the fact that I know my case pretty well and that somehow or other I have the art of getting on with Orientals."

The extent of the praise which was showered upon him both surprised and pleased him. "We are getting on with the Conference rather better than I expected," he wrote on November the 23rd, "and it is with the surprise of absolute novelty that I find myself everywhere praised (after the English pressmen's view of me) for conciliation, courtesy and tact!" He was depicted to the world as he had seldom been; for, since he had shed the "grand manner" in his intercourse with them, the portrait which those whose duty it was to inform the public of the progress of events at Lausanne were able to draw, was a more faithful likeness of the man than the caricature to which the world had become accustomed:

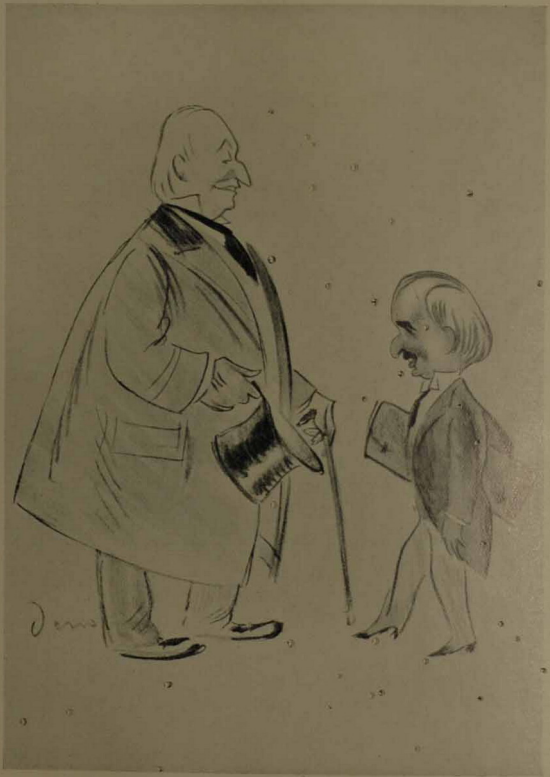
> "I wonder if you have read the wonderful tributes to me in the English newspapers, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *Evening Standard* and many others? I have suddenly been discovered at the age of 63. I was discovered when I was Viceroy of India from 39 to 46. Then I was forgotten, traduced, buried, ignored. Now I have been dug up, and people seem to find life and even merit in the corpse."[2]

[1] Mr. Perceval Landon in the *Daily Telegraph* of November 27th, 1922.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 28th, 1922.

Yet even now, the public did not obtain a complete portrait of this extraordinarily complex man. The little daily trials in connection not with great things but with small—things which if generally known would have done so much to present him as a being *in pari materia* with themselves—remained hidden from the world at large. The hazy idea of him as a sort of glorified Grand Panjandrum, sheltered in some mysterious way from the common experiences of the ordinary man, persisted. Yet, throughout his life, Lord Curzon seemed fated to be in special degree the victim of irritating if trivial domestic worries. And the fact that he was for the most part himself the author of his troubles did nothing to lessen the vexation which they caused him. No one who served him, in however humble a capacity, was ever permitted to perform his or her task in peace. Always Lord Curzon wanted it done differently. "I really think," he once wrote of one of his servants, "that the little housekeeper though quite willing is not at all competent. She has put the wrong covers on the wrong chairs everywhere. My own chair has gone and I am sitting on one of the little straight-backed green chairs—most uncomfortable." It was to no international crisis but to a comparatively trivial domestic mishap of a similar nature that he was referring when he told Lady Curzon, one day in October 1920, that even in her house of sickness she seemed to him to be in a haven of peace compared with "the world of storm and trouble and worry" in the midst of which he moved.

From his attitude towards his household it necessarily followed not only that he burdened himself, as has been pointed out repeatedly in these volumes, with an immense amount of wholly unnecessary labour, but that he found unusual difficulty in finding servants to suit him. "I am just going to put away your snuff boxes, etc.," he told Lady Curzon one day in March 1920, "before going down to tackle Bert Velot about Palestine."

