

of this year's Imperial Conference, and I am most grateful to Lord Birkenhead for the kind consideration he has shown to me in this respect. It is my good fortune to have to acknowledge, on behalf of the Indian Delegation, the very cordial welcome extended to the Conference, and to thank you, Sir, most sincerely for that welcome and for the kind words with which you have greeted us representatives of India. I should like also to say how much we have appreciated the eloquent passage at the close of your speech to-day in which you have suggested the spirit and the ideals that should inspire the Conference in the great tasks awaiting it. It will be the single desire of the Indian Delegation to take part in your discussions in that spirit and with those ideals, and to co-operate to the full extent of our opportunities in bringing the Conference to a successful and harmonious conclusion.

Position of India.

We realize that our position as representatives of India necessarily differs in some respects from that of our colleagues, the elected representatives of the self-governing Dominions, and on that account we value all the more highly the privilege of assisting at this great Council of the Empire. The basis of our presence here to-day is special because India herself occupies a special, and indeed unique, position in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Though her status in many respects is different from that of a Dominion, she looks forward to the progressive realization of responsible Government as an integral part of the Empire, and has already reached a stage of individual development as an important part of that Empire, through which alone it has been possible for her to be admitted to your counsels and also to take a place, side by side with the Dominions, as a member of the League of Nations.

As you, Sir, have indicated, India is a country including many races and peoples. It comprises many religions and a variety of cultures in the setting of an ancient civilization, which in consequence make it difficult for her people to understand always the problems that confront the West, and are not infrequently not in harmony with their mentality or their traditions. I would add that the Indian Empire which we, with the Secretary of State, represent here to-day includes both British India and also the Indian States which cover about one-third of its territory and contain nearly one-fourth of its vast population of 320 millions.

India's Pride in the Empire.

India is proud of her place in the British Empire and there can be no question that the real India's ambition is to remain in it. I should say that if there is one feeling more than another which unites all these varying elements I have mentioned—all the different peoples and classes in India—it is the desire to maintain and to strengthen the bonds of sentiment and loyalty which bind together the several units of the British Commonwealth. Since I was appointed a delegate of India to this Conference, I have, naturally, had occasion to study the proceedings of previous meetings. Perhaps, therefore, I may venture to say, Sir, that in reading the report of the Conference of 1923, I was especially struck by a passage in your opening address at that meeting. After pointing out that the peoples represented in an Imperial Conference are drawn from all the continents, from all their races, and from every kind of human society, you likened the British Commonwealth to a network of steel which, embedded in concrete, holds more than itself together. That, Sir, if I may say so, is a true and pregnant illustration, and its truth perhaps explains what might be called the special significance and value of the British Empire to India. The Empire, besides all else that it stands for, is a link between European and Asiatic civilizations and a bridge between the peoples of the East and the West, and, standing as it does for peace, it must tend to allay racial antagonism and to promote harmony of aim and conduct not only within its own limits, but, by its example, throughout the world at large.

India's Part in Imperial Defence.

I have said that it is India's desire to preserve this link. It is also her ambition to develop her own growth in order that she may be ready to take up as soon as may be possible her share in the common responsibility that naturally must fall to her as a partner in the Empire. In the field of Imperial defence India's long and exposed frontier renders her problems, both on land and in the air, more immediate and urgent than those of any other part of the Empire. They place on her a strain which, as communications tend to remove physical barriers, is likely to increase rather than diminish; but, despite her own preoccupations, India regards Imperial defence from the widest point of view, and, should danger threaten, she will not be found backward in putting forth her maximum effort for the common good in the direction most necessary at the time. You, Sir, have referred to the Indian Navy. While India is proud of this, the first step towards the provision of her own defence on the sea, the ever-increasing effort necessary to secure her land frontiers cannot but limit the extent to which she can develop strength on the sea. We must recognize, therefore, that she must continue to rely in the main on that great bond of Empire, the British Navy, for the security of her sea communications.

India's Interest in Imperial Development.

Then again, Sir, in speaking of Empire settlement you took a broad view and laid stress on the essential nature of the problem, which is to build up the prosperity and strength of the national life of the several component parts of the Empire so as to give the citizens of each opportunity for healthy individual development. Empire settlement in the narrower meaning of the phrase is, of course, of more urgent interest to other parts of the Empire than to India, though I may mention in passing that the Governments of British Guiana and India have recently agreed on the principles of a scheme for the settlement of Indian colonists on a small and experimental scale in that colony. But, regarding the question with a broader view as a problem of Empire development, I may say that India has continued recently to make rapid strides in the development of her own resources. As