CURRENT MAGAZINES[1]

THE CRISIS OF LEAGUE POLICY.

The Election and the Crisis:—Mr. G. Glasgow, in the *Fortnightly*.
The Crucial Test of the League:—Prof. A. Zimmern, in the *Contemporary*.
The League, Italy and the Future:—Sir H. Samuel, in the *Nineteenth Century*.
Did Canada Make War?—Mr. Escott Reid, in *Saturday Night*.

NEARLY everyone who speaks or writes about the present state of international affairs makes use of the words *crisis, critical, crucial*. These are common words in sensational journalism; common, too, in the lower sort of platform rhetoric. They are often chosen, one fears, for no better reason than that they may look startling on a headline, or that their sound may restimulate a listless audience. But it is noticeable that they are just now being used by writers and speakers who have generally avoided them; men who prefer, as a rule, to say less rather than more than they mean on public quarrels; men, too, whose training has fitted them to distinguish a world complication which is merely troublesome from one that is sure to mark an epoch in international diplomacy. When such observers announce a crisis, it is time for the general reader and general listener to reflect very gravely on what it is that makes the situation so exceptional.

The term has been borrowed, I suppose, from the vocabulary of medicine. Every doctor knows those tiresome ailments which are called "chronic"; cases in which the patient does not become either obviously better or obviously worse, and there is nothing particular to be done except to keep him as comfortable as one can. They may go on for an indefinite period, with discomfort never unbearable but always present, and a continuous impairment of vital force. What has been called "a general diffused debility"! The doctor worthy of his calling dislikes such parts of his practice, though the fee be both regularly paid and easily earned, for he has an unpleasant feeling that he has not earned anything at all, and longs for some genuine grapple in which he may prove his expert strength. He welcomes rather the disorders that come to a head, reach some point of sharp decision, where he may have a chance to intervene definitely at the right moment, and determine the doubtful result. Give him the appendix case, or a pneumonia, rather than a bronchitis, a sciatica, a rheumatism. In a word, he

1 The reader is reminded that this section of the *Review* was necessarily in the press early in December, before the development connected with the Hoare-Laval scheme.—EDITOR.

wants a case with a *crisis* in it. The analogy applies to international disorder. It also may be of the sort too tedious and indecisive to watch, or of the sort so thrilling that one holds one's breath at the spectacle. There are old, long-standing grudges which have kept certain nations in a mood of chronic surliness towards each other; and although outsiders have to share in the unpleasantness of the diplomatic scene, there is little that can be done to improve it, nor is it likely to become either much better or much worse. This might be said of the relation among not a few South-American republics, of the relation between Japan and the United States, of the relation between Italy and Yugoslavia. When such quarrels, springing largely from temperamental antagonism, develop into war, the matter is fought out until one or other prevails, and the readjustment at the end usually establishes again the old dislike, with some redistribution of the capacity to make it effective. But now and then comes a clash of different order. The issue for settlement is one upon which many other issues turn: the decision will not merely close that quarrel, but will alter procedure in quarrels like it for a long time ahead. Such a fight as, for example, the American War of Independence, the struggle against Napoleon, or—one still hopes it may be said—the World War of 1914.

Unless the leading publicists just now discussing the situation are unanimously wrong, we are witnessing a conflict of the *critical*, not one of the *chronic* type. Things cannot be the same after it is finished: they will be far better or far worse. Internationally, we are at a parting of the ways.

I

What is at stake is nothing less than this: Is collective civilisation going to succeed or is it going to fail in the greatest effort—the only effort with real promise—it has ever yet put forth to enforce world peace?

One often hears it said that the press just now has something to startle every morning, some announcement of a new war. Alas, the announcement of a new war is no longer startling; it is familiar. What should produce a real thrill is the news of a resolute, carefully planned, co-operative enterprise of mankind to compel a *stoppage* of war. That, at least, was never attempted before. If it should fail this time, it may be long indeed before it is attempted again. If it should succeed this time, it will have set up a safeguard for future peace more effective than even the most sanguine of us all, for at least the last ten years, had ventured to expect. The news

we get every day encourages us to believe that it is going to succeed. That is what all these writers and speakers mean by declaring the experiment with Sanctions against Italy to be "crucial".

