peculiar pleasure. "I can only attribute my exceptional good fortune," he wrote in reply to a correspondent who urged the distribution of one of his speeches, "to the fact that each of these speeches represented a burning conviction implanted in me by years of study, and fortified by the belief that a mission and a duty have been entrusted to my countrymen from on high."[1]

That it was this belief that lay at the root of his Imperialistic creed he made abundantly clear on many occasions, and, notably, in the course of a speech delivered at Birmingham in December 1907. Taking as his text "The true Imperialism," he spoke as one who, "by the accident of events, had been called upon to spend the whole of his working manhood in the study or the service of Empire, and to whom it had come to be a secular religion, embodying the most sacred duty of the present and the brightest hope for the future." He painted a graphic picture of the material loss which any dismemberment of the British Empire must inflict on the British people. But it was on the moral loss that he laid the greatest stress. "As for the priceless asset of the national character, without a world to conquer or a duty to perform, it would rot to atrophy and inanition." He denied altogether that Imperialism was a synonym for Jingoism, or Chauvinism or Militarism. It stood for the spirit in which the problem of Empire was handled; and that spirit involved a conviction, a policy and a hope. The conviction was a firm belief that the Empire was "a pre-ordained dispensation, intended to be a source of strength and discipline to ourselves and of moral and material blessing to others."

The policy was equally clear—it was the gradual welding of a number of loosely knit constituent parts into a great World-State; and to Imperialism alone of the many schools of political thought could they look to satisfy the needs and to hold together the framework of the British Dominion. But if it was to play this part, Imperialism must be animated by "the supreme idea without which it is only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; namely, the sense of sacrifice and the idea of duty." Except it be built up on a moral basis Empire must sink and crumble to decay. But true Imperialism

[1] Letter to Mr. E. H. Blakeney, dated March 2nd, 1906.

received this exhortation: "In the same way energy too much strained tends to excessive zeal, and energy too much relaxed tends to apathy. Therefore cultivate in yourself the mean." It is a parable upon whose moral Lord Curzon might have meditated with advantage.

Others there will be to whom, as they ponder upon the stress and turmoil of so strenuous an existence, will occur the question—to what end? The question has a personal and a more general aspect. Of the latter little need now be said, for the answer is writ large over the pages of these volumes and may be summed up succinctly in a sentence—to the end that he might serve his fellow men. Service to this cause or to that; the cause of learning or of art; service to the cause of human progress generally; and more particularly service to the State. This was the end to which Lord Curzon lived and wrought. And no more fitting tribute could be paid to him than that to which King Edward VII gave expression when he spoke of him as "a great public servant."

But what of the personal aspect of the question? Was it along this road that happiness lay? Some will say yea and others will say nay. To those whose ideal of happiness lies enshrined in the peaceful quietism of so much of the philosophic teaching of the East, his life can only wear the appearance of a phantasmagoria of unending horror—the life of all lives most diligently to be avoided.

> "Each day the thought recurs to me," wrote such an one from the placid reaches of an Indian river, "shall I be reborn under this star-spangled sky? Will the peaceful rapture of such wonderful evenings ever again be mine, on this silent Bengal river, in so secluded a corner of the world? Perhaps not . . My greatest fear is lest I should be reborn in Europe. For there one cannot recline like this with one's whole being laid open to the infinite above—one is liable, I am afraid, to be soundly rated for lying down at all. Like the roads there, one's mind has to be stone-metalled for heavy traffic—geometrically laid out and kept clear and regulated."[1]

[1] From a letter written by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore to a friend, on May 16th, 1893, and afterwards published in a collection of letters entitled "Glimpses of Bengal."

long was enjoyment of this unique experience permitted by the sleepless slave-driver within, and a week later he wrote from the same place—"In the long hours that I spend in my room here I have been compiling the index for my work on India, which is a very laborious task and one for which I should hardly have found time in London."[1]

