

CURRENT MAGAZINES

A SUMMER OF CONFERENCES.

Canadian-American Relations:—Dr. J. T. Shotwell, in *Queen's Quarterly*.
Reform Politics in Canada:—Dr. J. B. Brebner, in *Current History*.
Perpetual Peace, Official Schemes:—Mr. T. Barclay, in the *Contemporary*.
Radio in Canada:—Mr. M. Denison, in *Annals of the American Academy*.
The "Haves" and "Have-Nots":—Mr. F. H. Simonds, in the *Fortnightly*.

THERE has been much comment, during the last few months, upon those Conferences on Canadian-American relationship promoted at various centres by the *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. They were a conspicuous feature of the summer. From the extensive reports devoted to them in New York and Boston and Montreal papers which are most careful of their space, one may see how they arrested public attention. But it was not mere popular interest that they aroused. There was no mistaking the touch of unusual respect in the reference made to them by "intellectual" critics who profess *blasé* indifference to the enthusiasms of the vulgar, and for whom most projects of international goodwill now share the contempt long since bestowed upon projects of domestic "uplift". It is something to have stirred a responsive note among chords which had thus ceased to vibrate.

Nor is it difficult to discern a peculiar quality which commended such a gathering as the one at Canton, New York, to persons long sated with fruitless "conferring" in the cause of world peace. In the first place, this was no meeting of mere politicians or diplomatists, but one of representative citizens, Canadian and American, carefully chosen from numerous walks of life, to discuss with one another very frankly the differences which impede closer international co-operation. In the second place, the conferences were on hard matters of detail, threshing out—day by day—some point of international dispute, with no purple patches of platform rhetoric, but with constant effort at that clarity which is the only sort of eloquence suited to such an occasion. In the third place, the concentration on Canadian-American relations, without prejudice to the vast millennial project of World Peace, but aiming for the time at the more modest and localised ideal, brought a touch of reality into an enterprise too long lost in the clouds.

As a listener last June to the dialectical interchange at Canton, I can corroborate the enthusiastic notices which the press bestowed upon it. A first glance at its programme may suggest, indeed, that it covered far too much ground for the time. One half-day, for example, was given to tariff problems; one to transportation; one to the influence of Canadian and American newspapers; one to radio, and so forth. A vast subject, each of these, for a half-day! But it is to be kept in mind that the audience was made up of representative persons carefully selected. Most of them were already familiar to the point of repletion with the common claims and counter-claims in these controversies now so long drawn out. So they were ready to come to grips with certain special difficulties which the general debate, ranging over years, has surely reduced to a manageable number. They were not only willing but eager to have such remaining issues set forth by competent thinkers on both sides addressing enquirers for their information, not electors for their votes. It is safe to say that from this candid—sometimes extremely candid—interchange a good many Americans and Canadians, of striking influence in their own areas of opinion, returned with clearer and more sympathetic insight into the relationship of the two countries. The leading papers presented were of a high order; the critical comment was vigorous and outspoken. Members of the Conference learned from one another not merely by arguments in public, but quite as much by the informal contact of committees and small groups, not least in the genial intercourse of the dining-room and even on the golf links. It was the creation of new and most valuable *foci* for diffusing an international friendship.

Three weeks after the Conference at Canton, the University of Maine set an example of the service which, in these times, an academic institution should be at once fit and willing to render. It brought together speakers of different and contrasted types, each of whom had acquired for himself at least a *prima facie* right to be heard on those world issues which we must somehow meet or perish. Concentrating on two sorts of peril, that which comes from trade rivalry and that which comes from international jealousies, it invited advice from publicists who had devoted long years to little else than thinking out these very problems. To each the assigned subject was tolerably definite—what the United States could or should do on such and such a question. This Conference was short, extending only to two days, but into that period was packed a great deal of suggestive thinking. Its leaders included such men as the President of the Foreign Policy Association, the

President of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences, the Director of Studies at the London Institute of Bankers. One evening of keen debate between Mr. Frank H. Simonds, that notorious enemy of Collective League Action for Peace, and Mr. C. M. Eichelberger, Director of the League of Nations Association, was in itself enough to stir the audience to fundamental thinking on the most urgent topic of the hour. It was a debate typical of the spirit which has made these Conferences so successful; for there was no attempt at avoiding points of disagreement; it was rather assumed that world peace can be reached only through the most fearless avowal of competing opinions, and that the place best suited to this wholesome clash is the university—by its very nature and tradition a clearing-house for ideas. The speakers heard at Canton and Orono and Virginia have each of them many an audience elsewhere; on this occasion, diverse as the men were, they had to listen to one another (in Sir Walter Scott's old phrase "without impatience or interruption"), and to reply to one another *coram populo*. If there were more of such friendly conflict in academic halls, there might well be fewer conflicts which are not friendly in diplomatic interchange. And to the average listener it was a revelation. Whether democratic government can continue to be worked with success at all, is a point for difference of opinion. That its only chance for successful working lies in some new and better method of disseminating knowledge of what is wrong in world affairs, hardly admits of doubt. Those who organized the experiment at Orono deserve the credit of pioneers.