From time out of mind we have *talked* of abolishing war. Pacifists have never altogether lost heart, despite the long disappointment, the peace projects that began well and so quickly broke down, the obstinate inertia even of a multitude whose will was good, the sullen resistance of not a few whose will was evil. The cause of world peace has never been either abandoned as too high for mankind's achievement or spurned as too dull for mankind's inspiration. There has always been at least a select minority, contemptuous alike of those to whom super-patriotism is a lucrative profession and of those to whom munition-making is a lucrative business:—the sort who can be stopped neither by calumny nor by cynicism from thinking the message of Christmas both wiser and nobler than Lord Birkenhead's Glasgow Address. But that faith, like most faiths that matter, has been hard to keep, and one has often dismissed as mere poetry, unpractical however exquisite, the passage in *Locksley Hall* about a parliament of man, a federation of the world. What now amazes one is that at length, by the deliberate resolve of nearly all the great nations of the world, there is collective systematic action for peace. Like Macbeth, our generation—having "supped full on horrors"—was proof against surprise by a new horror. But it is surprised indeed by a world reform. And the cynics, still hoping against hope that the reform may be explained away, are finding little comfort in the bulletins.

II

It is essential to keep the facts on this matter clearly before the public, showing how an issue which so fundamentally concerns the whole world arose from a local quarrel in North-East Africa. In the stream of propagandist pamphlets, press articles and broadcasts from Italy, effort after effort has been made to create confusion. Such men as Mussolini, Baron Aloisi, Marconi, Pirandello, always depict the Sanctionist Powers (Great Britain especially) as plotting to turn into a general war what was intended at Rome as "a mere project of colonial police work". But most of this argument by Fascist spokesmen turns out on analysis to be either irrelevant or—when judged by the standard of free countries—quite fatal to the cause it is put forward to support.

The irrelevance of such pretences, obvious enough on general grounds, has been further shown by the developing propaganda of

Italy's own spokesmen. Like the cockney Englishman in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, they at first justified their African enterprise as "spreadin' civilawzytion". But whether themselves overcome by the humor of such an argument, or—more probably—discouraged by the coldness with which it was received abroad, they have lately fallen back on the naked avowal that Abyssinia has what Italy requires, and that Italy is determined to take it. There is no further controversy about rectifying and defining a frontier, none about fixing responsibility for the fracas at Walwal a year ago. Mussolini has put the point with characteristic directness in an article of the *Popolo d'Italia*. He there remarks that while Abyssinia is indeed uncivilized, and still addicted to slaveholding, the purpose which has taken the Italian arms there is neither to establish freedom nor to advance civilization. It is to provide for the needs of the expanding Italian people. Moreover, these needs he has always defined as extending far beyond mere material comfort. Italy, in Mussolini's conception, requires war as an occasional tonic. Sir Herbert Samuel, in his *Nineteenth Century* article, has collected significant declarations by the Dictator which seem to render superfluous and even absurd all further conference between his representatives and the spokesmen of Geneva. Such avowals as the following:

> Fascism does not believe in the possibility, or the utility, of perpetual peace...War alone brings to their maximum tension all human energies, and stamps the seal of nobility on those peoples which have the virtue to face it...We are becoming, and shall become so increasingly, because this is our desire, a military nation; a militaristic nation, I will add...There is too much talk altogether about peace. When there are crises, it is arms and war which solve them...Though words are very beautiful things, rifles, machine-guns, ships, aeroplane and cannon are more beautiful things...The judges of our necessities and the guarantors of our future are we; only we, and nobody else...The Italo-Abyssinian problem admits—with Geneva, without Geneva, against Geneva—but one solution.

The case lies in the proverbial nutshell. Italy has a complaint to make about Abyssinia as a bad neighbour, about border raids which disturb her nationals in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. She alleges that the Abyssinian central government has shown itself either unable or unwilling to restrain the wilder and more distant of the tribes under its nominal rule, so that some drastic change must be made to assure the safety of European settlers. The reply from the Emperor Haile Selassie is that he has had great difficulties to meet and acknowledges grave faults in

the administration of his scattered Empire, that he will welcome a full enquiry by disinterested investigators, and that he pledges himself in advance to accept the verdict of the League of Nations regarding the whole issue between Abyssinia and Italy. That answer has satisfied world opinion. It is indeed hard to see how hostile criticism could have been more completely disarmed, or the enemy who refused to negotiate could have been put more decisively in the wrong. For such reference of the whole dispute to the League covered not only the specific charges about border raids, but also the general reproach of low culture, bad government, maintenance of slavery, and oppression of subject peoples which Italian spokesmen have emphasized and which—coming from such a source—has been heard abroad with ironic mirth. Mussolini can hardly be surprised at the tone of comment upon his newly discovered sensitiveness to social inequalities, and the zeal he has begun to profess for popular liberty.

