

## I.—THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE.

### THE FIRST STAGES.

**W**HEN, on April 11th, the Disarmament Conference reopened its session after the Easter adjournment, it had already started on the second stage of its work. The first stage may be regarded as having ended on February 24th, when the general discussion concluded, while the second is, so far, mainly identified with the work of the various special Committees which the Conference has set up. These Committees had not proceeded far with their respective tasks when the recess began, the discussions of the ten days during which they sat<sup>(1)</sup> having served only to bring to light the variety and complexity of the difficulties with which they had to deal. There is, therefore, little to record as to progress made, and this article will be concerned, in the main, with the stocktaking which took place at the conclusion of the first stage of the Conference's work. During this period, which lasted from February 2nd to 24th inclusive, the achievements as far as concerns any definite steps that might have been taken towards disarmament were exactly nil, but the fifty speeches delivered during the general discussion *did* serve to bring out certain general principles on which the majority of the delegations were agreed. In a review of these speeches made on February 24th, the President of the Conference, Mr. Henderson, enumerated their main features, in the hope, as he said, of showing that wide agreement already existed on certain fundamental principles which would dominate the whole work they had to do. He claimed that no single speaker had been content with the measure of armament reduction which his own nation had been able independently to carry through, and pointed out that it had been generally recognised that the reduction of armaments not only constituted an urgent problem in itself, but also had both a direct and an indirect bearing on the present political and economic crisis. Coming more to details, no fundamental objection had been raised against utilising the Draft Convention, however deficient it might seem to certain delegations, as a framework for the discussions of the Conference. Mr. Henderson then noted that certain principles might be regarded as definitely accepted, and it may be of interest to enumerate these as :—

(1) The principle of an effective limitation of national armaments and the establishment of an efficient supervision.

(2) The necessity of prohibiting, or at least limiting, the use of arms of a specially aggressive character.

(3) The necessity of taking steps to deal with the problem created by the fact that modern science has given these arms a definite predominance over weapons of defence.

(1) The Committees began their work on March 9th and 10th and the Conference adjourned on March 16th. Some of the Committees, however, continued working for a few days after this.