A new valet had been engaged just before he started for Lausanne; but the venture was no more successful than many others. "—— is a perfectly useless valet," he wrote the day he reached Lausanne. "I don't suppose he has ever valeted anyone in his life. He cannot pack; forgets everything (left my foot-rest behind this morning) and is never there when wanted." Before a week had passed, one more



LORD CURZON AND ISMET PASHA AT LAUSANNE
(as seen by a French Cartoonist).

*By courtesy of* MONS. E. KELEN.

failure in the long series of attempts to secure a servant to suit him had to be recorded—"Having no valet I now have to dress myself." The reason was set forth in a letter written on November the 28th—"I have had the usual misadventure with my valet. He was blind drunk both yesterday night and to-night and was found dancing downstairs with the lady visitors. I dismiss him to-morrow and must do without."[1]

And though the greater accessibility which he displayed at Lausanne resulted in a truer picture of him being given to the public, it was to very few that he ever lifted the blind that was habitually drawn down upon the innermost places of his being. Those who, day after day, watched him at close quarters, may have suspected something, though they can hardly have guessed the extent, of the physical disabilities with which he had constantly to cope. "My broken 'cage' gives me great trouble," he wrote, referring to the steel support which in these days he always had to wear; "and yet I cannot afford to send it home for repair, for I should be without a support for a whole week."[2] They saw nothing of the constant inner struggle—hope alternating with fear, exhilaration with depression. Yet his mind, for all his outward calm, tossed feverishly on a sea of tempestuous emotion.

> "To-day we came to grips with the Turks. They were exceptionally rude and dilatory. So after they had made the most impossible demands I made a speech on behalf of the three great Powers, saying that we absolutely refused the points for which they were pressing and declined to give way. What will happen I do not know. Perhaps we shall learn to-morrow."[3]

These difficulties induced gloomy foreboding. "I do not think I will ever be Prime Minister," he wrote the same evening as he pondered despondently over the events of the day, "nor am I fitted for it. The chances against a success here are so great that my shares will go down."

[1]For an entertaining account of this particular domestic comedy the reader is referred to chapter VIII of Mr. H. Nicolson's "Some People."
[2]Letter to Lady Curzon, dated December 15th, 1922.
[3]Letter to Lady Curzon, dated November 22nd, 1922.

Progress was painfully slow and, on December the 14th, he wrote to Lady Curzon giving her a long account of the uphill battle which he had to fight:

> "We have had a day of much disturbance. The Turks are becoming impossible. Yesterday on the question of minorities Ismet made an irrelevant and rather insolent speech, attempting no sort of reply to the serious proposals which I had put forward on behalf of the Allies. I gave him an opportunity of making a better reply to-day. He did not take it. On the contrary his speech exhibited a complete indifference to the importance of the subject and a levity which was shocking. Thereupon I spoke with the utmost gravity. I said that neither I nor my colleagues were prepared to go on being treated in this way. If it were to continue we should leave Lausanne and Turkey must bear the responsibility before the world. I have now been here for over three weeks and not a single point is finally settled. It is wrangle, wrangle the whole day long. We have made every conceivable concession. But the Turks fight every point as though they were the conquerors of the world."

But any success, however short-lived, sent hope soaring, and this melancholy story was followed almost immediately by a shout of satisfaction:

> "I have really had a great triumph; for, after my indignant extemporary speech of yesterday, of which everyone here is talking, the Turks climbed down this morning and actually agreed to join the League of Nations, at which they had hitherto scoffed. I shall earn world-wide credit for this... Two days ago I was despondent about success here. To-day I begin to see a ray of hope."

