

the League ever attain its end. I agree entirely with the stand taken by the honourable senator from Edmonton (Hon. Mr. Griesbach) that when we sought to reduce, abbreviate and attenuate the meaning and force of the covenants of the League we applied the poison from which the League is suffering at this time.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: The honourable senator across the way twitted me because I used the words "ready, aye ready," as expressive of the proper attitude of Canada in respect of the violation of the treaty itself. I am not a master of phraseology; I sometimes take my phrases from greater men. In that case I adopted a phrase of the late leader of the Liberal party, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whose memory I revere. Never did I honour him more than when he used that phrase in the House of Commons as expressing the proper attitude of this country in the event of a British war. But I surrounded the application of the phrase with a condition. What I said was that when Canada signed a treaty and the Government had it ratified by the Parliament of Canada, this country had no right on the violation of that treaty by another power to say to Britain: "It is for you to enforce it, but not for us at all. All we had to do was sign it." I think if the honourable senator from De Lanaudière (Hon. Mr. Casgrain) will recall the circumstances, his heart and his mind will be with me in respect of that violation more than with those who twitted me at that time. Canada then took the stand that she has too often taken: that all we have to do is to pass high-sounding resolutions in Parliament, to get into the range of the contracting parties—the high contracting parties, if possible—to affix the seal of Canada and to dignify certain citizens by letting them sign opposite the seal; but that when it comes to assuming the burden and the peril it is for us to crawl out of our assurances and twit anybody who says Canada should be "ready, aye ready."

There is the spirit which has meant the undermining and the weakness from which the League suffers to-day. No wonder the greater nations, feeling that the onus would be entirely on them, and that they would probably be criticized for precipitating another great war within a decade of the end of the last war, stood back and said, "We had better wait and see if the conflict cannot be avoided without too great a cost, even though the avoidance of it means a very serious impairment of the rigidity and effectiveness of the provisions of the League of Nations."

I am not very hopeful that in the present attitude of the world the League could, in the

event of tremendous strain between the greater powers, operate efficiently and successfully in preventing a war. It might. I think it probably has more chance of doing so than any other institution known to man; and, whether it succeeds or not, at least should be effective as affording a sanctuary within which could gather those who wish to consecrate their collective strength to prevent the shedding of blood, and as affording a tribunal to which all could appeal, and before which even the offender must be heard, because to that tribunal he must appeal, speaking either for himself or through others, before the sword could be drawn.

The honourable senator immediately opposite (Hon. Mr. Dandurand) stated in a few words that a tremendous value attaches to the League to-day. He said that within its fold are fifty-four nations, every one of which is striving to justify its conduct, to give moral tone to its international relations and keep them on the highest plane; and there is not one of those nations but would feel ashamed if it were found guilty of conduct which it could not justify. This onus which is thrown upon the aggressor is in itself of great value. Therefore the world is likely to benefit far more from the League than it ever did from the old system which sought to balance the strength of one group of powers against the weight of another. Surely it is more likely to succeed than any other institution which mankind has been able to establish. My hope is in the longer view.

I entirely agree with the honourable senator opposite that the germ of decay was planted when the United States refused to join the League. I am one of those who hold the conviction that the decision of the American Republic to disregard the pleas of its great President and to withhold its allegiance to the League of Nations was probably the most deplorable verdict ever given in the history of the world. This great instrument was in large measure the ideal of President Wilson himself. His personality dictated in considerable degree its terms. The force of the man drove through, against tremendous obstacles, many of the features of the Covenant and of the League itself. After he had done all this, after he was understood to speak on behalf of the great nation he represented, strong opposition developed at home, the lessons of the conflict were forgotten, the peril of the future and the interdependence of nations were all cast behind, and the United States quietly withdrew, contending that the Covenant was not theirs and they could take no responsibility in connection with it. Constitutionally they had the right to take the course they took.