

That the political and economic equilibrium of the Orient has rarely been less stable than it is to-day, is the all but universal testimony of observers of Far Eastern affairs. We are assured on every hand that the restless ambition and aggressiveness of Japan presages expansion, exploitation, bitter rivalries, and stubborn conflict; that Russia is but temporarily checked, not in any real sense defeated, in her great purpose of dominance toward the Pacific; that China is certain to remain a disturbing factor of prime importance, whether as an awakened and regenerated power or as the tool and victim of predatory nations; that, in brief, the future historian of the Orient will look back upon the late Russo-Japanese war as merely an episode — at the most, a sort of prologue — in the perennial combat of Far Eastern forces.

The most recent presentation of this line of argument by one who may fairly be termed an expert is to be found in Mr. B. L. Putnam Weale's "The Coming Struggle in Eastern Asia." This volume is announced as the conclusion of a series whose publication was begun five years ago. In "Manchu and Muscovite" (1903) the point of view was distinctly unfavorable to Russia, and the author did not hesitate to shower praise upon the Japanese as the ablest rivals of the Muscovite and as the sole vigorous champions of the higher civilization in the Orient. At the close of the war (during which Mr. Weale was a careful personal observer of Far Eastern affairs) appeared a more ambitious work under the title "The Re-shaping of the Far East." In this book the status of China, Japan, Korea, and Manchuria, and of the Occidental powers represented in the Orient, was described at great length; but the author felt obliged to recall much of his earlier laudation of Japan and to substitute for it an attitude of moderate censure, particularly when Korean affairs were under consideration. In 1907 the third book in the series was published, "The Truce in the East and its Aftermath." In it the author advanced to a more pronounced arraignment of Japan, maintaining that Japanese aims and ideals had developed in a direction absolutely different from that which had been expected, and that they had become plainly subversive of the best interests of the Orient and of the world at large.

The volume now under review, "The Coming

* THE COMING STRUGGLE IN EASTERN ASIA. By B. L. Putnam Weale. Illustrated. New York: The Macmillan Co.

Struggle in Eastern Asia," is hardly the ablest and most convincing of the series, but it contains much that is worth while, and in relation to Mr. Weale's personal views it marks a full and unreserved conversion from the pro-Japanese of five years ago to the strongly anti-Japanese of to-day. The book is presented by its author as "a careful revaluation of the old forces in the Far Eastern situation, as they displayed themselves during the first half of this year (1907)." It falls into three parts, the first dealing with "Russia Beyond Lake Balk," the second with "The New Problem of Eastern Asia," and the third with "The Struggle Round China."

The first part comprises a very detailed description of conditions in easternmost Russia as the author found them during an observation trip in the autumn of 1906. The starting-point is Vladivostok, which, it is pointed out, has become once more "the outlook post, the advanced entrenched position of great White Russia." After an interesting exposition of the commercial and military strength of this point, the author goes on to tell of the Ussuri railway, Khabarovsk and the Amur province, and the present status of Manchuria. The fundamental fact, in Mr. Weale's judgment, in the whole problem of the future of Eastern Asia is the steady, irresistible, inevitable advance of Russia — of *European* Russia — toward the Pacific. "The Siberia of the story-books," he declares, "has already disappeared never to return. Siberia must now be looked upon as the exact Russian equivalent of the American Far West or the new Canadian Northwest. Railways, a great movement of virile men and women, agricultural machinery, houses of brick, wood, and stone, and all the inventions of a marvellously inventive age, — in a very short interval these can make an unconquered country, which is inhabited by inferior races and is gifted with a wholesome soil and climate, a new piece of Europe, as European as the countries of the old world, as white as the whitest." It is Mr. Weale's conviction that they not only *can* do this, but that they are already rapidly doing it in Asiatic Russia.

The second part of the book is taken up with a consideration of the present state of Japan, with reference to government, industry, commerce, finance, military and naval strength, colonies, emigration, and international relations. Despite the strong anti-Japanese slant already mentioned, the treatment is candid and illuminating. Not the least valuable chapter for the

general reader is one describing very clearly the actual workings of the Japanese imperial government, accompanied by the complete text of the much misunderstood Japanese constitution of 1889. This is followed, in the third part, by a similar interpretation of present-day China. Although one may not glean from it a great deal that is really new, one cannot put his hands upon a more sane, compact, and readable discussion of the subject in English.

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