While Lord Curzon was thus burdened with anxiety by events at Lausanne, he became quite unexpectedly the central figure in a sensational Parliamentary episode in London. One of the results of the Greek revolution in October had been the impeachment and

execution of M. Gounaris who, in his last desperate effort to save himself, had produced his letter to Lord Curzon of February the 15th, referred to in chapter XVII. On December the 3rd extracts from the letter were published in the *Sunday Express*; and, four days later, Sir E. Grigg in the House of Commons and Lord Birkenhead in the House of Lords asked for information, the latter declaring that not only had he never seen the letter, but that he greatly deplored the fact that the Cabinet had been given no opportunity of considering the grave state of affairs disclosed by it and of seeing whether there might not have been evolved from Cabinet discussion advice which might have prevented the ghastly tragedies which had followed. With ominous unanimity one member of the late Cabinet after another denied all knowledge either of M. Gounaris's letter or of Lord Curzon's reply; Mr. Lloyd George himself displaying as much astonishment at their contents as any of his colleagues.

It seemed, indeed, that Lord Curzon must have blundered in keeping from the Cabinet information concerning the state of the Greek army at a time when such information was of vital importance. It was not, however, Lord Curzon who had blundered, but those who attacked him. The whole thing was, in fact, a truly remarkable case of collective amnesia; for, as was conclusively proved, both letters had been circulated to the Cabinet, copies of them being found marked as "seen," among the papers of some at least of those who had professed ignorance of them. And in the belief—entertained of course in all sincerity—by the late Prime Minister that the letters had not been submitted to him, is to be seen a particularly striking example of the strange aberrations of which the human mind is capable. For not only had M. Gounaris in his letter of February the 27th, referred to in chapter XVII, informed Mr. Lloyd George of his communication to the British Foreign Minister and summarised its contents, but so recently as September Mr. Lloyd George himself had caused enquiries to be made at the Foreign Office whether any such letters had in fact passed between Lord Curzon and the Greek Prime Minister, and, if so, whether they had been circulated to members of the Cabinet? The reply had been in the affirmative and copies of the original letters had been supplied.

The facts were, indeed, beyond dispute; and on December the 11th Lord Birkenhead stated in the House of Lords that he accepted unreservedly the assurance given by Lord Salisbury that the letters had been communicated to the Cabinet at the time, and expressed his "sincere regret to every person high and low in the Foreign Office who was concerned in the circulation of these documents."

However much annoyance Lord Curzon may have been caused by the unsolicited notoriety which he derived from his having played so prominent though unwilling a part in the political sensation of the Session, he had little cause for subsequent regret, since the episode served to draw the attention of the public to the honourable part which he had played in the long-drawn drama of the Near East, the story of which has now been told in the immediately preceding chapters. But his irritation at the time was great, and was reflected in the bitterness of his comment on the burden of public life which crept into a letter to Lady Curzon written on Christmas Day—"I have often thought of you all during the day and realised that politics is a poor (even when it is not a dirty) game."

The end of the year saw Lord Curzon still at Lausanne and a Treaty of Peace not yet in sight. And on December the 26th he wrote a brief appreciation of the situation as he then saw it.

> "I have had a really bad day. Telegrams from all quarters indicating that the obstinacy of the Turks is deliberate and that they are preparing for a renewal of hostilities: and an interview of one hour and forty minutes with Ismet, who went on repeating the same old things twenty times over. One might just as well talk to the Duke of York's column. The Turks get more insolent and intractable every day and I am beginning to despair. . . Barrère and Garroni do not come back till to-morrow. I must then bring matters to an early head since nothing will induce me to go on with the pitiful game for another month."[1]

The failure to reach a decision was causing much anxiety in England; and in his correspondence with Lord Curzon, Mr. Bonar

[1] Letter to Lady Curzon.

