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months following September 11—when decisions have to be made, the personalities of those who are making those decisions can be of enormous importance.

The Paris Peace Conference reminds us not to ignore the players in history. It made a difference that Wilson was not a healthy man: in Paris he made concessions, to the Italians for example, out of sheer weariness. When he returned to the United States to try to get the Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, with the League embedded in it, his natural stubbornness was exacerbated to the point where he refused all compromise with the moderate Republicans. As a result the Treaty was not ratified and the United States never joined the League of Nations. It mattered, to take another example, that Eleutherios Venizelos, the great Greek Prime Minister, managed to charm Lloyd George and persuade him that the ancient Greek empire in Asia Minor could be reconstituted. Lloyd George gave Greece the go-ahead to land troops at Smyrna and encouraged the Greeks to advance inland. The result was the mobilization of Turkish nationalism under Kemal Ataturk, the defeat of the Greek forces and the end of the centuries-old Greek communities throughout Turkey.

It is sometimes decisions taken lightly or hastily which cause the most trouble in the long run. The fate of the Saar coal mines, which caused so much trouble at the peace conference, or the Duchy of Teschen, which nearly led to a war between Czechoslovakia and Poland, do not seem important today. The minorities treaties, which were laboriously drawn up to try to protect the ethnic minorities in the centre of Europe, were largely ineffective. On the other hand, the creation of Iraq, which was done in an imperialistic deal between Britain and France, has had repercussions right up to the present.

After some haggling, Britain got three former provinces of the Ottoman Empire. These had been ruled separately from Istanbul and did not constitute a nation. The British wanted them partly to keep the French from moving in, partly to protect the new air routes to India and partly because they suspected that there were significant deposits of oil. Britain made Iraq and found an Arab ruler in the person of Prince Faisal on the assumption that it would be easy and cheap to run. There were few of what we think of as the building blocks of a