

THE LIVING AGE

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AROUND THE WORLD IN JUNE

WHAT do we mean by normal in speaking of a country or a continent — by well-worn allusions to 'getting back to normal'? Does not post-war normality mean coup d'états, cabinet overturns, currency crises, civil wars, persecution of national minorities, religious wrangling, and the economic and political evils that follow in their wake? Certainly we cannot return to the high-tension 'normality' that prevailed before the war. The looking-backward optimist will get us nowhere.

So it behooves us, if we are to be hopeful at all, to keep our eyes fixed on ways of escape from the normal of either to-day or yesterday, and on the things that presage a reconstruction of the world along new lines, rather than on efforts to fit its broken pieces back into their old frame. The most conspicuous centre of such activity to-day seems to be Geneva — although Mussolini would doubtless say Rome, and Trotskii Moscow; and some of our own patriots may imagine that the light of redemption shines brightest along the Potomac. But just now it is the day of little — or at least of inconspicuous

and unsensational — things at Geneva. Certainly the average man does not think of the meeting of the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament, the deliberations over the reorganization of the League Council, and the International Labor Conference as epochal and world-compelling. Nevertheless, they have been making history in a modest way.

English-speaking America was chiefly interested in the work of the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament, while Spanish America was preoccupied with the reorganization of the League Council. We have previously mentioned the opposing theses that foredoomed to failure an attempt to agree at Geneva upon practical steps toward disarmament similar to those taken at Washington. The relative war strength of nations can no longer be measured in terms of battleships, guns, and other instruments of homicide. This has always been true in a measure, but it took the late war to impress the lesson upon the popular mind, and it is a truth strikingly illustrated to-day by Germany's influence

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in Europe, despite her formal military impotence.

Therefore France, supported by the logic of fact, has secured the recognition of her principle of potential military strength, including natural resources as well as specific instrumentalities of war, rather against the wishes of Great Britain, the United States, and Germany, who would have liked to see the consideration of technical disarmament precede these more theoretical discussions. Nevertheless, Count Bernstorff, the German delegate, was probably right in arguing that in practice the first thing for the great nations to do is to lay aside their weapons, and to talk of the incommensurables of military power later. France also secured the endorsement of her demand that a guaranty of the League's instantaneous intervention in case of a threatened war should precede disarmament, thus reviving by indirection the principle of the Geneva Protocol defeated two years ago. Skeptics say, therefore, and with some reason, that no perceptible progress was made toward disarmament at Geneva. Nevertheless, the proceedings of the Commission opened a debate that will doubtless continue until something actual is accomplished.

While the reorganization of the League Council will not be definitely decided until September, when the Assembly can act upon the question, it seems practically certain that the present division into Great Powers with permanent seats, and minor Powers with nonpermanent seats, will continue; that the number of permanent seats will not be changed, thus shutting out Spain, Brazil, Poland, and other aspirants for that honor; and that the number of nonpermanent seats will be increased, with some provision for their occupation in rotation by the minor Powers, in order to discourage the

practice of giving certain Governments an easement upon them. Brazil's resignation from the Council and announced intention to resign from the League will not be much of a tragedy for that body, inasmuch as she has not won the support of Latin America for her contentions. Spain's withdrawal will be more than compensated by Germany's accession. Argentina signed the League Covenant in 1919, but her Congress never ratified that signature as is required by her own Constitution. Nevertheless, she sent delegates to the first Assembly, which she immediately withdrew because her demand for a revision of the Covenant was rejected. The respective attitudes of Brazil and Argentina toward the League are of considerable interest to us, for they typify fundamental movements of public opinion in Latin America. Brazil's disposition has been to emphasize distinctions of status among the Powers. Her claim to a permanent seat is a claim to recognition as a Great Power. Argentina, on the other hand, insists that all nations, like all men in our Declaration of Independence, are free and equal, and that they cannot be divided into categories endowed respectively with greater and lesser rights. For that reason she repudiates the League's Covenant, which classifies Powers as great and small, and which gives an aristocracy of Great Powers privileges not enjoyed by their minor associates.