There is a still further suggestiveness in this development of last summer. It has stimulated an important line of thought regarding Conferences in general. Faith in the Round-Table method of international reconciliation is notoriously less robust than it was a few years back, and its disparagement does not come from intellectuals alone. One may protest, truly enough, that the Englishman who said "The Conference habit is a North American eccentricity" was a cynic. Perhaps Mussolini, when he called for a long moratorium upon Conferences, was just following his own well-known preference for the alternative of the battlefield; one remembers how he substituted the Fascist salute for that handshake which he despises as "the symbol of an obsolete mentality"! But Mussolini, whether he means well or ill, generally means something not quite baseless or pointless, and persons far removed from cynics have undergone much disillusionment about Pacts

and Covenants during the last fifteen years. So it is worth while to point out how some at least of the faults now so obvious in World Agreements are of the sort from which the more modest intellectual negotiation between Canadians and Americans would be free. Thus the small-scale experiment may prove instructive to those still planning the larger venture.

I

THE disappointments of internationalism, since 1919, can no longer be concealed. Pledges broken while the ink of the signatures was scarcely dry; the ingenuity of lawyers taxed to explain away the obvious meaning of words, so that no scruple of national honour shall stand in the way of national advantage; countries bound by oath to renounce war as an instrument of policy, yet waging war with one another year after year, and laughing to scorn all protests against their bad faith—is it any wonder that those who have watched the Nine-Power-Treaty go the same way as the Covenant of the League should be hard to stir to enthusiasm when they read of yet another document being signed by national plenipotentiaries “with a golden pen”? Behold the feet of them that buried thy predecessor are at the door! Mussolini, one may suppose, could defend his disbelief in Conferences as Coleridge justified his disbelief in ghosts: “I have seen”, he said, “too many.”

Yet as we look at those Pacts which broke down, or turned out wholly unproductive, can we not think of certain features absent from all of them, which from the very nature of the case might have been judged essential to success? Take three glaring examples: (i) the Japanese raid on Manchuria; (ii) the war between Bolivia and Paraguay, now in its third year of horrors; (iii) the conflict, darkening before our eyes into appalling tragedy, between Italy and Ethiopia. In every case the Powers involved are signatories to Pact after Pact which ought to have rendered impossible the development we have seen. Why did the Nine-Power-Treaty prove useless to restrain Japan? Why did the Covenant of the League exert no influence on Paraguay and Bolivia? Why were the Geneva despatches made a topic of open ridicule by the Premier of Italy, though an Italian delegate had sat at every Geneva Conference?

Three conditions must, surely, be fulfilled in any international understanding which will bind a country against the promptings of its own material interest. The Powers which effectively covenant, each for its own restraint, must (a) be in agreement on their

fundamental purpose, (b) desire this purpose so strongly as to be willing for sacrifice in pursuit of it, and (c) coincide, or at least sympathise, sufficiently with each other in method to ensure that conflict about the way to do their common job will not be so irritating as to make them forget the job to be done. Japan probably desires peace, but with nothing like the intensity of her desire for a great slice of China; who could pretend that her association at Geneva with such Powers as Great Britain and France was at any time on the basis of similar readiness to make sacrifice or run risk for preserving peace? The real surprise about Japan's relation to the League was not her ultimate withdrawal, but her long continued membership. In like manner, one can now see the purely temporary and accidental character of those circumstances which led Italy to accept the Covenant. Her representative, sitting on the League Council to deliberate on how war shall be brought to an end, must know how his own Dictator has laid it down as an essential belief of every Fascist that the abolition of war is neither possible nor desirable. Is it any wonder that the dispute in Abyssinia proved so hard for the League to adjust, when the appeal of the Geneva negotiators was to an ideal which Italy not only ignores in practice but despises in principle?