But his industry though the most obvious, perhaps, was not from a psychological point of view the most striking of his characteristics. What gave to his personality its peculiar interest was its amazing contradictions and perversities. What more perplexing paradox could be imagined than that presented by the pomposity and the simplicity, the aloofness and the sociability, the broad-mindedness and the intolerance, the generosity and the pettiness, the exuberant affections and the implacable hates, the contemptuous arrogance and the strange humbleness of heart of this incalculable man? How many, even of those who were his friends, would have credited him with the humility displayed in his surprising admission of the superiority of the Durbar held at Delhi in 1911, to the ceremony which he had himself planned and carried through with so much success in 1903? "The Durbar itself," he wrote when congratulating Sir J. P. Hewett on his organising ability, "must have been ten times finer than mine, and I should like to have seen it."[2] Or again in his acceptance of defeat in the Final Examination at Oxford when he wrote:

> "In the eyes of the world, no doubt, I shall be knocked down several pegs—or what is more probable, I shall be confirmed in the position of sober mediocrity to which many have, on the whole rightly, consigned me."[3]

Among his many and diverse activities there was not one in which he was not liable at any moment to astonish and confound by the display of some startling inconsistency. Even his style in both speech and writing was characterised by a natural tendency towards floridity, it was nevertheless marked for the most part by an impressive earnest-

[1] Letters to Lady Curzon.
[2] Letter dated February 25th, 1912.
[3] Letter to Dr. E. S. Talbot, Warden of Keble College and afterwards Bishop of Winchester, dated July 20th, 1882.

testimony to the effect produced on men's minds by his appreciation of Alfred Lyttelton :

> "You have poured into it all the glow of your heart's friendship and sorrow, and given them such a vehicle as one might almost imagine carrying into the permanence of literature his personality and your grief. . . It is unforgettable that you have felt and spoken so." [1]

Few, indeed, could read the closing passage of his tribute to Alfred Lyttelton without being convinced that here was the outpouring of a heart too full to contain the feelings of affection and sorrow that surged within :

> "All will remember his endearing manner that seemed almost to partake of the nature of a caress, and was equally captivating to age and youth, to high and low, to women and to men. They will see again the sparkle of his merry eye and hear the shout of his joyous laughter. They will picture once more the virile grace of his figure, loosely knit, but eloquent of sinews and muscles well attuned, his expressive gestures and swinging gait. They will measure the quality of his mind, moderate and well-balanced in its inclinations, emphatic but not censorious in its judgments. They will think of his high and unselfish character and of his honourable and stainless life ; and as he passes into the land of silence and becomes a shadow among shadows, they will reflect with a life-long pride that they knew and loved this glorious living thing while he shed a light as of sunbeams and uttered a note as of the skylark in a world of mystery, half gladness and half tears."

But while it is plain beyond dispute that George Curzon was capable of great affection, it must equally be admitted that he could be moved to displays of violent and implacable hate. He could be ruthless in his animosity. There seemed to be a danger zone in his

[1] Letter from the Rt. Rev. E. S. Talbot, D.D., Bishop of Winchester, dated July 7th, 1913.

exquisite feeling. Of Lord Sandhurst, with whom he had not always worked in complete harmony in India, he wrote :

> " His profound natural courtesy, his chivalry of character and his inflexible devotion to the highest standard of duty, endeared him to all who had the good fortune to work with him ; and whether one was thrown in contact with him as a colleague in Indian Administration, a Court Official, or a fellow member of the Government on the bench, one could not fail both to respect and to love. Would that more men set so splendid an example both of character and conduct." [1]

To persons with whom he was brought into contact in the course of his public activities, whether political or other, he could display a similar consideration. To Sir R. Hermon Hodge, afterwards Lord Wyfold, he wrote on January the 3rd, 1915, a letter of warm-hearted sympathy :

> " I read in the papers that you have nobly given one of your sons to your country. No man living is less likely to rebel at this sacrifice than yourself, though no Father living is more certain to mourn the loss. Thank God you have other sons who, I hope, may be spared to you to perpetuate a gallant name. Meanwhile you have the heartfelt but admiring sympathy of —etc."

Hence the extraordinary variation in the estimates formed of him ; for with his bewildering diversities he both fascinated and affronted, attracted and repelled.