Now, what possible purpose is served by bargaining between the League and a Ruler who has thus expressed himself? Or what value can be found in maintaining a formal association between those whose aims are so fundamentally conflicting? The reply from London to Mussolini's protest Note on Sanctions was curt and clear. It declined further controversy, and even further explanation. In order to explain and to controvert with any effectiveness, it is needful to find a starting-point in something agreed. But in this case what seemed to one side obviously true seemed to the other obviously false. So the British reply intimated that the time to talk was over, and the time to act had come.

III

Among those who condemn the application of Sanctions, there are some who profess that they would approve if they saw any prospect of making the Sanctions policy succeed, but must dissent because it is certain to fail. They point out that the League took no such action against Japan, whose raid on Manchuria was as indefensible as the present Fascist venture in East Africa, and they argue that this decision was wise, because it was much better to refrain from meddling than to meddle unsuccessfully. They contend that Italy now, like Japan four years ago, has means to evade League pressure; that all she requires can be got from non-League countries such as Germany, the United States, Brazil; or from those League countries which refuse to co-operate in the boycott, namely, Austria, Hungary, Albania, Morocco. They add that

there is ground to think France so half-hearted in her application of Sanctions as will make it easy for enterprising French firms to escape the meshes of any embargo on exports that the Republic may formally impose.

But without excusing the slackness or indulgence which permitted Japan to work her will in Manchuria, one may well insist on important differences between the Chinese and the Abyssinian appeal. When the dispute began in the Far East, two of the Powers most deeply concerned in that area—Russia and the United States—were outside the League; as it developed, a third—Japan—withdrew from the League. Thus, although the pressure of Geneva in 1932 might have been and no doubt should have been exerted much more vigorously than it was, there was far less reason for confidence in that case than in the present one that such pressure would be effective. At a distance so remote, and so situated strategically that she had little to fear from military Sanctions, Japan had sources of supply relatively far greater than those now available to Italy for her immediate necessities. Still more allowance must be made for the peculiarities of the South American case, the war between Paraguay and Bolivia, which critics of the League so often cite to show that its present action is unlike anything in its past. Coercive interference by a group of European Powers on the American continent, with the United States outside the partnership, might easily encounter the sharp edge of the Monroe Doctrine.

But the working of Sanctions against Italy is beset by no such obstacles. The coast is indeed so clear that those who profess to apprehend failure must expect a sharp scrutiny of their motives, and a guess that only the strength of desires could so nullify the effect of evidence. It is agreed that even in normal circumstances an Italian campaign in Abyssinia must be long and costly and exhausting—like the French War in Morocco, which so taxed the resources of a nation far better equipped than Italy now is for such an African venture. But the circumstances when this campaign began were very far from normal. Italian financing for the previous year had been notoriously desperate, and everyone knew how bad a risk the Roman Exchequer was held to be among the bankers of the world. Upon a Treasury to which the idea of a balanced budget had long been an elephantine jest, there fell—all of a sudden—the further demands of a gigantic military expedition abroad. And now, after two months of sacrifice upon sacrifice, extorted with Fascist ruthlessness from the Italian people, there comes collective action by some fifty countries—including all

the best customers of Italy—to deprive her of what she most needs for her African campaign. They will simultaneously withhold from her what is essential for her purpose, and by excluding her exports of every kind from their ports they will destroy at a stroke about seventy per cent. of her still available remnants of revenue. Can anyone pretend to doubt that measures such as these, if they are perseveringly applied, will end the war within a short time? Or that even though the evasion of Sanctions should be successful in not a few areas, their effective working in the rest will be quickly fatal? Unless our economic analysts have hopelessly misled us, all that is needed is the fractional success of a scheme on such a scale. A few "bootlegging" industrial adventurers who run the economic blockade, like the few League Powers which refuse to participate, can exert only inappreciable influence on the outcome. The two outside countries which matter most, Germany and the United States, are rendering such aid, effective though indirect, as makes them almost a part of the Sanctions network. It is futile to remind us that munitions can be obtained from Austria, from Hungary, from Albania: the significant fact is that, before long, neither munitions nor anything else will be available from any foreign country, because there will be no Italian funds to pay for them. The League has effectively cut what are called the sinews of war, and the resources in storage cannot last long. After that, as Italian economists must surely have warned the Duce many times, there is nothing to await but destitution and the breadline in Italian cities. It requires no prophet to forecast what will then happen to the Dictatorship.

IV

But suppose the Sanctions policy altogether successful: suppose a complete and at the same time a bloodless triumph, cooperative economic pressure prevailing without a blow struck by sea, on land or in the air: the marauding State subdued to the international will, and a wholesome warning thus set for all time to come: suppose all that. Should we then be able to say that a thrilling and tragic chapter of world experience had been satisfactorily closed? It would by no means follow. There is another aspect of the case, which has been set forth with even more than his habitual clarity and power by Sir Herbert Samuel.