Law was exhibiting a growing desire to see the negotiations at Lausanne brought to a speedy close at almost any cost. The Prime Minister was, in fact, seriously alarmed at the proportions of the Budget and was subjecting every head of expenditure to rigorous scrutiny. That we should make ourselves responsible for heavy outlays in nursing to adolescence the infant kingdom of Irak seemed to him quixotic and unnecessary. "As regards Mesopotamia," he wrote on December the 5th, "You know how keen I am, if we can, to get out of it." He never ceased pressing his view on this point upon Lord Curzon; and seized the opportunity, provided by the state of affairs depicted by the latter at the end of the year, to emphasise it once again:

> "The difficulties which you have so far succeeded in surmounting seem to be accumulating. To judge by the papers it looks as if it were possible that the Turks might seize upon Mosul as the ground upon which to break. This would be the most unfortunate thing which could happen in every way, as half of our own people and the whole of the world would say that we have refused peace for the sake of oil. . . If I made up my mind that we were free to leave, I would certainly not be responsible for continuing to hold the Mandate."[1]

And with this possibility in mind he invited Lord Curzon to meet him for a personal discussion in Paris. Lord Curzon looked forward to the meeting with little enthusiasm. "I have just got a telegram from Bonar," he wrote on December the 28th, "summoning me to Paris next Sunday for a day to see him. Oh, dear!"

His expectations of the lines on which the conversation was likely to run were fulfilled:

> "I found Bonar longing to clear out of Mosul, the Straits, and Constantinople, willing to give up anything and everything rather than have a row; astonished at the responsibility I have assumed at Lausanne and prepared for me to back down everywhere. . ."[2]

[1] Letter dated December 28th, 1922.
[2] Letter to Lady Curzon dated January 1st, 1923.

And if the meeting at Paris left Lord Curzon disturbed at what appeared to him to be the timidity of the Prime Minister, it equally left Mr. Bonar Law apprehensive of the enterprise of his Foreign Secretary. Turkish representatives in London, he informed Lord Curzon on January the 8th, insisted that it was the question of Mosul alone that prevented an immediate agreement at Lausanne. And he begged him to remember what he had endeavoured to impress upon him in Paris :

> "Indeed, although I think from conversations you know exactly what my views are, it is perhaps as well, to prevent possible misunderstanding, that I should again repeat that there are two things which seem to me vital. The first is that we should not go to war for the sake of Mosul ; and second, that if the French, as we know to be the case, will not join us, we shall not by ourselves fight the Turks to enforce what is left of the Treaty of Sèvres. I feel so strongly on both these points that unless something quite unforeseen should change my view, I would not accept responsibility for any other policy."

Lord Curzon was no more willing to go to war for Mosul than the Prime Minister himself. But he knew the strength of the case for retaining the vilayet as an integral part of the Kingdom of Irak, and he had not the smallest intention of handing over to Turkey a vast tract of territory, the retention of which he was certain could be more than justified in the eyes of the world. He waited, therefore, in patience until an opportunity of submitting his case to the judgment of Europe presented itself ; and when, towards the end of January, the Turkish delegate with greater courage than discretion gave him the opportunity which he sought, he seized it with avidity and with dramatic effect. In a statement made at a sitting of the Territorial Commission on January the 23rd, Ismet Pasha expounded his case for the rendition of the vilayet to Turkey. Before the end of the sitting he must have regretted his intrepidity. "I am grateful to Ismet Pasha," said Lord Curzon, "for having summed up the Turkish case in the statement to which we have just listened. I propose to take his case point by point and to give my reply, and I

shall be only too delighted if the Turkish case and the British case could be printed side by side and referred to the opinion of the world."

Lord Curzon's speech was an admirable example of the particular art of which he had always been so great a master. He knew the case far better than its Turkish exponents did. There was not a point of detail, however small, on which he was not able to speak with the authority derived from exact knowledge. First he stated with unanswerable logic the juridical and Treaty basis of the British position. Great Britain was under a threefold pledge which prohibited him as her representative from agreeing to the rendition for which Ismet Pasha asked; first, to the Arab nation to whom the British Government had given a solemn promise that they should not be returned to Turkish rule; secondly, to the Arab king of Irak who had been elected by the whole country including the people of the Mosul vilayet themselves, and with whom we had entered into definite obligations; and thirdly, to the League of Nations without whose consent we could not abandon the Mandate with which we had been entrusted. He summed up this preface to his more detailed reply to the specific arguments advanced by the Turkish delegation, as follows:

> "I hope that my argument up to this point will have convinced my hearers that it is quite impossible for my country, consistently with a due sense of honour, to run away from the pledges it has given, to break its word before the world, to cut out the vilayet of Mosul from the mandated territory and to give it back to the Turkish delegation."