There is thus a note of welcome truthfulness in Mussolini's occasional avowals of his real thought about Geneva. Pretence is hard for a Dictator to keep up all the time, and when we get from him yet another outburst, intimating his desire to resign a membership which means such constant falsification, some of us begin almost for the first time to respect his candour. Similar considerations might be offered regarding the precarious partnership between Soviet Russia and the countries whose forms of government so radically differ from hers. It was a prescient wisdom which prevented any attempt at bringing a Bolshevik representative to Geneva, at least until the original creed and programme of the Russian revolutionaries had been profoundly revised. Even yet, many of us wonder how far there can be partnership without collision, where the contrast of method touches such vital human interests and such far-reaching human values. Despite, too, the enthusiasm expressed in so many quarters for a return of Germany to the League, one may be permitted to doubt the value of a yet deeper ambiguity and a yet more subtle equivocation (such as Sir John Simon might quite possibly evolve), to obtain from France and Great Britain a pledge equally acceptable to the Nazi leaders—men of the Brown Houses, the Concentration Camp and the Blood Bath.

II

THIS feeling of unreality which must haunt many a delegate to Geneva, as he looks round at his strange colleagues, can have no place at a Conference between Americans and Canadians. We have our differences, but fundamentally we desire the same things, distribute our values in the same way, and are prepared for the same sort of sacrifice in order to attain them. It was no chance coincidence of interest that brought us, as it brought for example Italy and Japan, into the Great War on the same side. It is no mere transient industrial or economic advantage which keeps Canada and the United States, as it keeps for the moment Italy and Yugoslavia, at peace with each other. Not as a mere item among items, to preponderate to-day and yield to something else to-morrow, but as the paramount ideal for which hardly any price is too great, does the American equally with the Canadian wish to substitute world peace for world strife. We may joke one another about lapses from this high resolve in the past, about the Canadians who served so eagerly in a "capitalist" war in South Africa, or about the American marines landed in Hayti or San Domingo. No Power has a quite clean slate, if you search far enough back. But some Powers learn from past mistakes, or worse than mistakes, and others do not.

Moreover, on this continent, as Mr. Stanley Baldwin said of Great Britain and France on the continent of Europe, we remain the co-trustees of democratic government. With the collapse of this on many sides, with Bolshevism here, Fascism there, and a wearied impatience exclaiming in so many quarters that any kind of government or no-government is as good as another because they are all alike illusory, we in North America have kept steadfast our belief in representative institutions. They are to us no mere forms; they are symbols and embodiments of an ideal of life. When Hitler and Mussolini tell us in Fascist jargon just what Stalin maintains in the jargon of the Soviet State, when in their pseudo-scientific strain they argue that what has succeeded in a time of emergency is thereby justified as a normal method of government, when the hollow rhetoric about dictatorships and the empty jests against democracy recur in their journals with wearisome reiteration, neither the American nor the Canadian reader is impressed. We know that if representative institutions are defective, dictatorships and autocracies are a horror. We fully appreciate the brief glow of what is called "efficiency", the paeans of delight with which it is hailed, the grim disillusionment which

has commonly followed. The story of ten years under Mussolini in Italy reads like the story of a similar period under Napoleon III in France, and already the tokens seem to point to a like second decade of financial crisis, with the desperate expedient of a war to distract attention from the collapsing *lira* like the one started in 1870 to cloak the collapsing *franc*. But while dreams of a better substitute for the institutions of freedom make little impression on the average Canadian or the average American citizen, while revolutionary method appeals on this continent in the main only to those whom Dean Inge has called "psychopathic artisans and dishonest intellectuals", it is far otherwise with many a people now attempting an entente with peoples fundamentally different.

For world recovery, then, among many methods of at least highly disputable promise, there is one in whose effectiveness we have good ground to believe. Let us at least deepen and strengthen co-operative work among those peoples whom Nature and history seem to have indicated for co-operation. First and foremost, taking the task nearest to our hand on this continent, let us consolidate the North American forces, in scornful disregard both of "super-patriotic" Canadian groups and of "hundred-per-cent" enthusiasts across the line, who would alike put violently asunder those whom Providence plainly meant to work together. Causes which in the past divided our countries and held them apart have at times been far from trivial; but they are now, in view of the greatness of our common task, relatively insignificant. With the power to exert such influence on world policies at such an hour as this, and with sentiments so fundamentally alike on all that matters, the course is clear and the duty is overwhelming.