The demands of Italy and Japan and Bolivia, each of which has led to a desolating war, are demands from Powers that have ground for complaint in the hardships of their lot. In Mr. Escott

Reid's apt language, they are "hungry Powers", Italy hungering for the raw materials and the coal essential to her industry, Japan for an outlet for her crowded population, Bolivia for access to the sea. If we make use of the analogy with a State and its internal discipline of its own citizens, if we contend that international control must keep the different Powers from attacking one another just as the police in each country maintain the King's Peace among individuals, we may be confronted with one sharp point of contrast. Within the State, each individual who feels aggrieved at his lotin life can at least appeal to parliament for redress. The courts and the police are not the only agencies through which he comes in contact with the collective will. He can have resort also to the legislature, and it is just because he has his share in thus determining the laws under which he must live that he can be justly required to submit to their operation. Only thus is "Self-government" saved from the reproach of paradox. But where, in the international structure, is there a parallel to this? What World Tribunal is available for the State which finds itself unfairly handicapped by Fortune, so that it may secure what the Socialists call "equal opportunity" in the contest with others? Surely unless and until there is such sovereign control, to abate special privilege and redress special disadvantage, the States of the world must remain as Hobbes conceived that individuals once were, in a condition of war by all against all, where each will take who has the power and each will keep who can.

It is a pointed argument. As Mr. Escott Reid remarks, it has very special interest for Canadians, not only because Canada is among those privileged countries rich in raw material which Italy lacks, but because fifteen years ago an Italian appeal to the League for a Committee to investigate this whole problem in international justice encountered fierce Canadian opposition. By what means an "under-privileged" people, suffering the handicap of late-comers to the colonial field, could now be granted what Mr. Reid calls "concessions", is a puzzle of great intricacy. The chief opportunities thus unequally shared under the present order are access to food supplies, access to the raw materials of industry, and access to the sources of power. Lack of room for settlement of surplus population would be of comparatively slight significance even in crowded countries, if the requirements of an intensely industrialised people were within easy reach, as they are for example in Belgium, whose densely peopled area seems to present no such problem as we meet in Italy and Japan. What shall we say, then, about the handicap which these two peoples are doomed to endure because they are late

entrants into the competition? They find all the best areas already occupied, and the best instruments already monopolised. Pulsating with energy, richly endowed with industrial talent, where shall they obtain the coal and the oil, the cotton, the wool, the iron, the copper, the nickel, the rubber, the chromium and all the rest without which they have so little chance? We know the immigration laws, and the tariff laws, framed to preserve their disadvantage. This is a question which, however intricate, must somehow be solved. Light may perhaps be cast upon it by a parallel.

National advantages, like personal advantages, however indefensible the method by which they were originally obtained, have often by degrees so grown into the world structure that to abolish them now would inflict injustice far worse than any it could redress. Communist cries for "Restitution" are met quite reasonably by the protest that we cannot now reach those really responsible to deprive them of their ill-got gains, and that in the attempt we should merely punish the children, not just to the third and fourth but to thirtieth and fortieth generation for such remote parents' sins, robbing them of the fruits of their own effort in a system on whose stability they had been entitled to depend. "Vested interest" is, no doubt, a term of ill omen in Radical rhetoric; but not surely when it means the assurance we have all felt that the State will honour its own signature to the deposit receipt we hold for our savings in a Government bank, or to the certificate for a Government bond—both phenomena of "bourgeois capitalism".

The Communist proposal to redistribute all such national wealth is easy indeed to recommend on the ground that the differences of rank and fortune are completely and often grotesquely unfair, that a few are born to splendid privilege and the great multitude to grinding poverty, neither of which in the least corresponds to individual desert. But to the proposal that this might be mended by a sudden redistribution in arithmetically equal shares, two objections at once suggest themselves. The first is that no matter how you thus arranged "a fresh start on equal terms", within a very short time the grievance of inequality would be heard again, because the greatest of all handicaps is that of inferior capacity, and this having been appointed by Nature is not alterable by even the most benevolent legislators. The second objection is that such re-sharing, with arithmetical equality among all, whatever their powers or dispositions, would in a short time tremendously reduce the quantity of wealth to be shared. On such ground, even those most eager to meet the challenge of poverty and unemployment have, in general, refused the Communist method, choosing not to

attempt a wholesale reversal of the past (deplorable though the past has often been), but to contrive social services which may make good in some degree the deficiencies of the underprivileged lot. Something of the sort, one my assume, is what Mr. Reid has in view when he speaks of "concessions" in respect of land for settlement and minerals for use, which the League might grant to the "discontented" Powers.