He then proceeded to deal *seriatim* with the arguments, ethnographical, economic, historical and strategical, on which the Turkish case was based; and he very soon showed that against facts and figures which were ancient, incomplete and therefore demonstrably misleading, he was able to pit up-to-date statistics derived from careful investigations carried out by British officers who had visited every part of the vilayet, making an accurate record of the facts in each locality and in every town and village. Ismet Pasha had asked

what Lord Curzon could know about the population of Sulimanyeh and of Southern Kurdistan? It seemed that Lord Curzon knew a good deal about the population of both these places. There was not now, nor had there been for some years past, a solitary Turk in Sulimanyeh. And he proceeded to give to the Commission a mass of ethnographical information about the district in dispute which must have been gravely embarrassing to the Turkish delegation. The total Turkish population of the whole vilayet, he explained, was only 66,000 or one-twelfth of the inhabitants. And as to the Turks who made up that small fraction they were not Osmanli Turks at all. With ill-concealed delight the greater part of his audience listened to a brief but interesting historical digression:

> "They are descendants of a Turanian invasion from Central Asia which came to this country long before either the Seljuk or Ottoman invasions took place. They speak a Turkish dialect. It is not the dialect of Angora; it is not the dialect of Constantinople. There exist also a certain number of the families of the Turkish officers and officials who had been employed by the Turkish Government in that neighbourhood."

But here, from the point of view of the Turkish delegate's contention, was an awkward fact. A plebiscite had been taken and—"the whole of these people, except in the Kirkuk area, voted for inclusion in the Kingdom of Irak and for the Emir Feisal as its king." As for the city of Mosul itself, it was an Arab town built by Arabs. During centuries of Turkish occupation it had never lost its Arab character. "I am unable to understand," exclaimed Lord Curzon, "any principle of logic or equity by which it can be contended that this Arab country should be handed over to Angora."

From Sulimanyeh and Mosul Lord Curzon passed in orderly sequence to Southern Kurdistan. And here he was able to reinforce the data of the experts with knowledge derived from personal experience of the country. Lord Curzon had been to Southern Kurdistan. He had been the guest of Kurdish hosts. He did not wish, on this account, to pose as an authority on the country; but it at least gave him the right to take a discriminating interest in the

conclusions of the experts; and with gentle sarcasm he challenged the history of the Kurdish people as retailed to the Commission by Ismet Pasha:

> "It was reserved for the Turkish delegation in one of their papers to discover for the first time in history that the Kurds were Turks. Nobody has ever found it out before."

Other authorities had been less dogmatic:

> "The origin of this people is somewhat obscure. Ismet Pasha in one of his Notes quoted a single authority which was of opinion that they were of Turanian origin; but that is not an opinion that is shared by the best authorities, or indeed, so far as I know, by anybody else. It is a matter of general agreement that the Kurds are a people of Iranian race. They speak an Iranian language: their features are entirely distinct from those of the Turks, so are their customs and their relations with women. . .
>
> "As regards the general relations between Kurds and Turks, we all know that there have been constant manifestations of Kurdish discontent under Turkish rule. During the last four years the British Government have been bombarded with representations from disappointed Kurds asking us to interest ourselves in Kurdish autonomy or Kurdish independence. We have felt much sympathy for these representations. But, pray, do not let the Turkish delegation imagine for one moment that Great Britain desires to absorb a single Kurd into the British system. The whole of our information shows that the Kurds with their own independent history, customs, manners and character ought to be an autonomous race."