The International Labor Conference, which opened at Geneva early in June, where an imposing new edifice has just been erected for its bureaus, devoted itself mainly to consideration of two problems: the ratification of the Eight-Hour-Day Convention, and the scientific organization of production. It will be recalled that the Labor Ministers of the leading Continental countries met in London some-

time ago and agreed upon a formula for eight-hour-day laws to be adopted by their respective legislatures. Bills to this effect have already been introduced in some parliaments, and will probably be before those of all the signatory Powers at an early date. The scientific organization of production is a pretty big subject, but its inclusion in the Labor Conference agenda is hopeful, as suggesting that the idea behind trade-union restrictions of output is being replaced by a recognition that increased efficiency and increased production contribute most to the welfare of the workers.

Naturally the flash of optimism that Great Britain felt at the ending of the general strike has been somewhat clouded by the continuance of the coal lockout, which not only throws a heavy direct financial burden upon the nation at a time when it is already laboring under economic stress, but threatens to force the curtailment of important industries like iron and steel making and the engineering trades. At present writing no remedy, either temporary or permanent, has been found for the coal difficulty, which is a disease aggravated by neglect. Details as to working conditions in some British collieries have come to light that help to explain the miners' obstinate stand for a seven-hour day. Principal A. P. Laurie of Heriot-Watt College in Edinburgh, for example, describes in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* some English collieries 'where you can walk forty miles underground without once turning back.' In such workings 'it is not uncommon now for a miner to walk two or three, or even four, miles from the bottom of the shaft to the coal face.' Since the utmost speed with which even an experienced miner can make his way through these underground galleries is two or three miles an hour, a man sometimes spends

nine hours underground in order to get seven hours' actual working time. Twenty years ago, before the passages were as long as they are at present, a Government commission estimated the average time lost by a worker in traveling to and from his work inside a mine at sixty minutes. The professor goes on to say: 'Many of us during the recent strike had to walk three or four miles to our work; but imagine, instead of a good road, fresh air, and a sunny day, we had to walk in darkness, except for the dim gleam of the safety lamp, through mud and slush, or, what is worse, with clouds of coal dust rising at every step, and with the temperature of the air at about seventy or eighty degrees, and in addition, in many pits, having to climb along a steep incline either going or coming. I was discussing this question the other day with a mining engineer who had served his time in one of our Scottish pits. At the end of his day's work at the coal face he had fifty minutes' steady climbing up a steep grade to reach the bottom of the shaft.' The solution would naturally be to do what some up-to-date companies have already done — that is, provide truck transportation for the men along the coal runways from the foot of the shaft to the coal face, so that they could reach their work in a few minutes and avoid beginning their day's labor already fatigued.

Lord Oxford and Lloyd George have fought several rounds in the Liberal ring without either of them getting a decision from the umpire. There are some signs that the Conservatives view the discomfiture of their old rivals with less satisfaction than does the Labor Party. One element of strength in the older political organizations has been a certain prestige of dignity and tradition — an aura of good form dear to the heart of the British elector. If either Party sacrifices this, it detracts a little

from the standing of the other. Nevertheless, the debate between the two Liberal leaders has not descended to unseemly wrangling, and it has been a grand opportunity to reaffirm Liberal doctrine in all its shadings. Such few straws as are floating on the current indicate a political swing toward Labor since the strike. The Conservative *London Outlook*, in commenting on the North Hammersmith by-election, in which Labor captured a seat that had been held by a Conservative, observed: 'The luck of the electoral system gave the Government a larger number of seats in 1924 than the actual voting entitled it to. . . . But this unfair advantage at a general election means, and is bound to mean, that the Party in power is normally at an unfair disadvantage in a by-election.' However this may be, Labor is politically optimistic in Great Britain just at present.

Little of general interest is happening in Ireland, where the Government plods along with its everyday tasks and is chiefly occupied with economic problems. Sinn Fein has been rent asunder, even more thoroughly than the Liberal Party in England, by the split between Miss McSwiney, its new president, and Mr. de Valera, who has now started a rival organization, Fianna Fail. Ireland, like the United States, has a large body of discontented farmers, and apparently a Secretary Mellon also in its Minister for Lands and Agriculture, who recently told the rural electors without mincing words that the conflict with England and the civil strife which followed had demoralized the country districts, and that agricultural prosperity could be restored only by organization and hard work, and not by protection and government subsidies.

Factional dispersion and planlessness characterize parliamentary governments of so many countries at

present that it is almost impossible to discover anything of general interest in their political happenings. The Dutch, the Swiss, and the Scandinavians pursue the even tenor of their way, although Sweden has recently set up a new ministry under a prohibitionist premier. Perhaps the most significant generalization that one can make of this group of countries is that Labor, which has an important voice in their public policies, is less interested in Marxian dogmas and doctrinaire theories than before or immediately after the World War, and is growing more like-minded with its British comrades as time goes on.

