

AUSTRALIAN NATIONALISM, AND SOME OF ITS ENEMIES.

The belief that Australia will never really find her feet till she is a distinct nation is so general that there may be said to be a doctrine of Australian Nationalism. People who share in this belief hope that Australia will shake off many of her old-world fetters and develop national characteristics which will enable her to produce a national literature, a national art, and a national policy which will be the result of a fusion of European characteristics and local peculiarities. They do not look on Australia as a rather nondescript and second-rate overflow of England and Scotland; they regard her as the youthful heiress of the whole world, and also of the unique riches of Australia herself. They hope that she will live to produce something that will be better than, or at least different from, anything the world has known before. Australia is the most-favoured of all lands, and the most unlike the countries of Europe. It is the hope that she will be able to bring forth something that will be as permanent as the sculpture of Athens and the drama of Elizabethan England that makes it seem worth while working towards the development of an Australian nation. For while Australia is regarded as a duplicate of England, and while she looks to London for inspiration and authority, she will never be able to produce anything more than an imitative culture, which could not help being lifeless. This doctrine of Australian Nationalism maintains that, for Australia to achieve the most she is capable of, she must ultimately, when she has strength, become a nation.

The acceptance of this doctrine does not imply belief in the desirability of separation from the Empire. The present condition of affairs, under which Australia is free to grow, is generally satisfactory as a temporary condition, based on mutual self-interest. But it is the future that is looked to by Australian Nationalists. As the country grows in population, strength, wealth and virility she will want to stand on her own feet, to have a chance, not merely to wait and grow, but to think and act as her own needs suggest. So all that "Australian nationalists" can do at present is to propagandise and try to develop a national sentiment and a national character which will show themselves in a patriotic attitude and current questions.

Many people who live in Australia and who would be expected to have as high hopes as any for the future of Australia are not Nationalists, but Imperialists. They think that the best possible future Australia can desire is one as a junior-partner in the Imperialist concern, and that all aspiration for a unique Australia is moonshine or poison. They feel that the Empire is homogeneous, that Australia's destiny is within the Empire, and that Australia should always be a colony, looking to London as its capital. Many Imperialists in Australia, as in England, realise that the present Imperial position is temporary, and that there must be a choice, as the British Prime Minister, Mr. George, has said, "between immediate concentration and ultimate dissolution." So they advocate a revolution in the system by which

Australia and the dominions and dependencies are related to the mother-countries, often along lines of close organic Imperial Federation.

But it is probably true to say that people in Australia who shudder at the thought of Australia as a nation, and who hope that Australia will always find her place within the Empire, are influenced by one or more of the three following considerations,—commercial interest, sentimental gush, and a belief in the Empire as a power for good. They are untouched by the idea that Australia is intrinsically different from England and the other parts of the Empire.

Many people who live in Australia, and whom therefore we may by courtesy term "Australians," are led to distrust any policy of Australian Nationalism by reason of their conviction that the Empire works to the financial advantage of all concerned, or, anyhow, of themselves, and that therefore Australia's place will always be within the Empire.

Others feel that England or Scotland is their real home, and that any policy which aims at the cultivation of a distinct Australian form of civilisation is in itself bad. These people look at Australia and the world in terms of England. Imperialism to them means close adherence to their England, and Nationalism to them is something they cannot understand. These people, who are thus absentees from Australia in sentiment, if not in residence, have great influence by their control of education and the press, and they teach that the First Loyalty is to the Empire, and that England is our Home. They become lyrical with all kinds of cries about "Our Debt to England." Thus a great many people in Australia, by instinct or by education, are decidedly opposed to a policy of Australian nationalism. To them such a policy is disloyal, traitorous and revolutionary, incompatible with prudence and self-respect.

But apart from these, there are people less sentimental and less mercenary who live in Australia, and who are yet scornful of a nationalist policy. To them the world is full of devouring Empires and helpless non-Empires, with the British Empire as the only exception, a great power for good. We are told that the Empire stands for the preservation of the invaluable "British liberty," for the preservation of world-peace, and for the cultivation and civilisation of the less enlightened parts of the world. It would take too long to answer these idealistic Imperialists on their own ground, and to analyse the Germanic ideal of Kultur which inspires their beliefs, and to examine the means by which the Empire would help to maintain peace while remaining a force of potential aggression. But it is necessary to note that these Idealistic Imperialists shut their eyes to the facts that every addition to the Empire during the last forty years has been in Asia and Africa, in places where there is a big population, and where the only advantage goes to a small body of English capitalists. They shut their eyes to the wars that have been caused, or just averted, on account of petty commercial disputes in out of the way parts of Asia.