The economic and strategic arguments advanced by the Turkish delegation in support of their case were similarly demolished. A mere glance at the trade statistics was sufficient to dispose of the former; and as for the latter, Ismet Pasha's contention that, if the vilayet were returned to Turkey, its Southern boundary would

constitute a sound defensive frontier for the land of Irak, was based on a defective knowledge of the geographical features of the country—"Ismet Pasha has suggested that the Jebel Hamrin will make a good defensive boundary But it is well-known that this is not a great range of mountains but merely a series of rolling downs" A Turkish army based on Mosul would have Baghdad at its mercy. It could starve it into submission. It could, in fact, make an Arab kingdom well-nigh impossible. "I would not care to be on the throne of Baghdad if I had a Turkish army within sixty miles of me."

Lord Curzon then turned to answer an insinuation that had been made in many quarters that it was the presence of oil in the vilayet that was responsible for the reluctance shown by Great Britain to relinquish her hold upon it. And he concluded a memorable speech by playing a trump card which he still held in his hand. They had to determine the northern frontier of the mandated territory of Irak. The British Government were content, relying upon the strength of their case, to refer the matter to independent enquiry and decision and to abide by the result. To what arbiter should the question be submitted? Lord Curzon had no hesitation in making a suggestion—

> "As the area is part of a mandated territory and the British Government exercise mandatory powers there under the League of Nations, and as we cannot surrender or modify that position without the consent of the League of Nations, I think and propose that the League of Nations should be the body entrusted with the examination to which I have referred. . . . That is the suggestion which I submit to the Commission and the Turkish delegation and to which I await with interest their reply."

The speech created a profound impression alike upon those who listened to it and upon the far larger public which read it. Mr. Bonar Law who, as has been seen, viewed the question of the Mesopotamian Mandate from a very different angle to Lord Curzon, could not withhold his admiration for the manner in which he had handled the case. "Your speech," he wrote on January the 24th, "even as reported, was very good reading and I am sure you must

have enjoyed yourself—though perhaps that does not bring the results any nearer."

The note of mild pessimism on which Mr. Bonar Law concluded his encomium was not without justification. The Conference had now been in session for nine weeks. Great concessions had been made to the Turks. Yet they still showed little disposition to come to a settlement. And on the day after his speech on the question of Mosul, Lord Curzon discussed the whole situation with M. Bompard and the Marquis Garroni. As a result it was agreed that a time-table should be drawn up, under which the Turkish delegation would be given five days in which to examine the Treaty to which the Allies were now prepared to append their signatures. Every question of importance had been exhaustively discussed during the past nine weeks; and while the Allies declared their readiness to listen to representations on points of detail, they refused to reopen the discussion on questions of principle. It was agreed that, in the event of the Turkish delegates refusing to sign the Treaty, no further discussion could take place at Lausanne, whence the Allied delegations would withdraw at the end of the week.

With the Allies presenting a united front to Turkey, the prospect of a Treaty of Peace at last being signed seemed good. The whole situation was suddenly changed for the worse and the position which the Allies had laboriously built up undermined by the publication in Lausanne, on January the 30th, of a Havas Agency telegram containing a statement that the French Government had the day before instructed their High Commissioner in Constantinople to inform the Government at Angora that they did not regard the text of the Treaty submitted to the Turkish delegation at Lausanne as final, but as a document providing a basis for discussion between the Governments concerned. The effect upon the prospects of the Treaty was immediate. The Turkish delegation, quick to realise that the Allied front was once more broken, played for further time. Lord Curzon described the result in a letter to Lady Curzon, written after the sitting of the Conference on January the 31st—

> "My speech went off quite well this morning. But when Ismet Pasha asked for eight days' delay, and the French, Italians,

and myself retired to a private room to discuss it while the Conference was kept waiting, we had some very violent scenes. I absolutely declined to wait here the eight days or to allow the Conference to reassemble. The utmost I would agree to, and that with profound reluctance, was to wait here till Sunday night, when I mean in any case to return."

For the next four days all was confusion and uncertainty. "I have had two hours with Ismet this afternoon of the usual character," he wrote on February the 1st. "He knows now, however, that before Sunday he signs or I go, and wild horses will not induce me to budge." Still the Turkish delegation would not show their hand.

