

THE FUTURE OF THE INDO-BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

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The future of the Indo-British commonwealth by Josiah C. Wedgwood

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JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD

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INDO-BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

BY
JOSIAH C. WEDGWOOD, D.S.O., M.P.

WITH A PREFACE BY
VISCOUNT HALDANE, F.R.S., K.T., O.M.

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ADYAR
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And at Krotona
Los Angeles
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The old pre-war British Empire is gone—in the sense of colonies or subordinate nations clustering around one, master-nation. The British Empire itself is developing into a real League of Nations, a group of partner-peoples. The old nationalism was regimentation. The New World will be a world of individualism controlled by Britain and America.

*GENERAL J. C. SMUTS,
Prime Minister of South Africa.*



PREFACE

I HAD the opportunity of reading the manuscript of this little book. I was so impressed with its outlook that I have asked leave to write a few lines on the subject.

To the whole of the diagnosis of the present state of affairs throughout the British Empire, I do not profess to commit myself. I do not know enough, and I do not think anyone can know enough, to be certain of all the ground. What interests me is the breadth of outlook, and a certain quality in the estimate of results, amounting to brilliance.

The author sees, as others of us do, that the great war has precipitated what was already in solution. There is now a definite residuum which was not distinctly observable earlier. This is likely, not only to increase, but to be of increasing importance. For the rest, that

from which the precipitation has come is growing clearer.

For alarm, I doubt whether there is any real cause at all. The process in operation to-day is one which has been as unavoidable as it has been natural. It is only if we are narrow-minded and try to interfere artificially with what we cannot safely endeavour to arrest, that danger is likely to arise. The age is one of a tendency which has become both obvious and universal. But it is taking effect within the limits of human nature—human nature, which is everywhere in the main the same, and which history has shown to be in the end dominating for good when not interfered with.

What we have to do is to cultivate in ourselves and in our neighbours the larger outlook upon our national lines. We all need more knowledge, intellectual and spiritual. Both fall within the forms of knowledge, and without both the world will remain incomplete.

The change which is coming is not greater than that which Christianity introduced nearly two thousand years ago. Then many were alarmed, for reasons which were to prove so misplaced that we have now forgotten them. To-day the world is moving nearly as rapidly. One has only to live in London at the present time in order to become aware of the fact. What is extreme in some phases of new movements is steadily losing its sharp edges as democracy grows. We are learning that democracy is in the main conservative in tendency. That is because it appears as cautious, in this country certainly, wherever it does not know and is therefore not convinced. Only when it is thwarted in what it is striving towards, does it become alert and aggressive. Now it does not seem as if to-day democracy, here at least, were striving after anything very dangerous or even definite. What it asks for is more knowledge, for itself and for its rulers, and more knowledge

has not in the past resulted in violent action. It is narrowness of view, arising from the lack of the larger outlook, that the history of the past shows to have caused danger of violent action.

The moral seems to be that we have to educate democracy and ourselves at the same time, and for the rest to have faith in human nature. Reforms embodying the fruits of reflection will necessarily follow an increase of understanding. That is as it should be, and it is a way of averting danger. Moreover it is the only way. Rule by the sword is progressively becoming impossible. The military failure of Germany in the world-war is the last and most convincing demonstration of this. Understanding and power are now seen to be closely allied. The lesson has not yet been adequately assimilated. But it is being learned rapidly.

The author of this book seems to me to be preaching just this gospel. That is why the book attracts me much, irrespective of questions