His vitality was such that when he exerted himself to please, he produced an effect that was almost physical in its reaction. As one for whom George Curzon entertained feelings of warm regard, once said to me—" if you chanced to run across him in the street, he seemed to leap to meet you." Yet for all his ebullient animal spirits, which in his earlier days, at any rate, rendered him a familiar and congenial figure in the midst of the most festive company, he

[1] Letter to Lady Sandhurst, November 3rd, 1921.

It was this that enabled him to acquire control of his sensitive physical and mental mechanism. It was the source of an immense earnestness which had in it something of the fanatic, and which was in its turn the basis of so much of his success. "George Curzon," declared one who knew him well, "is the only man I know who could make a speech in his pyjamas without looking ridiculous." The occasion was a day in the summer of 1904 on which Lord Curzon, chained to his bed by illness, had been descanting upon the supreme necessity of British administration in India being founded on the most rigid conception of justice towards the people of the land.

Brought up though he had been in the strict tenets of the Christian church, he found himself unable, while yet comparatively young, to accept the essentials of the Christian creed. It is uncertain when exactly the full realisation of this intellectual revolt against the miraculous in the Christian doctrine flooded in upon him; but no one who reflects upon the self-examination to which he subjected himself as a result of his visit to the Holy Land, referred to in Chapter IV of Volume I, can doubt, in spite of his vehement protestation at the time, that it was then that the corroding acid of scepticism first bit into his mind. His full and busy life left him little leisure for abstract speculation; but he could not dispossess himself of the desire, when once it had been awakened, to find an answer to the questions which scepticism prompted—questions concerning the "How" and the "Why" of the Universe, the "Whence" and the "Whither" of Man? His questionings led him to no very definite conclusions; but they defined and strengthened the simple basic faith which accompanied him through life—that the Universe was an expression of divine purpose, and that Man, for all his insignificance and seeming impotence, was a vital element in an inscrutable but Divinely ordained plan. It was this ever present conviction that gave to his work in India its special character and that lifted it on to so high a plane. It is not without significance that more than one of his speeches made at that period of his life were singled out, by different persons at different times, as breathing so lofty a spirit of morality and patriotism as to render desirable their employment as texts in the schools of Great Britain—a fact which afforded him

was a lofty and inspiring creed ; and to any who doubted he would say :

> " From the sordid controversies and the sometimes depressing gloom of our insular existence, look forth ; and, if the summons comes to you, go forth into the larger fields of Empire where duty still calls and an illimitable horizon opens. Preserve with faithful attachment the acquisitions of our forefathers ; not tabulating them with vulgar pride, but accepting the legacy with reverence and holding no sacrifice too great to maintain it. Be sure that in our national character, if we can keep it high and undefiled, still lies our national strength. Count it no shame to acknowledge our Empire Mission, but on the contrary the greatest disgrace to be untrue to it ; and, even if God no longer thunders from Sinai and his oracles are sometimes reported dumb, cling humbly but fervently to the belief that, so long as we are worthy, we may still remain one of the instruments through which He chooses to speak to mankind."

He could not understand anyone believing that man was the hapless victim of blind chance. Thus, in reply to a cry of despair from a beloved friend at a time of great anguish, he wrote :

> " The only other thing I deprecate is your saying that you have lost all faith. Faith in what ? Why the only thing in which we firmly and finally believe is not in each other, nor in Christ, nor in Christianity, nor religion, nor philosophy, but in the God that is somewhere behind them all. You do not believe in him the less for this tragedy. Nay, it is so savagely inscrutable that it almost makes one believe the more ; since lurking somewhere there must have been some motive or reason, imperceptible to us, but in some degree or other ordained." [1]

Twenty years later his faith was the same, and he defined it in similar though rather more elaborate terms :

[1] Letter to Violet, Duchess of Rutland, at the time of the death of her eldest son, dated January 10th, 1895.

EPILOGUE

"What is the common thing in all religions that appeals to all of us?" he asked in a letter to a friend. "I suppose the existence of an all-pervading, all-powerful Spirit (for want of a better word) which must have created the starry Heavens, made the miracle of Nature and the even greater miracle of man—and had an object, however inscrutable, in doing all this—which implanted in man, as distinct from animals, the sense of right and wrong and taught him to dream of a life everlasting."

