

are absorbed they cease to be a foreign body ; once they are absorbed into the great corporation, a it were, of the Dominions, then the interest of the Indian Government, of course, will cease ; and there is nothing that the Indian Government, and there is nothing that anybody connected with it, there is nothing that the Secretary of State for India, dislikes more than interfering or appearing to interfere with the domestic affairs of the great Dominions. Now, I am not insensible, of course, of the grave difficulties which stand in the way. I know how very difficult it is to bring home always to local opinion that local views and opinions are not necessarily coincident with the wider interests of the Empire, and I know quite well that those who are listening to me as representative of the Dominions—whatever they may or may not have done—desire that a solution of this question should be found, and I do most earnestly plead that, when later in this Conference they take into consideration the practical measures which they may adopt for the solution of this question, they will bear in mind the intense feeling that has been aroused on this subject in India, and will bring home to their own people that in the highest interest of the Empire the aspirations of India should be respected.

Difficulties of Problem.

I know that there are great difficulties. The Prime Minister, in his opening address, spoke of the contacts of civilization. There are contacts, of course, here of more than one civilization, and you have peoples differing in tradition and social habits, fashioned in the course of centuries—thousands of years, I may say—fashioned by differences of national surroundings, by differences of secular and religious thought. We have to deal—and we should never forget when dealing with India that we have to deal—with ancient races full of the pride of race ; we have to deal with ancient religions full of the pride of religion. That is, of course, one of the great differences we have to remember in dealing with the position of India as compared with countries farther west. There are, for instance, seventy millions of Moslems in India—seventy millions in India ; but in communion with them through religious ties and rites there is a vastly greater body—hundreds of millions of Moslems—stretching in a great belt from the Gulf of Malaya right across to West Africa—hundreds of millions of Moslems, who, in their hour of worship, all turn their faces to Mecca.

Indian Culture and Traditions.

We have the pride of the Hindoos in their own history, in their recollections of the past ; they look back to, shall we say, the Mauryan Empire, the memories of Chandra Gupta and of his famous grandson King Asoka. Their memories stretch to an even earlier time when, scarcely noticed by history, their Aryan ancestors were moving down from the North-west Frontier, the traditional path for the invasion of India, along the plains of the Five Rivers now called the Punjab ; they look back to dim far-off times, to a date long before the Jutes and Angles and Saxons and Norsemen, the original elements of which our race is composed, landed on these shores ; when Rome itself was a mere village ; before the Roman legions garrisoned the Great Wall which used to run from sea to sea in the north of Britain ; a period even before the Druids reared the gigantic monoliths of Stonehenge.

I press this subject on the Conference, and I hope, with the consent of the Prime Minister, that they will listen to Sir Tej while he deals with the subject in more detail.

STATEMENT BY SIR TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru : Prime Minister, let me at once say how deeply grateful I feel to you and to His Majesty's Government, and may I thank you and His Majesty's Government and the various Prime Ministers for giving me this opportunity of a free and full discussion of the question in which India is to-day so vitally interested. I fear I may take some time, but I shall crave your indulgence for more reasons than one ; the most important of those reasons is the importance of the subject. I am glad that His Majesty's Government have decided to set apart a special day for this subject. That being so, am I not entitled to draw from it the inference that His Majesty's Government do really recognize the importance of this question ? When it is known in my country that His Majesty's Government recognize the importance of this subject, and that that recognition is shared by the various Dominion Prime Ministers, that fact alone will inspire them with some hope.

Before I proceed further, may I also express my deep gratitude to Lord Peel for the assistance he has given me in helping to bring this subject up before the Conference, and for the speech which he has delivered to-day, which has filled me with gratification, and which I have no doubt, when it comes to be known to my countrymen, will fill them also with gratification. He has identified himself to-day completely and unreservedly with every sentiment of our national honour. That is what I appreciate more than the moving eloquence with which he delivered his great speech this morning.

I may well produce in some quarters the impression of being a fighter. I do not object to criticism of that kind. Really and truly, I am fighting the cause of my country, and the Premiers of the various Dominions, who have in their day fought the cause of their country, will not object if I fight the cause of mine. But I do fight, let me tell you frankly, as a subject of King George, and I fight for a place in his household, and I will not be content with a place in his stables.

Unanimity of Indian Feeling on Question.

Prime Minister, let me tell you that the problem of Indians overseas is of vital importance not only to India, but to the whole of the Empire. Whatever may be our position in regard to self-government, howsoever distant we may be from that cherished dream of ours, let me tell you that,