France is in the midst of another cabinet crisis as these lines are written, with reasonable certainty that portfolios will continue to change hands with monotonous regularity, while the country tediously toils through its post-war convalescence. M. Briand seems to be the best qualified, by temperament, character, and experience, of any man France possesses to navigate the cranky ship of State through the tortuous channels in which it is entrapped. Both France and Belgium are inclined to entrust their affairs to technical cabinets, which are virtually boards of alleged administrative experts, thus confessing the incapacity of their divided political Parties to unite on a constructive programme. The situation is not so very different in Germany, where Chancellor Marx heads what the local press characterizes as a stop-gap ministry of a rather colorless political complexion. The plebiscite upon the royal-property question has resulted, as predicted, in the defeat of expropriation; but it has probably left a popular grievance behind it.

Things seem to be settling down in Poland with Pilsudski securely on top. The Marshal did not accept the Presidency, where he might have been more

decorative than powerful, but preferred to be head of the army, which is now the Tammany Hall of the young republic. Meanwhile, Posen Conservatives, whose leaders are pre-war politicians trained in the old Prussian Parliament, are sulking in their tents and polishing their armor for new battles. Moscow seems to have thought the moment propitious to extend the hand of fellowship to the Balkan States, with whom she has proposed more intimate relations. These alarmed little Governments, however, are said to have excused themselves, probably fearing that their big neighbor's overtures might have a deglutitory purpose.

The North African Coast has not relapsed into the dullness that might have been anticipated when Abd-el-Krim ceased to decorate its sky-line. In the first place, Spain is piqued because that doughty warrior surrendered to the French, who will probably treat him considerably out of tactful regard for his numerous coreligionists and sympathizers in her Moslem possessions. Such chivalry will be remunerative; and the French have never been as vindictive toward fallen foes whom they no longer fear as have the Spaniards. Señor Yanguas, Primo's Foreign Minister, has come out in favor of equal status for all the members of the League Council, which is substantially the position of Argentina, already described.

Prospect of a general Morocco settlement brings the Tangier question again to the fore. Italy — it is alleged, with British backing — is interesting herself anew in the status of that city. Mussolini has hedged somewhat of late on his warlike demonstrations by declaring in the Senate that Italy's imperialism is neither aggressive nor explosive, and insisting that his Government 'follows, and cannot but follow, a policy of peace.' We have every rea-

son to suppose that such a policy accords with Mussolini's larger designs. It also may help the standing of the lira, whose recent tumble has caused the Government some concern. Commenting upon this, *Journal des Débats* does not altogether agree even with Mussolini's alleged pacifist imperialism. 'He asserts in effect that he will not make war to get what he wants, but that he expects the Powers to give him what he desires. But that does not follow. The Kingdom of Italy was created at a time when there was plenty of free space in the world. If it has not acquired territories outside of Europe since 1860 that satisfy its present ambitions, it is because it has not made a sufficient sacrifice. It is true that the nation was engaged for a long time in consolidating and organizing itself at home; yet it was never put to such a test as was France in 1870. In spite of her disaster and losses in Europe, France toiled unremittingly and perseveringly to extend her colonies . . . while Crispi tried and failed. Discouraged after her Abyssinian defeat, Italy gave up the effort. Is it right for her now to claim territories that bolder and more persevering Governments have conquered and organized at great cost? Neither is the demographic argument of the Fascisti valid. If Italian laborers have migrated in great numbers and contributed by their industry to the prosperity of other countries, they were well paid for labor that their fatherland could not give them.'

While it would not be precisely accurate to say that all is quiet along the Danube, nothing internationally alarming has happened in that quarter during the last few weeks. In fact, domestic scandals have entirely absorbed public attention. Late in April Nicholas Pašič, Yugoslavia's venerable and perennial Premier, quit office following a new quarrel with Stefan Radič, the

Croat peasant leader, after a few months' miraculous reconciliation with that versatile and unstable gentleman. Pašič was succeeded by a like-minded politician, Nicholas Uzunovich, who tried to rule without the coöperation of the Croats. But Radič brought up in Parliament vast financial scandals of which Nicholas Pašič's son, Radomir, is the centre. That enterprising young gentleman is alleged to have received a rake-off on every important Government contract. He is also charged with having made a bargain through the wife of a leading Czechoslovak industrialist whereby, in return for a 'loan' of five million Czech crowns, he became a representative of Czech industrial and mercantile interests in his country, with the express stipulation that he was to act under the patronage of his father. But so many hands have been tarred in these dealings that they will probably be hushed up, although they may cause new political combinations that will eventually eliminate the personal coteries of both Pašič and Radič.

