

A League of Nations and Its Equipment

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"The patriot loves his national domain;
His fatherland he calls it thine and mine;
But who would care to see his love disdain
The love that lives beyond the boundary-line?
—The Citizen of the World.

It would seem that from the erstwhile American Secretary of State, Hon. Elihu Root, comes somewhat indirectly the assurance that the organization of a properly equipped League of Nations as proposed by President Woodrow Wilson and Prime Minister Lloyd George, is a practical proposal. There is certainly no end of work to do, while getting it on its feet. It is not sufficient merely to organize a League of representative statesmen. That is comparatively easy to bring about, if we are to judge from the plethora of protective societies in evidence here, there and everywhere. But a League of Nations must have its roots planted in a lasting constitutionality; and, as I think, in the founding of a Supreme Court of Justice. Such a Supreme Court of Justice has been for long in operation in America, as a means of co-ordinating state-rights in terms of an inter-state consensus. That highest court of justice seldom fails in its judgments to give heed to the several federal statutes, with its eye always open to the constitutional judicial differences of the several States. The judges of the said court are expected to be as familiar with all inter-state laws just as any ordinary lawyer is expected to be familiar with those of the State in which he practises. Before proceeding to aid in formulating a judgment he has to give heed to all inter-state legal technicalities and methods of procedure and interpretation.

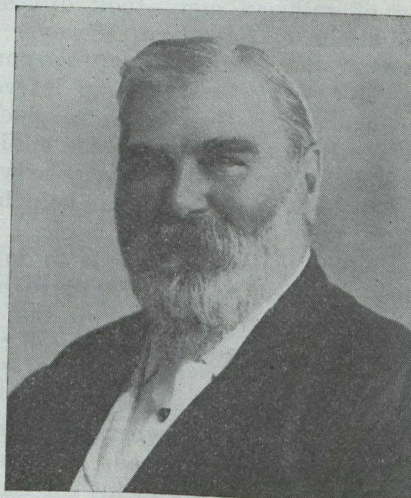
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And much the same may be said of the Privy Council of Great Britain and her dependencies. Indeed, the Supreme Court of Justice of the United States and the Court of Justice in connection with the Privy Council of the British Empire seldom comes into conflict with subnational or provincial prejudice, while the settlement of a case brought before them is being reached. Even the newspaper critic feels called upon to be respectful towards the routine of these higher courts of justice. In fact, to such an extent has the credit of these courts been established, that not long ago a suggestion was favorably entertained in regard to the organization of an Anglo-American Supreme Court of Justice, to deal with cases of a co-national nature within the wide and inclusive scope of the Empire and the Republic. That suggestion was in line with Mr. Elihu Root's idea; and now, at this very moment, it encourages one to think of a League of Nations' buttressed by an International Court of Justice, as being no other than a God-send, when once accomplished, steadying to all activities having the perpetuating of peace at heart.

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When we ask why the Hague Council did not proceed to establish a Supreme Court of Justice, before the war bid it close its doors, we find next to nothing in the objections, raised against such a scheme at the time it was being discussed, which could be advanced as a barrier to a serious reconsideration of the question, now that the closing of the war opens the way to the organization of a League of Nations to take the place of the Hague Council with amplified functions. Mr. Root's idea was by no means unfavorably considered by his colleagues on the Council. Yet it is hardly to be expected that a League of Nations will escape the difficulty that led to the postponement of the project, namely, the misunderstanding that might arise in the selecting of a workable Bench of Judges. Each and every nation, it was somewhat hysterically alleged by one or two of the members of the Council, could hardly be expected to be satisfied with a bench full of Judges on which a place could not be made for a judge of its own nationality, since the number of judges required was not more than twelve. Thus did parochialism paralyze for the time being the wholesome arm of internationalism; and thus may parochialism also raise some empty cry or other against the momentous international movement of organizing a League of Nations.

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Nevertheless the desirability of organizing an effective League of Nations and its annex of a Supreme Court of Justice, in addition to its several Courts of Arbitration, and the striking feasibility of the world getting such in the near future, remain with the immediate generation, whose mentality the late war cannot but have clarified and whose judgment it cannot but have shorn of not a few of its parochialisms. When once a League of Nations comes to assure the world at large that its great main function lies in the upholding of international fairplay, common-sense will come into its own to greet its several functions as war-deterrents. The wisdom that would aid in a latter-day upbringing of the world will hardly halt in maturing the proposed League as an effectively qualified Council of Peace, equipped with all the appliances necessary to make it an active guardian of the peace of the whole world for all time. It's "one better" to the late Hague Council, it is safe to conjecture, will stare every project in favor of any nation massing "a largest army possible" out of countenance as a Mephistophelian hypocrisy, as far as a maintaining of a right kind of peace is concerned.

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Nor can a League of Nations fail in time to convert the commercial spirit to see with it what a waste there is in war, and eventually lead it to drive, by some economic agency of its concerting, the spirit of militancy into a back seat. As the most potent ethical force in the world to-day, that same commercial spirit is sure to rally to the upholding of such an international League, calling upon it, directly or indirectly, at the beck and call of all nations, to put a stop to the monstrous use-and-wont of breaking the peace of the nations by a shedding of blood in order to bring peace back to them. The commercial spirit, as the most of us know, is patient enough with folly as long as the dividends keep coming in regularly and on a rising scale at that. But, when war interrupts the coming in of the dividends or the lowering of them, then does the commercial spirit become alarmed, however certain shameless profiteers may rejoice, and is not slow to decry the passions of militancy and its ominous extravagances. In the wars that carry with them the prospect of financial exhaustion, which are sure to be urged to an end before they begin by a League of Nations, there will arise a desire for disciplining the passions that beget disputes to the undoing of the world's philanthropies by a shedding of blood. And now that Germans has been brought to its bearings in its rampages of the blood-letting kind, there can be but few who can be predisposed to withhold their loyalty from the movement in favor of organizing a League of Nations, or from its decreeing when once it is organized.