III

IN Nova Scotia, a few weeks ago, a pleasant example was shown of this deepening international goodwill. Nowhere should the partnership which transcends all national boundaries be more clearly seen than in the field of scientific progress, where gain for each is gain for all. On 30th August last, at the village of Wallace Bridge, N. S., there was unveiled a monument to a great Canadian astronomer, whose investigations had been prosecuted at his observatory in the United States, and whose renown is thus shared. On the spot where Simon Newcomb was born, just one hundred years before, there assembled the representatives of two countries to set up a memorial of his immortal achievement. It was unveiled by the scientist's grand-daughter, with seven others of his immediate descendants on the platform, and a glowing tribute was read from Albert Einstein. The suggestiveness of the occasion

was emphasized by the United States Minister to Washington, representing his Government at the ceremony. He said:

The historic friendship binding Canada and the United States was never closer nor firmer than at present. The problems confronting us are in very many cases similar, springing from like conditions, social, climatic and economic. I hope you will agree with me in my feeling that we are confronting those problems with much the same spirit, and determination to find a solution of them.

A slight example, no doubt, but one suggestive of a temper which cannot be too carefully nurtured, and whose range may go far indeed.

Among the clearest of the inferences to be drawn from those meetings of last summer was perhaps just the special promise of international contact on interests remote from "high politics". It is in observing the casual detail, as every scientist will agree, that sweeping generalisation often begins; and there are limitless possibilities in a friendliness which first sprang up in exchange of thought on the small things of common concern. At Orono, for instance, so close to the border between Maine and New Brunswick, a question in every mind last July was about potatoes and lumber. The newspapers were strewn with stories of potatoes being such a glut in the market that they would shortly have to be destroyed, and that at the moment they were easily obtainable by anyone who would take them away for five cents a barrel! As Americans dwelt upon that situation in the State of Maine, it set Canadians thinking of their own wheat, and of the desperate mood in which—not very long ago—they had felt driven to thankfulness for the "plague" of grasshoppers creating a shortage of grain just in time to save the farmer's price. Here was the chance to use a contemporary situation for pointing a moral far-reaching indeed. Whence that intellectual collapse which thus leads one to welcome public calamities? It was bad enough surely, exclaimed one leader of debate, for "technocrats" to demand a stoppage of man's inventive mind in industry, and to propose remedying unemployment by Acts of Parliament "in restraint of brains". But it did seem a stage worse for statesmen and economists to plan in concert how the very fertility of the earth might be curtailed! Here was the sort of problem, rising out of an immediate crisis in agriculture at their very doors, which might set Canadians and Americans alike to obstinate and persevering thought. The speakers showed no lack of appreciation of the difficulties of what is called the tariff problem. On the contrary, just because they did such ruthless justice to the ancient sources of unpleasantness,

they stimulated and challenged their listeners. One felt that the difficulties were being explained, not explained away, in a spirit equally remote from that of the nationalist politician who so wilfully intensifies them and that of the internationalist in fearful haste who so ineffectively dismisses them.

Dr. Shotwell, in the article cited at the heading of these notes, has intimated that next year a Conference similar in character to the one held at Canton will be summoned for the halls of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Of the problems taken up last June, some may by that time have entered into a new phase, all were such as cannot be too perseveringly re-examined, and one may expect that twelve months in these exciting times will develop others altogether fresh. One's mind goes back to that breezy morning at Canton spent in exchange of confidences between Canadians and Americans about the way political leadership on their respective sides of the line might be improved, with many a piquant illustration to show how sorely such improvement is required. One thinks of the evening devoted to qualities, good and bad, of the press of this continent, with leading journalists from every part of it to speak in turn—proudly, perplexedly and penitentially—about what they thought their papers had done. One recalls, too, men of extensive influence in widely scattered universities and colleges, who shared in discussion of what the schools of higher learning may yet accomplish, far in excess of what they have ever done, for world harmony, and of the method by which they should proceed. But at the utmost only the surface of these great subjects could be surveyed at a single Conference. One looks forward to its resumption under the same favorable auspices.

A final point, refreshing for its rarity, may be mentioned. With so many debates proceeding on the assumption that the whole issue between the countries on this continent is economic, it was good to find due place given to quite other sorts of motive and of influence. So long had we heard the old cynical judgment, reducing every international dispute to a scramble for money or land, that many a young college student—both American and Canadian—has been tempted to cite this hemisphere in support of Karl Marx and his "materialist interpretation of history". Listeners to the Conferences of last summer, and still more those who participated in them, were helped to escape from this way of thinking, if they had ever cherished it. Some kindly spirit has told us "I cannot hate a man I know". And in proportion as we come to know our neighbours better, the speculative doctrine of their complete selfishness is harder and harder to retain. We may hope that they undergo a like disillusionment about us.

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