And they do not show what particular good close and permanent participation in the Imperial business would do Australia. Even supposing England can do some good by her Imperialistic policy, and even supposing

the British Empire is, unlike most other Empires, a power for good (we cannot stay to argue about this at present), Australia could never be more than a very junior-partner in the business, and if the Imperial bonds were made closer she would be expected to act in relation to peoples and countries which she could never hope to understand, even if England can.

The arguments of Imperialists, whether selfish, sentimental or rational, do not seem particularly cogent to frighten Australians from nationalist hopes and a nationalist policy. And if the present system is felt to be adequate for the present, and a change in the direction of further individuality is felt to be desired for the future, Australian nationalists must assert themselves against all proposals to set the Empire on a firmer basis by means of anything like a federation.

SLIPRAIL.

(To be concluded.)

THE FREE RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP.

What It Stands For.

Members of the Fellowship are not asked to give assent to any hard and fast doctrinal statement. The attempt to imprison the truth of religion in rigid form is not only futile, but harmful. The following statement is therefore merely tentative. Those who read it are asked to remember that "the letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive."

The Free Religious Fellowship stands for Freedom with Fellowship in Religion.

I. **Freedom** is incompatible with dogma; i.e., with the attempt to limit, by outward authority, that spirit of inquiry, which is itself a part of true religion. "The only infallible guardian of truth is the spirit of truthfulness." Life is the great sifter of doctrines, and the ultimate court of appeal.

Each member of the Fellowship is therefore responsible for the forms of his own religious belief only.

II. "**Fellowship** is life; the lack of fellowship is death." Religion, like all other human interests, is social, and requires for its realisation the give and take of common life. The Free Religious Fellowship, by uniting its members in the bonds of comradeship and good will, aims at strengthening them to meet the deeper problems of life.

III. **Religion** is a natural and permanent human interest, arising spontaneously from the reaction of man's spirit to his physical and spiritual environment. It can never be fully or finally expressed by any verbal statement, though every such statement may enshrine some imperishable truth. Religion constantly seeks outward expression in acts of worship and duty, but its roots lie hidden in man's nature. In its essence, religion may be described as the aspiration of the spiritual in man towards fuller communion with God, and the constant effort to live the spiritual life made possible through that communion. It is not, therefore, a mere intellectual exercise of emotional luxury, but an adventure of the soul among spiritual realities.

CURRENT COMMENT.

In the matter of general ideas one does not nowadays look to the academies for light, nor, it must be added, sweetness. Professional culture has come out into the market-place, and its voice is not distinguishable from that of the rest of the mob. The clear and impartial analysis of ideas, which should be the business of culture, is for the moment in abeyance. We find professors writing in the newspapers, but have long ceased to be shocked by the discovery that their temper and their English are those of the surrounding columns. To be sure we have in our own University Professor Tucker, a scholar and a man of taste, who certainly does keep alive the traditions of culture. When the general public was growing hysterical about the Napoleonic qualities of Mr. Hughes, his subtle and restrained satire on the modern Demosthenes was calculated to restore our sense of proportion. This ability to keep poise and balance amid the ferment of ephemeral enthusiasms is one of the finest fruits of a classical culture.

Yet one is inclined to avoid reading a book by a Professor. "Australia," by Professor Gregory, does not sound tempting. One can imagine how our own illuminati would treat the subject. Though some of them have actually lived in the country quite a number of years, there would be a strained air of diffidence in their approach, combined with an honest determination to remember that Australia was a bright jewel in the Crown of Empire, after all. "The characteristic which always seems to me the chief distinction of Australian politics," says Professor Gregory, "is their dominant idealism. The Australian differs perhaps most strikingly from the American or Canadian by being more idealist and less romantic." It doesn't quite sound like a voice from the academies! Professor Scott, studiously compiling his history-books for schoolboys, would be puzzled by such penetrating bits of analysis, and others might even question their good taste. I have been wondering who Professor Gregory is. He surely could not have got his information from the thoughtful articles in the "Round Table."

"The word 'worsen' has, it seems, no place in the vocabulary of a journalist," wrote Mr. Maurice Blackburn in a recent letter to the "Argus." "It is none the worse for that. Approved by Milton, Johnson, De Quincey, Southey, Carlyle and Stevenson, this vigorous and simple English word need not fear the journalist's frown." One can imagine the journalist looking up these names in one of the handy books of reference to make sure of their respectability. The word "worsen" may even be accepted and take a place among the polysyllables that lumber to the leader-writer's aid when he sits down to clothe his proprietor's ideas. But it is rather light and racy for its associates. Our newspapers are written in a confused and cumbersome jargon that the authors Mr. Blackburn quotes would hardly understand, but that every office-boy recognises for dignified English. And a British Prime Minister said of a certain paper that it was written by office-boys for office-boys.