"Even at this late hour, midnight, the day before I go, I have not the slightest idea whether I am to get a Treaty or fail. The odds are, I think, decidedly against me, for my last shot has been fired and the Turks are running about everywhere swearing, but uncertain whether to surrender."

Lord Curzon had good reason for anxiety and irritation. The habits of a lifetime, however, prevailed, and finding that there was nothing more that he could do, he turned his mind to other matters. He spent his time while waiting for news of the Turkish decision in writing a long letter explaining in minute detail what his wishes were with regard to the filling of the incumbency which had fallen vacant at Kedleston.

The final scene in the long-drawn drama was enacted in Lord Curzon's room at the Beau Rivage Hotel on the evening of Sunday, February the 4th. There, at twenty minutes to six, were assembled the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Turkey, with their assistants and experts in attendance. A Memorandum setting forth the final concessions which the Allies were willing to make to Turkish *amour propre* had been submitted the day before. A reply to it, raising yet further points, had been received. On the question of Mosul, Ismet Pasha had asked that the intervention of the League of Nations might be postponed for a year, in order that

an attempt might be made to reach a settlement by direct negotiation between the Turkish and British Governments. Anxious, if that were possible, to clinch the matter by one final gesture of magnanimity, Lord Curzon assented. But the sands were running out and the end of concession had at last been reached. "The Treaty," he declared, "must be signed here and now. There are only a few hours left. The world is looking for a solution and we must find one before we leave this room."

The French and Italian representatives appealed in turn to Ismet Pasha to sign the Treaty. Yet he could not bring himself to do so. Having at last declared his acceptance of those portions of it which had been dealt with by Lord Curzon's Commission, he now raised objections to the provisions embodied in the economic and judicial clauses which had been the special interest of the French and Italian delegations. For two hours the discussion dragged wearily on, the Turkish delegates remaining deaf alike to argument and to appeal; and shortly before 8 o'clock Lord Curzon rose. A little after 9 o'clock, he said, he must be in the train. There was still a brief space before the door was closed irrevocably against success. If, after further reflection and consultation with his own experts, Ismet Pasha felt able to sign, well and good; if not, the Conference must come to an end with a confession of failure. It might be the last time, he added with some show of feeling, that he would ever see Ismet Pasha. He fervently desired to carry back to England a memory of friendship, and nothing was nearer to his heart than the hope that he might sign with him before he left a common pact of peace and goodwill.

Thus came to an end the famous Conference of Lausanne. A little after 9 p.m. the special train with Lord Curzon and the other members of the British delegation on board steamed out of the station. And it was not long before the world learned that no Treaty had been signed. The ill-judged gesture from Paris which was the cause of the final breakdown of the Conference was the more unfortunate in that at Lausanne itself Lord Curzon and the representative of France were in close accord. M. Barrère has himself borne testimony to the fact that, in spite of the forebodings of the pessimists, he worked throughout in harmony with the British

Foreign Minister. And it may confidently be affirmed that he saw in the outcome of Lausanne a striking illustration of the view that common action between France and England could carry all before it in the arena of diplomacy, while divergence entailed misfortune for both countries.

The temporary failure to obtain a Treaty did not, however, obscure the personal triumph of Lord Curzon.

> "I feel I cannot let this letter go," wrote one who had not always been a whole-hearted admirer of him, "without my telling you a little of what I feel about your signal public service at Lausanne. It was one of those miracles of statesmanship which deserves to stand with the work that Talleyrand did at the Congress of Vienna. You went into the Conference without a single trump in your hand and with everything against you, and yet, by sheer power of management, good sense and integrity of purpose and knowledge of facts, you soon gained complete predominance. I trust and hope that all will still go well; but even if it does not, your achievement will be undimmed. The nation owes you a great debt of gratitude, for you have recovered our diplomatic status which had fallen so low. . . ."[1]

