

Current Events

Abyssinia—the End?

ABYSSINIA is no longer in the news: it is doubtful whether it is even on the map, except under the ignominious title of Italian East Africa. The League Assembly which met to acknowledge defeat and to beat the retreat from its principles was one of the most tragic events of recent times. Two things went to heighten the tragedy. The one was the presence of the Emperor, the other the reminder of the dissipated might of "the well-ordered ranks of the League countries imposing sanctions." The Emperor's speech was probably the most dignified and moving yet heard at Geneva. His eye-witness account of "the terrible tactics which killed tens of thousands" of his subjects who fell victims to "the rain of mustard gas" serves as a warning to other nations of the doom that awaits them if they neglect the opportunity, even at the eleventh hour, of organising a warless world. "Fifty-two countries," he reminded the Assembly, "assured me in October that the aggressor would not be successful and I ask them to remember their promise, on the faith of which I directed the struggle against the invader."

"In my confidence in the League," the Emperor continued, "I did not believe that right would bow to force. Hundreds of millions of people throughout the world shared my confidence. . . . I am defending the cause of small nations. It is not merely the settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute that is at stake. It is the future of those little States who place their trust in the sanctity of treaties. It is the whole international morality that is at stake." But his appeal fell on deaf ears. The resolution formally lifting sanctions against Italy was carried, and the delegates left to reflect on the weaknesses of the instrument upon whose successful working the future of world peace depends.

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"Timeo Danaos . . ."

MEANWHILE, Signor Mussolini was making conciliatory gestures to the League and offering once more to share in its work. Provided that sanctions were dropped, he undertook not to raise a conscript army in Abyssinia, to give other nations opportunities for trade, and to inform the League from time to time on the progress of the country. Thus he does at least acknowledge the League's status. But on no account must these promises which, had they emanated from any other source, might have been rated higher, be accepted in return for a recognition of the Italian seizure of Abyssinia. The Assembly would at least have preserved some of its self respect if it had passed the Argentine's resolution refusing to recognise Italy's conquest.

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Revision by Consent

IN these days, when the authority of the League is flouted with impunity, when treaties, covenants and pledges are torn and cast aside, when international confidence is shaken by one rude *fait accompli* after another, the Montreux Conference, with the resulting Convention regulating the future of the Dardanelles, comes as a welcome reminder that changes in international affairs can be achieved in an ordered manner. Montreux was significant not only in that it procured the first revision of a treaty by negotiation since the war, but also that it was the first really successful international conference of a political nature for the past four years. Un-

doubtedly the country which has gained most is Turkey herself—the plaintiff power. Not only has she established her claim to greater security in the Straits, but she has, by her method of approaching the problem, added considerably to her prestige and become, in the words of Mr. Bruce, Chairman of the Conference, "the standard bearer of legality." Whatever the result of the new agreement may be, it should certainly encourage those who realise the importance of making Article XIX a working reality. In this particular case, Article XIX was not invoked, the reason being that Japan, one of the signatories of the original Lausanne Agreement of 1923 governing the Straits, was no longer a member of the League. In this connection, it was interesting to note that at the closing session, M. Sato, the Japanese delegate, pointed out that this was the first international instrument signed by Japan since "her unhappy abandonment of the League of Nations."

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A League Triumph

AT the Conference there was general agreement on the main issue—namely that Turkey should be allowed to re-fortify the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, but there were strong divergences of opinion on the question of the regulation of the passage of warships through the Straits in time of war. Naturally, if Turkey herself were a belligerent then no conventions could prevent her from exercising her discretion as to what ships should be allowed to enter the narrow portals of her largest city. But what if she were not a belligerent? The Agreement itself fortunately avoids the word "neutral," although most of the Press commentaries used it and in so doing ignored the fact that the word is completely meaningless, even in a world where resistance to war finds its only expression in collective inaction. On the question of the right of passage through the Straits in time of war when Turkey is not a belligerent, the British Delegation proposed either that there should be free passage for all belligerents, or that passage should be refused to all warships not acting on a mandate from the League. The Russian Government, on the other hand, rejecting the first alternative, wished to *extend* the second to admit the passage of ships acting in virtue of pacts other than the Covenant. Agreement was eventually reached on a French compromise proposal, whereby warships of any belligerent Power shall be accorded passage through the Straits only if acting under obligations devolving from the League Covenant, or "in the event of assistance being given to a State which is the victim of aggression in virtue of a mutual assistance pact to which Turkey is a party and concluded within the framework of the League of Nations Covenant."

Here then is the second benefit which has come out of the Montreux Agreement. The League has been recognised as the final arbiter on the opening or closing of the Straits in time of war. When the principle has been extended to all other strategic waterways, the League will have become a much more reliable instrument for the prevention of war than unfortunately it is at present.

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Locarno Talks

EVER since the German reoccupation of the demilitarised Rhineland zone in March, efforts have been made to bring about the appeasement of Europe and to re-establish