The depositaries of industrial power are the unions. The unions must be made "blackleg-proof" by absorbing all workers, manual and mental. And along with organisation must go education—that is, the spread of a knowledge of the aims, ideals and methods of unionism. There must be no more strikes for higher wages. Experience shows that such strikes, even when apparently successful, cannot prevent the rise in rent and the cost of living, which counterbalances every rise in wages. The aim of future strikes, and the objective of the industrial movement must be the control of industry by the unions. When this objective is attained, there will be an end of strikes, and of the wage-system. The only alternatives are either the indefinite prolongation of the present industrial strife, with its material waste and its deepening of class animosity, or the final enslavement of the workers to private industrial despots or to a bureaucratic State. But we accept neither the theory of a permanent division of classes, nor the dogma of the divine right of private employers, nor yet the German dogma of the infallibility of the State. Let the State mind its own business, which is politics, and let the unions mind their business, which is the management of industry. Only by this demarcation of functions can there be any real efficiency in either sphere.

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And having used the word "efficiency," let us define it, so far as it relates to the sphere of industry. There is a lower and a higher conception of efficiency. The lower is that of the private industrial despot, the bureaucrat, and the writers, whose business it is to provide their masters with a philosophy. The philosophy of this lower efficiency is mechanical and materialistic, its standards of measurement quantitative; it ignores precisely the most important factor in labour, human personality. The higher and truer conception of efficiency, on the other hand, applies to work a qualitative standard, and treats men and women as spiritual beings. It therefore recognises that the surest guarantee of efficiency is the interest of the worker in his work. And the prior conditions of interest are freedom and responsibility. To our academic exponents of the Prussian gospel of a low mechanical efficiency, which defeats even its own low end by engendering friction and strife among the workers, we commend the more excellent way of safeguarding the human rights of the worker, and, above all, his right to the position of a responsible agent, controlling, through his unions, the conditions of his own labour. In other words, the way to attain real efficiency is to strengthen the unions and give them more and more status and responsibility. Whatever hampers, weakens, or degrades the unions makes for inefficiency in industry. We are not afraid to trust in the workshops the men whom we are prepared to trust in the trenches. For, as we have already said, the spirit of the unions is the spirit of the battalions.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONALISM.

(Concluded.)

This "doctrine of Australian nationalism" is not a merely academic concern; it is not above the clouds. To subscribe to it, it is not necessary merely to see the fallacies in Imperialist methods of thinking and to picture an ideal self-sufficient Australia. It is necessary to develop a habit of looking at present-day problems in the light of a future ideal, and to desire to help Australia to work out her national destiny.

Australia is a great island continent, occupied at present by a few million whites who are not much different from the people of Western Europe. Its great natural resources, its unique geographical and economic characteristics, its late start, its freedom from many of the contaminations of Europe, seem to suggest that Australia is one of the most favoured countries of the world. Australia is worth developing, and patriotic Australians are intent on drawing out all the wealth and freshness that lie in her. It is reasonable to suppose that Australia is not so important now as she will be in the future, and it looks as if the future may take on whatever form we Australians set ourselves to aim at. So a theory of what we desire Australia to become is important in itself, as influencing our outlook on all proposals for the development of Australia.

And the issue between Nationalism and Imperialism is forced, because of the behaviour of militant imperialists who are not terrified by the difficult conditions of the time from bringing forward schemes like those of Imperial Federation. Federationists hope, by the establishment of an Imperial super-Parliament, to make the relations between the component parts of the Empire more logical, more democratic and more efficient. It is probably quite true that there would be some gain in imperial efficiency if Imperial Federation or less complex and revolutionary schemes were a fact, unless the rigidity of the scheme led to the dissolution of the Empire because of irritation. But it is clear that the Imperial Parliament would have to interfere with all kinds of things like the tariff and immigration policies of Australia; Australian representation (however nominal) at this Parliament would involve her automatically and actually in every little concern of English capitalists in Sierra Leone or Guiana. Australia would be reduced to the elevated position of a suburb of London.

