

protected by three thousand miles of ocean could insist that those exposed to immediate danger should forthwith lay down their arms.

In order that what I am saying so imperfectly may reach you, as it came to me, from a great master of eloquence, I shall take the liberty of reading a passage from M. Briand's wonderful speech at the last Assembly of the League.

After several pronouncements had been made, all more or less pointing to France as the chief offender against disarmament, the position of M. Briand became a difficult one. I can see him shuffling slowly towards the rostrum, his shoulders stooped, his grey head bent. I knew that he was suffering from a very serious disease, one which I had thought would not permit of the effort then required. For an hour and a quarter he held forth, and when he had concluded his hearers knew why security must precede disarmament.

In other words, the problem is not disarmament, but security. Can you conceive that the governments of Europe, functioning under democratic rule, could extract from their respective populations the huge amounts required for armaments unless it was for them a matter of life and death? They could not do it. If they attempted it they would not remain in power for a day. There is only one thing that will cause a people in a democratic country to submit to such a process, and that is dire necessity.

Now I will read to you a part of M. Briand's speech. He explains first of all that France is not going to seek the postponement of the Disarmament Conference. All the nations have made a solemn promise, on their honour, to be at the place of meeting on the 2nd of February. Time and again within the last four or five years France has preserved the life of the Disarmament Conference by finding the way out of difficulties which otherwise would have been fatal. This is what M. Briand says:

When we examine the Covenant, we find that it is soundly conceived, that it is a solid construction, and the only regret I have to voice here is that some of its provisions should still have remained as it were veiled, like one of those statues that are always going to be but never are uncovered.

Beneath the shroud, however, a searching eye can discern the contours of the statue; it is possible to tell what lies hidden behind that shroud. What the founders of the League all wanted, what they were trying to embody in the Covenant, was peace, a means of placing the people in such a state of tranquillity as should enable them to forget the horrors of the war and to devote themselves whole-heartedly and unreservedly to the work of peace. When that result had been achieved, the huge outlay that a nation expends on material forces would be found to be needless.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN.

Similarly, the authors of the Covenant had devised means for replacing material force. They were not pure ideologists; they know quite well that between peoples, as between men, subjects of discord may remain long after the cessation of hostilities. Proportionately as they envisaged the disappearance of individual material force, they prepared legal solutions and collective sanctions; they called upon the peoples to agree to conciliation, to arbitration. They saw a progressive reduction in armaments in proportion as security increased; they saw the peoples, in the settlement of their conflicts, turn more and more to the judge instead of resorting to force. We need only read the Covenant to realize that all these various considerations were in the minds of the authors and founders of the League.

I now pass to the question of security, a word which my lips hardly dare utter. It is one of those words over which contests have so often raged, which have so often stood as obstacles in the way of certain experiments, that those who employ it appear to do so not in order to act but in order not to act.

This word, however, is written in the Covenant of the League. That is quite natural. If the authors of the Covenant had not kept a place for it, they would have been guilty, for the most generous-minded members of the League might have been deceived.

As regards security then, has progress been achieved? No one can deny that it has. I, who stand on this platform, have done all that was in my power to increase the sum total of security. The Paris Pact was conceived with that purpose in view; certain work which you have undertaken and in which you are still engaged is calculated to add to guarantees of this nature.

War is a crime. Such was the dictum of the nations who signed the Paris Pact. Until then, we must not forget, war had actually remained, in certain circumstances, a licit means for settling disputes. It is appalling to think that, in this century, war should have been considered a normal means of putting an end to disputes that might arise between nations. The Paris Pact laid down that it is an impious act to have recourse to war, that war is a crime against mankind. All the nations signed the Pact, thereby declaring that they renounced the possibility of making that fatal gesture—a declaration of war. That is something; morally it is an excellent result.

One fact, however, we cannot disguise: cases still exist in which war may occur. That fact is apt to be forgotten, and it is right not to become obsessed by such an idea; still, it is a contingency that has to be borne in mind. The League of Nations, I willingly admit, had realized this. Lord Cecil will not contradict me if I say that on that point it had thought out a whole system which, had it been adopted, would have obliterated once for all that terrible question mark. For three whole weeks we met in order to establish that system. I will not discuss the reasons why it was found impossible to put it into application; but it must be admitted that if it had become a living reality, if mutual assistance against the contingency of which I was speaking could actually have been organized, the problem before the coming Conference would have been very much simplified.

That system, however, was left standing there, like one of those ever-veiled statues to which I have just referred, those statues of which only the outlines can be discerned. I do not know