We have recently referred to the sentences passed upon the Hungarian franc forgers. Another counterfeiting conspiracy in Bulgaria, though without the political implications of the one at Budapest, has also been broken up and the offenders have been sentenced to heavy terms of imprisonment. Rumania has gone through the motions of a general election under what was virtually martial law, described by one outspoken German correspondent as 'a concentric military movement against the electorate.' Consequently the victory of General Averescu's Government was a foregone conclusion. In fact, balloting is a mere convention in Rumania, as it is to-day in some other European countries, and as it has been at times in parts of the United States.

After Zaghlul Pasha and his Wafd Party swept the country for the third

time at the May elections in Egypt — which were the first held under the universal-suffrage law — there was an interval of ticklish negotiation. The British Government stood out obstinately against allowing Zaghlul, in spite of his huge majority, to take office. A compromise was finally reached under which one of his lieutenants becomes Premier, but moral authority will of course remain in the hands of the successful independence leader. Almost simultaneously a Caliphate Congress called by the Ulemas of El Azhar University met in Cairo to settle several important questions for the Islamic world. This gathering was not looked upon with special favor by the Egyptian authorities, partly because it was suspected of favoring King Fuad, who is supposed to be under English influence, for Caliph. The Congress did nothing of the kind, however, but adjourned without electing a Caliph or taking other decisive action. A second Mohammedan World Conference has presumably just concluded its sessions at Mekka. This was summoned by Ibn Saud, the Wahabite Sultan, who is now in possession of the holy places, and who probably commands higher respect among his fellow believers than any other leader. He shares with Mustapha Kemal the prestige of an independent ruler, and enjoys additional merit as a religious zealot. In fact, the principal obstacle to making Ibn Saud himself Caliph is the fact that his puritan sect, which prohibits tobacco as well as alcohol, requires the utmost asceticism of its members, and rejects all additions to the Moslem cult of later date than Mohammed himself, ranks among the factions of Islam as ultra-protestant.

Great Britain and Turkey have signed a Mosul agreement, which is said to have caused much dissatisfaction in the latter country. Almost

simultaneously the restless Kurds, who revolted last year, again started on the warpath, requiring several Turkish regiments to suppress them. While the Mosul controversy was pending, Great Britain showed many favors to the Kurds in the Mosul district, such as introducing their language in the schools and the courts, and appointing them to offices formerly held by Turks.

The Swaraj movement in India is suffering from factional wrangles, and mob fighting between Hindus and Mohammedans has distracted popular attention somewhat from grievances against the British raj. The latter has taken steps to abolish gradually the traffic in opium, and to find new sources of revenue to replace the Government's receipts from that drug. Rumors are current of serious public scandals in Indo-China.

June has not been a dramatic month, in the larger sense, for the Far East. A regrouping of forces appears to be taking place in China, with the possibility that new leaders will appear in the near future. Chang Tso-lin and Wu Pei-fu are reported to be planning a conference, which will probably have been held by the time these lines are in print. It will mark the first personal meeting of the rival-and-allied military leaders. A new source of friction with the Western Powers has arisen at Tientsin, where the Chinese military authorities are reported to have seized the salt revenues, which are pledged to foreign bondholders, and to have ejected the regular officials of the Salt Administration. The Japanese Government celebrated the eve of the disarmament discussions at Geneva by bringing in a naval bill providing unexpectedly heavy appropriations for new construction. Naturally this programme is confined to subsidiary craft and does not violate the terms of the Washington Agreement; nevertheless,

it is meeting sharp criticism in the press. *Miyako* said the proposal had two secret objects beside its professed purpose of maintaining the Japanese navy at its present strength. One of these unexpressed objects was to get the subsidiary fleet as strongly re-enforced as possible, so as to face any future Disarmament Conference with a *fait accompli*, and the other to keep the shipyards permanently employed.