The present condition of affairs, however satisfactory for the present, cannot last for ever, and Federationists and people like the British Prime Minister are always stating that, if we are not satisfied with plans of "immediate concentration," we must be prepared for "ultimate dissolution." So a knowledge of what we want Australia to become in the future, and a recognition that there is another destiny possible to Australia than the imperialist, are the best weapons for those whose patriotic instinct and whose observation makes them see the hatefulness of schemes of Imperial Federation.

Thus for Australians, who have the hope that their country will produce something unique and eternal, and thus play her part in the work of the world, the theory of Australian nationalism is useful in two obvious ways—it enables them to look ahead and to escape remaining in the dark, and it enables them to meet theory with theory, and to estimate the value of present-day proposals by considering what these proposals are likely to contribute to the future Australia of the ideal. The belief in the doctrine of Australian nationalism makes simpler other problems than those concerning the relations between Australia and the Empire. Population is the most pressing need for the continent which has one inhabitant to every square mile. But the quality of the population is as important as the quantity. Australia wants to create something great, and to this end there must not be any very great racial differences within the nation. The question whether black or white races (for colour is a sufficient though very unscientific test of race) is superior, is irrelevant; all we know is that they are so different that they will not mix, and, even apart from the very important economic considerations, a mixture of races would be fatal to the hopes of a great Australian nation. That nation would have to be either white or black; the beginnings are white, therefore it must not be either black or grey.

The question of the Northern Territory is at present chaotic enough, and there seems no chance of an improvement, but if the ideal of a great, unique Australian nation is remembered, two things stand out as absolutely necessary—the Northern Territory must be made suitable for settlement, and not tinkered with as at present; and the Northern Territory must never be alienated from Australia, even if it looks as if American meat trusts or European philanthropists would work it more efficiently.

As an indispensable to the maintenance of a White Australia policy, and, indeed, as an indispensable to the preservation of everything that gives promise of an Australian nation, defence against possible aggression is necessary. Our geographical isolation is not a sufficient protection, and, as we know too well, war is not a thing of the past. We cannot rely on help from other countries, and the real Australia would not want to. As we have no take measures of protection, it looks as if a citizen army and navy, implying compulsory training and compulsory home service in time of war, is the fairest, most honest and most self-reliant form of measure.

At present Australia is cursed by an arbitrary division into six more or less distinct entities, and by the concentration of most of her energy into six capitals of these pretentious principalities. If only to stop the present centralisation and urbanism, some scheme of unification and redistribution seems necessary, a scheme which would divide Australia in such a way that she would have a chance to grow and yet to retain her rational system of political division and economic decentralisation.

Moreover, while the wealthier classes, full of old-world prejudices and scornful of things Australian, exist to dominate the industrial world, there can be nothing national in the economic life of the country. A belief in Australian nationalism implies a desire to destroy the present economic

system, if only to make it national. The Australian nation will have to be democratic, and in the present state of affairs there is not industrial democracy, the most fundamental democracy of all.

This belief that the Australian nation has a destiny to fulfil, and this habit of looking at national problems in the light of this belief, have nothing to do with suggestions for separation from the Empire, either now or in the near future. No true Australian could wish to provoke trouble with the Empire, merely with the idea of giving Australia a chance to stand on her own feet. From the Australian point of view, it would be a ghastly tragedy if Australian nationhood were achieved by too sudden agitation or by war. People who would try to provoke trouble in order that Australia might be "cut free" from the Empire would be as doctrinaire, as light-headed, as flippant as the lions of Imperial Federation to-day.

But circumstances will change as Australia grows in strength, and the contingency may arise when Australia, in accordance with a natural law of development, will have to assume the full responsibilities of nationhood. "Australian nationalists" do not flinch from the prospect, but believe in preparing for it, convinced that the real Australia will not come till then, and anxious to mould Australian life so as to make the process of development as easy and as free from trouble as possible. The reactionary influences to-day are so numerous that it is necessary to keep in the foreground this idea of Australian nationality, not less in war-time than in peace. Otherwise the idea may well be completely lost to sight, and the natural easy evolution of Australia to nationhood may be impossible, and Australia may be unable to contribute her distinct share to the general civilisation of the world.

SLIPRAIL.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

"Mr. Hughes was trying to win the war mainly by adjectives."—Archbishop Mannix.

So, while the world was one whirlpool of strife,
Ground he at Grammar;
Still, through the prattle, parts of speech were rife:
While he could stammer,
Eloquent still to voice his masters' views,
Adjectives filled him,
Till wicked Mannix, poking fun at Hughes,
Utterly killed him.
Muffle the drums, square chests, erect each head,
He was a jingo!
Lo the pale Patriot, silent now and dead,
Stripped of his lingo!

R.H.L.