For even more absurd, if possible, than a proposal to equalize individual wealth would be a Quixotic plan to redivide the earth's minerals or reassign the areas of settlement. Anatole France could set forth, in picturesque satire, how national rapine gave certain countries their colonial predominance, just as the fortune of many an ancient family was laid by an ancestral buccaneer. But who would seriously propose to undo the social consolidation and economic development of centuries? It is not national self-consciousness alone that would stand in the way, though there is point in Mr. George Glasgow's reflection about a Lord Mayor's Banquet where every reference to an "imperial heritage" co-operates with the port wine in warming the hearts of Londoners. But even though national sensitiveness could be ignored, such derangement of the whole economic structure of the world would bring disaster quite incalculable to all. So the only method of repair must be by "concessions". The kind which at once suggests itself is in the areas (far bigger than is generally realized) which still remain altogether unexploited, and in the modification of those tariff barriers set up in the name of "economic nationalism". One has only to think, for example, of the possibilities of Brazil—larger by far than the whole area of the United States—for further colonization. And obviously there is no limit to the purchase of raw material for all the industries of the "discontented" Powers if those Powers had money to pay for it; but how shall they ever pay if the Powers more fortunate (because earlier in the colonizing race) shut out their exports which alone could establish foreign credit?

Such are some of the issues which the League, if it is to succeed in establishing world peace, must somehow bring to settlement. To establish peace, it is vital to take away the provocations of war: conspicuous among them, and growing worse, are the overcrowding of population with outlets closed, and the strangling of world trade by tariff. But no State can be permitted, any more than an individual, to take the law into private hands. The risks of private "justice" are too well known. Denunciations, genuine or affected, of Abyssinian slavery and the horrors of the Danakil land are irrelevant: these scandals may cry to Heaven for redress, but hardly

to Italy. The League may have a solemn duty of fierce interference, but not a single Power, especially that Power bent so obviously (and now confessedly) on its own aggrandisement. Such procedure used to be common enough, and took longer to suppress in national than in personal pillage. No doubt Fascists can cite British and French practice of the seventeenth century as bad as Italian practice is now:—poor reassurance to the Fascist Council, but they can have it. Since 1919, however, a new world order has been professed. Just, even generous, concessions to the underprivileged must be made with cautious safeguarding of the new international method. To Mussolini's defiant message that Italy will proceed on her own judgment, "with Geneva, without Geneva or against Geneva", we oppose Premier Baldwin's insistence that all such settlements "shall be examined within the League, shall receive the sanction of the League, and shall be carried out peacefully under the auspices of the League". There is the issue, in its briefest, clearest statement.

V

For the present, then, these wider adjustments must wait. It is an issue of sharp, clear-cut simplicity that has at the moment to be determined. Few Canadians will entertain Mr. Reid's recommendation that Canada should refuse to co-operate in the imposition of Sanctions, unless and until she is assured of a League enquiry into ways and means to meet Italy's grievance about raw materials and land. It sounds like advice to withhold co-operation with the police in the hunt after a highwayman, unless and until parliament agrees to investigate the conditions of poverty to which highway robberies are known to be due. This outburst of international brigandage must be overcome, before there is either leisure or disposition to discuss the narrowness of territory and the shortage of essentials by which it may quite intelligibly have been provoked. Our immediate task is to vindicate the collective system, and it may well be our pride that the cause we have taken up is that of a backward coloured race against a Great Power of Europe, swollen with the self-consciousness of its cultural past. Like individual citizens in the nation, all these Powers are equal before League law, and any misconception on that matter cannot be too soon or too thoroughly dispelled. It is indeed to the negro delegate from the Republic of Hayti that we owe just now the most succinct and memorable of mottos: "Every country may become somebody's Ethiopia".

With chastening thought of what Mr. H. G. Wells called "The War that will end War", one hesitates to indulge, or at least to avow, any millennial expectations from the present effort. But at least one may acknowledge that one thinks of it as unique, and as likely to establish—if it succeeds—such an obstacle to the war-maniacs of the world as was never in all history contrived against them before. One feels that it cannot fail of its purpose unless there is failure of nerve, or a wearing-out of patience, in the Powers which have undertaken it. With such a hope for the future, reinforced by such memories of a not very distant past, will the nations of Europe allow this to fail when they could so easily make it succeed? Let us not believe it, at least until we must.

H. L. S.