But there was a strain of rigid rationalism in his nature which rejected the distinctive doctrines of all systematised creeds:

"To such a conception (i.e., that of an omnipotent and omnipresent God) all creeds, dogmas and formulas are subordinate; in its light, sacraments and ceremonies become mere forms; the so-called Holy Scriptures a highly idealised branch of human literature. Jesus Christ takes his place alongside of Buddha as the preacher of a rare and sublimated ethics and as the type of a perfect humanity."

But while this uncrystallised Theism sufficed for himself and, indeed, was as far as his powers of belief were capable of carrying him, he realised that it must prove inadequate to the bulk of the religiously minded:

"The weakness of the theory seems to be in its application to ordinary people who are always looking for a Voice from on High. Through whom, then, does God speak to man? If Jesus Christ was only a Nazarite Socrates, if Moses was no more than Confucius, Isaiah an earlier Savonarola, Saint Paul a forerunner of Martin Luther, where are the oracles of the Almighty to be heard? How are people to worship? What authority and where written are they to obey?"

His difficulty in finding an answer to this question led him to the conclusion that the truth enshrined in the religions of mankind was relative and not absolute; that religion must necessarily take a

form suited to the temperament and stage of development of the worshipper. For those for whom the "Ethical Theism" which he himself professed was insufficient, there must be the religion of the mass of worshippers in all countries—of the vast army of the devout who demanded:

> "Miracles, prophecies, the Son of God incarnate, the Saviour hanging on the Cross, images, processions, intercessions, prayers, oblations, and perhaps the extra spice of a Heaven and a Hell."[1]

From the point of view of the influence which it exerted upon him, however, it is not so much the particular form of belief which he professed that is important, as the deep and unalterable conviction with which the belief itself was held. "Though my views about religion are not very orthodox," he told Lord Roberts, "I am a firm believer both in the duty and efficacy of prayer, and I do not think I have ever missed a day in my life myself."[2] It was this unfailing source of spiritual aid that enabled him in all the difficulties and trials of life—and how many and grievous they were—to be of high courage and to keep his eyes lifted to the stars. From India he once wrote to a friend and companion of those full and glorious days whose lighter hours had sparkled with the high spirits and resounded with the laughter of a band of joyous comrades:

> "All sorts of clouds seem to roll up between the present and the dim delightful past. Where are those days gone? Gone, burned, only a faded memory—but an eternal spell. Next summer I am going home to see if I am remembered and to save myself from dying here. Will anyone know me or care for me? Or shall I find a grey-haired company trudging with myself to a common end? . . . I, at times, suffer terribly from my back and one day it will finish me. But so long as one is marching, I say let the drums beat and the flags fly!"[3]

[1] Letter to Sir F. Younghusband, K.C.S.I., January 23rd, 1914.
[2] Letter dated October 26th, 1914.
[3] Letter to Violet, Duchess of Rutland, dated September 13th, 1903.

EPILOGUE

And nothing ever shook his belief in the persistence of personality beyond the grave, for he never departed from his conception—formed at an early age—of the individual as a permanent entity, clothed for a little time with an earthly body as with a garment. His eclecticism did not, therefore, reject such articles of the Christian creed as the Communion of Saints, and he saw no inherent improbability in apparitions of the dead or the dying. His conviction as to the nature and destiny of individual man grew in strength as the years rolled by—"You can rest assured," he wrote, on November the 3rd, 1921, in his letter of sympathy to Lady Sandhurst on the death of her husband, "that wherever his emancipated spirit may be, it is well with him and that he will watch and wait for those whom he loved." And he was supremely happy in his belief, which was no mere theoretical supposition but a living and ever present certainty, that when death claimed him, ties of love and friendship which had given so great a zest to life would infallibly be renewed.

Here, then, was the controlling force that enabled George Curzon to rise superior to the disabilities of constant physical suffering and of a vivid and capricious temperament; that moved him to dedicate his life and talents to the service of the State; ever to set duty before convenience or inclination; "to pursue high ambitions," in the telling words of Lord Oxford, "by none but worthy means"; to take—by the general assent of his fellow countrymen—"an assured place in the long line of those who have enriched by their gifts and dignified by their character the annals of English public life."[1]

[1] Speech in the House of Lords on March 23rd, 1925.