This appreciation of Lord Curzon's achievement was a just one, as a cursory glance at subsequent events will show. After the break-up of the Lausanne Conference, Ismet Pasha proceeded to Angora, whence, at the conclusion of a stormy Session, the cause of peace supported by Mustapha Kemal Pasha and Ismet Pasha himself gained the day. There followed a letter from Ismet Pasha to the Allied Governments, together with a Note putting forward certain proposals for the modification of the draft Treaty presented at Lausanne. These communications were discussed by the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan at a meeting under Lord Curzon's chairmanship in London, in March; and, as a result of this exchange of views, identic Notes were despatched to Constantinople for transmission to the Turkish Government at Angora, inviting Mustapha Kemal Pasha to send representatives at as early a

[1] Letter from Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, February 17th, 1923.

date as possible to Lausanne, for the purpose of discussing with the Allies such of the Turkish counter-proposals as they were prepared to consider. The second Conference of Lausanne assembled in April with Sir Horace Rumbold, British High Commissioner at Constantinople, as the chief representative of Great Britain. For three months "the process of haggling," as Lord Curzon subsequently described it, "was continued with pertinacity and at a length that recalled the palmiest days of Oriental diplomacy in the past."[1] At last, on July the 24th, a Treaty of Peace was signed, and this wearisome and melancholy chapter in the history of the relations between Turkey and Europe was brought to a close.

It was easy enough for those who chose to ignore the conditions under which the Treaty was negotiated, to criticise it. Yet to have secured the agreement of all concerned to a Turkey restricted to the Anatolian plains and highlands and the narrow European territories of her former Empire up to the confines of Bulgaria on the one hand, and of Greece, with her frontier determined, with the exception of the tiny enclave of Karagach, by the course of the river Maritza, on the other; and to have won for the nations of the world the freedom of the Straits, with the guarantees which unfortified and demilitarised zones on each side of them afforded for the unhindered access of their warships and their merchantmen, were in the circumstances no mean achievements. That the Treaty secured to the minorities in Turkey—in the main Greeks and Armenians—a smaller measure of protection than he had striven to obtain for them, Lord Curzon did not deny.

> "The Turks in their passion for a self-sufficing and self-centred national existence were resolved," he declared, "upon purging their State of all alien elements—a policy which, in my view, was grossly mistaken, which has been attended by incidents of great cruelty and hardship, and which, as time passes, they will often have occasion to repent. I did, however, obtain this much, that Turkey undertook to apply for membership of the League of Nations after the ratification of peace; and at the hands of that tribunal the afflicted minorities will

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference, October 5th, 1923.

receive such protection as it may be in the power of Europe to afford."[1]

And if Lord Curzon was disappointed with the protection secured for the minorities, still less did he regard with satisfaction the financial and economic clauses of the Treaty. Nevertheless, he thought that, taking a broad view of what had been accomplished—the final restoration of peace in the Near East, the freedom of the Straits, the liberation of the entire block of Arab countries, the acquisition of the sacred soil of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the enhanced prestige of Great Britain in Turkey which was generally admitted, together with the appeasement in all Moslem countries which was already following on the reconciliation between Great Britain and Turkey, were results "sufficient to justify our labours at Lausanne and to silence the not always disinterested and frequently ungenerous critics who have derided our handling of a problem which they were powerless to compose themselves."[2]

It only remains to point out that Lord Curzon's confidence in the strength of the case for the retention of the vilayet of Mosul as an integral part of the Kingdom of Irak, which he had laid before the Territorial Commission at Lausanne on January the 23rd, 1923, was more than justified by the subsequent history of the matter. Direct negotiation between the Turkish and British Governments failed to provide a solution and in due course the question was submitted to the Council of the League of Nations. Though Lord Curzon did not live to see it, the decision of the Council on the question of the northern boundary of Irak given in December 1925, and eventually accepted by Turkey in June 1926, confirmed the King of Irak in his possession of the vilayet of Mosul, and justified in almost every particular the case which had been so brilliantly presented by Lord Curzon all but three years before.

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference, October 5th, 1923. [2] *Ibid.*