

A Question for Socialists, by Hilaire Belloc, M.P.

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NOTES OF THE WEEK.

SIR EDWARD GREY's circular note to the Powers suggesting the appointment of an independent Turkish Governor for Macedonia is satisfactory if only as evidence that the British Foreign Office is really anxious to secure immediate reform. It seems more than doubtful whether our proposal will be accepted by the other Powers even as a basis for negotiations with the Porte, but it is something that we should have taken the initiative instead of waiting for Austria or Russia to move. The geographical position of these two countries may originally have justified the action of the European Concert in appointing them as its representatives in South-Eastern Europe, but experience has shown that they cannot be relied upon to initiate real reforms in Macedonia. Naturally enough, they have regarded their own economic interests as paramount and have given these the first place in their dealings with Turkey.

With the possible exception of France, who is fully engaged in Morocco, there is no one of the great Powers so disinterested in this matter as Great Britain, and we have therefore solid grounds for believing that negotiations instigated by ourselves have the greatest possible chance of being brought to a successful issue. We congratulate Sir Edward Grey on having translated speeches into action, and on having thrown, for the moment, the onus of delay upon the other members of the Concert, but we hope he will not too easily feel himself relieved of his responsibilities in the matter.

Sinister rumours have reached London during the past week of a possible diplomatic rupture between Japan and China over the Tatsu Maru incident. We cannot believe that there is serious reason for these fears as yet, although the Japanese Jingo Press have been showing somewhat extreme excitement. The matter in dispute is a question of fact, and it is impossible for us to know with any certainty which party is in the right. Japan has every right to resent the capture, in neutral waters, as she believes, of a vessel carrying the Japanese flag. But the Chinese officials assert that the

seizure took place not in neutral but in Chinese waters, and that the vessel was conveying arms and ammunition to Chinese insurgents. Under the circumstances our ally's ultimatum seems to have been delivered with overmuch haste, and unless she agrees to an impartial investigation into the facts before taking further action she will not be likely to get much British sympathy.

Mr. Morley's statement in the House last week in regard to the administration of the Indian Sedition Law was wholly unsatisfactory. Mr. O'Grady asked the Secretary of State whether he was aware that native editors were being severely punished for alleged sedition which was in fact merely Nationalist propaganda, and whether, in view of the fact that the Government campaign against the Press was regarded by the natives as a campaign against the faith and aspirations of the people, he would take steps to have the term sedition strictly defined and the penal code generally amended. Mr. Morley replied, or rather avoided replying, by saying that the word sedition did not occur in the text of the penal code, and added, "so long as the persons concerned give expression to their 'faith and aspirations' without attempting, in the language of the code, to excite hatred, contempt, disaffection, or enmity between class and class, they will, I am quite sure, not be disturbed."

This sort of verbal jugglery is utterly unworthy of Mr. Morley. His attempt to raise a laugh at Mr. O'Grady's expense by exposing that gentleman's inaccurate knowledge of the wording of the penal code was the merest debating society trick—hardly the sort of thing one expects from a Minister who stands even higher in the world of letters than in the world of politics. Mr. Morley, as well as everyone else, knows that what these editors are charged with, and punished for, is sedition, whether it is called by that name or not; and he knew that what Mr. O'Grady wanted was that the crime itself should be clearly defined. Mr. Morley may, if he chooses to be credulous and optimistic, feel sure that the loose words of the code which he quoted are not being misinterpreted and used as a weapon of oppression by inferior Courts. But we are far from being so convinced as he appears to be, and we hope that Mr. O'Grady will take an early opportunity of raising this matter again, and will insist upon receiving a more courteous and a more satisfactory answer.