Late in May alarming rumors were heard from Central America to the effect that all five of the republics were likely to be involved in revolutionary disturbances having their focus in Nicaragua, where a Conservative leader has recently seized the Government by force. Guatemala was placed virtually under martial law, the principal Opposition dailies were suspended, and constitutional guaranties ceased to be operative. That republic, like Mexico, is involved in a controversy with the Roman Catholic Church. A decree published on May 31 prohibits the entry into the territory of the Republic of any members 'of the Order of Jesuit Fathers or of any other kind of congregation, or order, or Catholic religious body,' and forbids priests of the Catholic religion belonging to another nationality to carry on their ministry in the Republic except with the special permission of the Government, under penalty of deportation. Sisters of charity and their chaplains are excepted from the provisions of the decree. Indeed, Guatemala's political course has not infrequently been charted with that of her northern neighbor in view. The *Diario de Centro-America*, which is the mouthpiece of the present Administration, in commenting upon the suspension of constitutional guaranties in Guatemala late in May, quoted President Calles's assertion that the political independence of Latin America, won a century ago, must be

reënforced by economic independence in order to be effective.

Apparently our effort to arbitrate the Tacna-Arica controversy has failed. Our Government has thereby lost some prestige, and Chile has incurred a moral responsibility that will unquestionably burden her heavily in the future. No question exists as to the facts. A plebiscite was called for by a preëxisting treaty between Chile and

Peru, which was merely reaffirmed by the President of the United States as arbiter. Chile made a plebiscite impossible by refusing to suppress violence in the disputed provinces, which remained under her jurisdiction, so that a fair vote could be taken. She nevertheless insisted that the plebiscite be held under these impossible conditions, and withdrew from the negotiations when that was not granted her.

TACNA-ARICA



SWEATING INK

—*Caras y Caretas*, Buenos Aires

THE DISARMAMENT CONGRESS



IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY TO . . .

—*Notenkraker*, Amsterdam

SYRIA'S MALAISE¹

BY ROGER LABONNE

[SPACE considerations have made it necessary to summarize portions of this article.]

It was early in 1920 at Constantinople. The representatives of the Syrian colony had been given an appointment in one of the ancient palaces that still border the road to Pera. One entered through a modest gate and found himself in a narrow courtyard, where a few spindly and bedraggled palm trees dozed between the black walls. Crossing this, he passed down a musty corridor, whose mouldy floor creaked beneath his feet, and then groped his way up a tortuous staircase that took him into a reception room as dark as the rest of the building. After this unpromising introduction, he came to a door—which opened, and behold! With one of those magic contrasts in which the East delights, he stepped out of the ugliness and darkness into a fairyland of light and beauty. The apartment was a vast reception room whose broad windows opened upon the Bosphorus and Stamboul. Through them the radiant panorama of the Golden Horn—white cupolas, pointed minarets, amethystine waters, and silver sky—was reflected from tall pier glasses, against which the sun cast here and there a scintillating ray.

In the midst of all this beauty the Syrian delegates were peaceably discussing their affairs. A sharp-eyed little chairman presided gracefully and

courteously, with the simplicity of an old pasha smiling away his declining years in Oriental calm. He had accumulated in trade a large property which guaranteed him the respectful esteem of all who knew him, especially since he was a most accommodating person and his charity was inexhaustible. The other delegates did not exhibit the same serenity beneath the placid masks that the presence of Europeans rendered necessary. They were clearly neither as tolerant nor as philosophical as their chairman. The younger men in particular let words escape them now and then that betrayed intense feeling and violent partisanship.

But these little outbursts left the meeting cold. The members had agreed to avoid burning questions, and so they confined themselves to discussing the needs of the Syrian colony in Constantinople—its free dispensary, its House of Refuge, and its commercial relations with Beirut. Perfect courtesy prevailed among the diverse and discordant elements in the assembly. Mohammedans formed a compact group, but in their midst I desecrated the big Persian bonnet of the Syrian Bishop and the black toques of the Maronite and Chaldean prelates. Three Israelites were seeking to ingratiate themselves with the chief of the Orthodox community, an old patriarch who resembled one of those personages that you see on the bas-reliefs of Nineveh. And close to a young deacon who had the golden hair of a Byzantine Christ a pious mullah with turbaned head sat ab-

¹From *Le Correspondant* (Liberal Catholic semimonthly), May 25