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THE SAVING MERIT OF THE PEACE TREATY

The obvious lack of finality in the treaty may come to be regarded as its saving merit.

(Sir Robert Falconer in his masterly address to the recent Educational Conference made a point which many superficial spectators of and participants in the great war would do well to thoroughly get hold of, namely when he took issue with Dr. Gordon as to liberty having been won by the sacrifices of that great cataclysm. The winning of the war did not mean the final deliverance of liberty to the world, but only the removal of one great obstacle to that great objective.—Ed.)

The Future

THE German signature of peace marks the first stage, but only the first stage, in the renaissance of Europe," says the "New Europe"; "and it is the duty of all serious students of foreign policy to combat the growing tendency towards indifference and slackening of efforts which is already noticeable in many quarters. With victory the supreme danger is over; but it now rests with the victors to prove their constructive force, their faith in the principles in whose name they mobilized the nations, and their firm resolve never to look back upon the smoking cities of the plain.

"When the dust clears away it will be evident that a vast amount of work has been done in Paris, such as may fairly be said to atone for the lack of method and coherence or the undue secrecy in which its highly amateur decisions were veiled.

"What at first sight might seem to be the treaty's condemnation—namely its obvious lack of finality—will, we venture to prophesy, come to be regarded more and more as its saving merit.

A Safety Valve

"Former Congresses, such as those of Vienna and Berlin, laid down settlements designed to be immutable, and made no attempt to provide a safety valve. The present Treaty for the first time supplies proper machinery by which the international situation can be modified to meet each turn of the political kaleidoscope. As we have always contended, the Covenant of the League of Nations is not to be regarded as a panacea, or indeed as anything more than a paper prescription whose efficacy remains to be tested. It may be that the League will remain a splendid dream, but in that case the fault will be with ourselves—with a generation which was incapable of averting the greatest disaster in history and too feeble of faith to retrieve it afterwards. To admit the failure of the League would be to confess the bankruptcy of civilization; to work for its success is the duty of every believer in the constructive idea of Integral Victory.

"The signature of peace with Germany can bring no real slackening of effort; for the moment it can only mean the diversion of effort to other fields. New problems of internal development will at once arise in every European country. The announcement of the new frontiers will release economic forces hitherto arrested by the prevailing uncertainty. At least five problems of the first magnitude—Constantinople, Syria, the Adriatic, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish financial liquidation—must be faced and solved without further delay, and in the consciousness that until they are solved, the germs which produced the present war will continue to infect the body politic of Europe. It is sincerely to be hoped that the Big Four or Five (or Three, or Ten, or whatever the magic number may be that is to go down to history) will at last regard their task as completed, and will henceforth allow a properly constituted body of competent and representative statesmen to act as the forum of the League until its first formal meeting in the autumn.

The League's First Meeting

"At that meeting a number of other no less vital problems will have to be discussed; and there is still an immense

amount to be done in the necessary education and preparation of public opinion in all the countries concerned.

"The definition of the mandatory principle and its application to the concrete cases of the German colonies and to the utterly different cases of territories formerly under Ottoman rule; the adoption of some uniform international code for all tropical colonies; the enforcement of drastic limitation of armaments and the abolition of private ownership of all means of war production; the establishment of an international force under the orders of the League, as the only possible means of overcoming many serious objections to the present Covenant; the establishment on a permanent basis of several of the economic commissions without which the war could not have been won; and the consolidation of credit in the newly-formed European States, to say nothing of some even among the Great Powers—these are only a few of the more urgent and vital problems which surround the cradle of the infant League.

Germany and the League

"And, whether we like it or not, the question of Germany's future admission to the League is certain to force itself into the discussion. That admission is impossible so long as there is occupation, that there must be occupation so long as the fulfillment of the Treaty is in doubt, and that the incident of Seapa is calculated to increase the doubts already so widespread, need not blind us to the need of a definite German policy, not a mere attitude of passionate resentment. We shall have to live with Germany in the years of peace, and we must maintain a ceaseless vigilance very different from the old careless spirit of pre-war days.

"But, while equally avoiding sentimental advances and vindictive abuse, we must do all in our power to prove to the German, collectively and individually the hopelessness of another bid for world power, and at the same time the possibility of a return to the comity of nations and even to material prosperity. To drive Germany to despair will merely react against ourselves. True statesmanship will henceforth seek to convince her that the path of repentance and reform offers better prospects than that of continued defiance of the outside world. Incidentally it is already making the practical discovery that it is useless to expect payment from a bankrupt or work from a cripple."

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