

# The Awakening of the Orient

A Great Wave of Democracy is Sweeping Irresistibly Over Asia

SOME poppy seeds, lying for centuries in the cracks of a stone in an ancient Egyptian grave were recently exposed to light and air by a random blow from a German spade. Within a few days, as if by magic, a luxuriant crop of the finest poppies in the world sprang into life and compelled attention by the vigor of their growth. Some among the foreign tourists wondered how seeds so old, and lying so long buried under a stone, could have vitality enough left in them to respond so boldly to the action of light and air.

That is what has recently happened in the Orient—Persia, India, China, Japan. A whirlwind of democracy has passed over the entire Asian continent, exposing to sun and light the germs of progressiveness that for lo! these many centuries have lain hidden in the fissures of the rocks of superstition, ignorance and conservatism; and as a result of this, a new life is surging through one and all of the Eastern lands. Nations that were dead or dying—civilizations that were in the process of disintegration—have suddenly completely veered around, and where not long ago was death and decay, today one finds a rejuvenescence and progression whose virility is truly beyond compare. Persian autocracy has been overthrown and India is seething with a new spirit.

When the present becomes past, and this generation is succeeded by posterity capable of getting a dispassionate focus on the current events of today, the first decade of the 20th century, it may safely be predicted, will go down as the most epoch-making period in the history of the human race. During these ten years the greatest revolution of our times has taken place in Asia. The Oriental has completely changed his viewpoint and earnestly set about remodeling society according to his new notions. The reorganization of the Orient is taking place on such a gigantic scale that no one could afford to fail to take cognizance of this Oriental readjustment or neglect to familiarize himself with the details of the transformation that is going on in Asia.

#### Asian despotism is falling.

THE wave of democracy has struck the rock of Oriental absolutism that for ages has been considered positively unshakable, and today, before this onslaught, the mountain of Asian despotism is falling to pieces. Despotic government, which for hundreds of years has been considered a purely Oriental institution, and which even now is regarded as the only form of government that is possible in Asia, or that is suited to the temperament of the Asian, in the first decade of the 20th century is being swept off the face of the Eastern lands like so many cobwebs ruthlessly brushed away by a broom.

At the time of this writing, the Orient has become the storm center of democracy. Turkey and Persia today are the battlefields where privilege and people's rights are engaged in a fierce hand to hand fight. The sultan of Turkey and the shah of Persia have remained unshaken with the spirit of our times, which is distinctly democratic in its nature and trend. Today the one is making his last stand, the other was defeated in his fight against the surge of demand for popular rule that is bound to utterly destroy one-man government. Both Persia and Turkey have long been the scenes of a bloody revolution. The younger generation is imbued with the longing for liberty. The older people, being conservatism-crazed, are in favor of the continuance of the old order of things. The two factions are fighting with bayonets, and it is easy to see that the liberty-loving younger generation is winning, while those who are in league with the despots are destined to be wiped off the slate of existence. It is but a question of time when chaos will be evolved out of chaos in Turkey and Persia, and when this time comes, both



This is a remarkable photograph. The group contains representative students in an Oriental university from Japan, Philippines, Korea, China, Siam and India.

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these lands will be governed by monarchs whose power is limited by a constitution—or these countries will declare themselves to be republics and do without a monarch.

#### India a political volcano.

INDIA also has come to be a veritable volcano active with political agitation, which has for its platform the initiation of a government conducted in the interests of the people and by the people of the land. The agitation in Hindostan is less concerned with revolt against the British rule, and more with the democratization of the government. The political leaders in India demand that if the English remain in the country, there will be no objection to their doing so provided they prepare East Indians to govern themselves and keep substituting the native agency in lieu of the foreign administration, until, in course of time—and a short time—the government of Hindostan will be run by its own people, as is the case in Canada. The English seem to be complying with this important demand of the people. A few weeks ago a Hindu councillor was taken into the innermost sanctum—the executive council of the governor general—to actively help in the governance



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of his land. The highest posts in the administration are now being given to natives of India, and small parliaments are being held in the various provinces of Hindostan. Every indication points to the conclusion that the spirit of our times is prevailing upon the Englishman to liberalize the administration of India.

China has already started on its career to give, by installments, constitutional government to its people. Many astonishing things have been happening in China since the Boxer uprising. Today travelers and correspondents can scarcely recognize Peking, so amazing has been even the mere external transformation of the Dragon Empire. Judging from the outward

signs, the country has become possessed of a new light, a better outlook, a mental and political regeneration—a national conversion.

The Chinese government has promulgated a constitution—flowery and rhetorical in its preamble, but nevertheless promising better things for the land Celestial. In this bulky document, the government repeats its former promise to establish provincial and local self-government, and a national parliament. The program, as it is arranged, will cover nine years, and the great task has already begun. Local self-government will be the first reform instituted under the new order of things, to be immediately followed by a complete revision of the criminal code and the reorganization of the national finances. Provincial assemblymen and constitutional commissioners are being elected this year. In 1916, if all plans materialize into action, parliament will be summoned and a premier will be named to act as the head of the executive government.

#### The condition in Japan.

IN Japan the popular form of government has been in existence for nearly a generation. Daily the power of the mikado is becoming more limited. Fifty years ago the mikado was the autocratic ruler of Japan. His word was law. There were councillors, to be sure; but the emperor seldom consulted them, and he was not at all influenced or bound by the advice they gave him. The present Japanese mikado saw the folly of such a procedure, and, of his own accord, began limiting his powers and rendering his subjects supreme in their land. The work of educating the people in popular government has now been going on in Japan for nearly a half century, and as a result of it the Oriental isle is a limited monarchy. The mikado is still at the head of affairs in the Sunrise Kingdom, but he derives his authority through the love of a grateful people more than anything else. Moreover, there is every sign extant promising that the Japanese people are being progressively democratized. As it is, the most common and ignorant of the Japanese are imbued with a patriotism unexcelled in quality or quantity by that of any other people, and the little brown men and women talk about governmental affairs in their homes with the zest and understanding of an American politician. It may be added here that today the parliamentary form of government is in full swing in Japan. A premier is at the head of the executive end of the administration, and legislation is enacted by the Japanese houses of parliament.

In matters pertaining to popular government the Sunrise Kingdom proved the John the Baptist to the entire Orient. The Russo-Japanese war seared the lesson Japan had to teach Asians in regard to modernizing themselves, on the memories of all Oriental nations; and as a direct result of it, all Asia is today experiencing the greatest shake-up in its entire history. Japan has inspired the East to a better appreciation of herself and her opportunities and the metropolis of the Sunrise Kingdom already has become the rendezvous of young men and women from all parts of the Orient. They