

will be admitted by any student of the subject that the League of Nations is to-day a source of weakness to Great Britain, and she never would have gone into it if she had not believed that the United States would also be a party to the League of Nations. Britain is confronted with great obstacles and dangers owing to her adherence to the League of Nations. She has either to break faith with France or to coerce a number of small Balkan states which might at any moment cause trouble, and there is little doubt that her comparatively isolated situation in the League of Nations is a source of danger. But the United States is not a party to the League of Nations. A league of nations that does not include the United States or Germany or Russia or Turkey, with a united population of almost three hundred million, or nearly fifty per cent of all the white races on the globe, cannot help being weak and ineffective in the exercise of any power to stop war.

We are told that we should remain defenceless, because a number of people cry, "Peace, peace", when there is no peace. But do we require to be taught the lesson a second time? Who was so blatant in his declaration of peace previous to the Great War as the Emperor of Germany? Did we not pay in the blood of the human race for our foolish belief in his interested assurances? It is an absolute fact that many of the men lying in Flanders are there to-day because we had to rush in men who were unprepared for war. We paid in blood the price of unpreparedness. When we recall the occasions of men going up to the front, infantry men who had never fired a rifle in their lives until they reached the front, and men who took charge of aeroplanes the third time they had ever seen one, because there was no time or material or instructors, artillery men supplied with twenty rounds of ammunition to last them a week in competition with an enemy who could fire that number of rounds a minute, we begin to realize that we paid in the slaughter of our men because we listened credulously to the assurances of the German emperor and people of his ilk.

There is another argument, in addition to the one based on the League of Nations, which has been advanced. We are told we are going to have disarmament. We have had disarmament conferences and are going to have more of them. I have no doubt we will have more, but as to their efficiency, I think the matter will have to be considered very carefully. The actual results of disarmament conference recommendations up-to-date have been exceedingly small, very much

[Mr. Neill.]

smaller than is popularly supposed. The sole limitation imposed by the disarmament conference at Washington was not to limit the size of fleets at all. It was supposed to be, but all that was limited was the size and numbers of the capital ships; that is men of war like a dreadnought. There was also a provision as to aeroplane carriers. And they did put a restriction on auxiliary ships—that is, smaller than capital ships—and the restriction they put on was that they were to be of not more than a certain size and a certain gunnage capacity, and the result is that instead of reducing the navies it has increased them, because you will understand you can build more ships when they are a reasonable size and reasonable in price than when you require to build an enormous dreadnought. Suppose the Utopian dreams come true—and they have never yet come true in this world—but suppose disarmament is an accomplished fact; suppose they succeed in suppressing the instincts, the ambitions and passions of every nation in the world, whether they belong to the League of Nations or not, and we have universal disarmament—and you would not expect a ten year old child to believe it—what does it mean? It means a great advantage in one respect and one respect alone; it would be a tremendous advantage to the human race, as it would stop the enormous economic waste caused by maintaining armaments, and that is all it would do.

I want to lay down another principle and emphasize it, because it is almost the crux of my argument. Disarmament does not stop war. I think it is the popular idea, but it is not correct. No greater fallacy was ever enunciated than the proposition that armament is the cause of war or that disarmament would stop war.

Mr. SHAW: Does the hon. gentleman say that armament would stop war?

Mr. NEILL: No. Armament, to a certain extent encourages war. It encourages a nation to be truculent towards its weaker neighbours. Disarmament, to a certain extent, also encourages war, because a weak nation, defenceless and unprotected, offers an opportunity of attack by a bullying or aggressive neighbour who wants to take advantage of the weaker nation's necessity. To that limited extent, disarmament encourages war and armament also encourages war.

Mr. SPENCER: What, in the hon. gentleman's opinion, is the general cause of war?