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Canada and the League of Nations

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The author of this article has written much on Imperial affairs. He knows Canada "inside out." Among the books that he has published are "The New Empire Partnership" and "Canada, Past, Present, and Future."—ED.

"Canada reaffirms adherence to the fundamental principles of the Covenant."—Canadian Prime Minister at Geneva, September 29, 1936.

This utterance of Canada's foremost statesman at the Assembly of the League of Nations directs attention once again to the tenacity with which the Dominions of the Crown, following their own will, have always supported the world movement to establish the rule of law as between nation and nation. With other communities, the peace fervour of 1919 has been lost; they have left the League. But Canada and the other Dominions abide by their initial faith. That is a fact worth considering.

The U.S.A. and Canada.

It helps to clear the position if one asks: Why is Canada a member of the League while the United States holds severely aloof? Canadians have far more in common with their Republican neighbours than they have with any nation in Europe, far more even than with France, though France is the original motherland of three out of every ten of the Canadian population. Both Canada and the United States fought on the Allied side in the Great War. Both suffered heavily in human life and economic disturbance and they might be expected equally to welcome any means of preventing a recurrence of this calamity. The American President was the prime author of the League idea. Yet the United States is further than ever from becoming a member of that body, while Canada has not only been a member from the start but has also taken a foremost part in many of its activities. Why this difference of attitude?

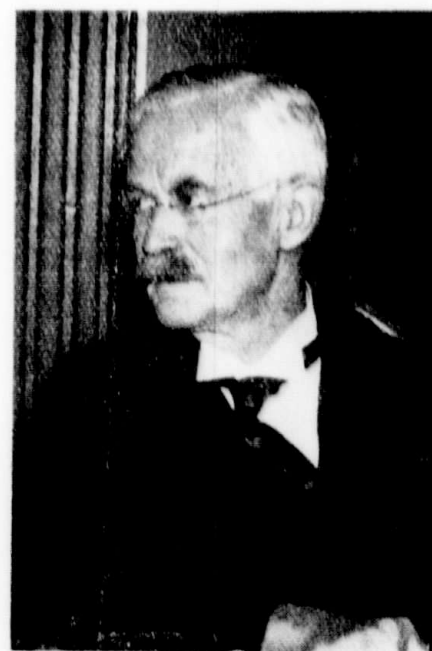
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Most foreigners, knowing little as they do of the British way of Empire, would answer that Canada had no choice in the matter. Is she not a daughter in her Mother's house? The Motherland being a member of the League, Canada must surely follow suit. But that explanation will not do. Canada's external relations, like her domestic affairs, are directed from Ottawa, not from Whitehall. She has her own Ministers in foreign capitals; her own political and commercial representatives are stationed abroad as occasion requires. She need not have sent a single soldier across the Atlantic in 1914. Indeed, the then Secretary of State for India in the British Cabinet, Mr. John Morley, had, a few years before, scoffed at the idea that Canada would in any circumstances share in a European conflict in which Great Britain was concerned. Canada joined the League just as she joined in the War, because to do so was the will of her people. In 1914 they were not content to rely on the Monroe Doctrine and the protective neighbourliness of the United States to safeguard them in a position of neutrality. Similarly, in

the post-War developments they have neglected the example of the United States and have freely chosen to take their share in the effort to save humanity from the horrors of another world war.

No Amalgamation!

The first answer, then, to my question is just this—Canada's way is not the way of the United States or of any foreign land. When Professor Goldwin Smith went from Oxford to Toronto in Mid-Victorian years, he never ceased to preach the gospel of Annexation as the gospel of the inevitable. And to-day superficially-minded Britons grow anxious, every now and



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again, because of what they call the "American permeation" of Canada through the agency of newspapers, broadcasts, cinemas, tourism and the rest. Of course, the relationship is close, but as Mr. Stephen Leacock, the Canadian sage, has just been telling Americans, the idea that this relationship may end in a political union is just a forgotten dream; "there is not the slightest prospect of it even on the furthest horizon." Canadians have in the past half-century seen "a new idea in the Union Jack: not subservience to England, but single sovereignty across a continent," and Mr. Leacock adds:—"People with such a vision before them do not amalgamate with anything. Canada has firmly embraced its own political ideal and means to keep it." Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in a somewhat flamboyant mood, once said of Canadians: "We answer to a higher destiny."

REPEAT
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