

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROBLEMS OF A PEACE LEAGUE

SIR,—Perhaps I have overlooked it, but I have not happened to see a detailed development of the idea of a "League for Peace," or of an "International Court or Arbitration League," to determine questions that may arise hereafter between the nations, or some of the nations, of the earth.

The titles of these proposed bodies are attractive, but how is the "League" or "International Court," or whatever it may be called, to be formed? If it is to be composed of the representatives of "Leading Nations," what nations are referred to? and what entitles them to be so-called? If all nations are eligible to representation on acceptance of the conditions of membership, and some great and warlike nations decline, would not the whole scheme be a failure, since each member of the league, and all together, would then have to arm against the non-members?

But, assuming that all nations, or those coming within the grade of eligibility, express a wish to join, on what basis will the number of representatives be apportioned? It is not to be presumed that such nations as Great Britain, Germany, France and the United States would consent to the plan of a single representative from each member, and thus place themselves on a level as to voting strength with Spain, Portugal or Denmark, because, in that case there would be no "Great Powers"; and the present dominant nations would be outvoted and overruled in any material contention with the lesser Powers. If the United States, for example, were to have but one representative in the Court, the Monroe Doctrine would "go glimmering," for the representatives of the European nations would annul a doctrine that is offensive to all of them. For that matter, the Monroe Doctrine would be doomed, no matter what the representation of the United States might be, unless, combined with the South American and Central Republics, it should command a majority vote, which is improbable. So, any doctrine of Great Britain as to "Search and Seizure," and interference with mails, now held adversely to the contentions of neutral nations, would be swept away by the remorseless votes of the present neutral and minor Powers. Therefore, the limitation of a single representative from a nation is not to be thought of.

Should representation be in proportion to the superficial area under the government of any nation? That would give Russia the largest representation, if, in such case, the mother-country alone is to be considered. If the area of colonies is to be included, the British Empire would be first, Russia second, France third and the United States fourth. But this would be unfair, since much of the territory of Great Britain and Russia is uninhabitable, and incapable of supporting any population.

Should it be according to the national wealth and material assets? That would be almost impossible to estimate, and would change more rapidly than any other basis. Should it be according to military and naval strength—that is, according to the ability of a nation to defend itself, a condition which now gives it rank as a real Power? There is something to be said in favor of that as a basis; but how is military strength to be rated as against naval strength? One can see a never-ending dispute on that question between Great Britain on the one hand, and Russia, Germany and France on the other. Furthermore, it was demonstrated in the Russo-Japanese war, and is being demonstrated in the present war, that intelligence and efficiency count more than numbers. The great Russian army seems almost a play-thing as against the Germans; and the Serbian and Rumanian armies have been scattered like chaff before the wind by more intelligent and better trained troops.

Should population be the basis? That works fairly well for some of the deliberative bodies in America, although it does not apply to the Senate nor to the Courts; and by trick legislation and election machinery is abused in a large section of the country. Here again, if the representation is confined to the mother country, China would rank first and Russia second, a deplorable situation. If colonies are to be included, the British Empire would take the lead, but China would be second—still deplorable, and quite unfair, because Great Britain would profit by the ignorant and superstitious masses of India and the savages of Africa as against the intelligence of small nations like Holland and Switzerland.

If based upon the present representation in the law-making bodies of the nations respectively, Great Britain would cut a small figure (to which she would not consent), for her colonies have no votes in Parliament. Should she be represented in a World Congress by counting her colonials whom she does not now consider as entitled to a seat in her own Parliament?

And that suggests another possible basis, viz.: educational rank. In that case, Germany would come first and Denmark, with her intelligent colony of Iceland, or perhaps Sweden, would be second.

A representation based on literacy would reduce Russia to a fifth rate Power, or lower, and of course she would not consent to that.

Ex-President Taft, in a recent after-dinner speech in New York, admitted the great difficulties of the proposition, but thought it "could be worked out." However, he gave no hint as to a practical solution. And President Wilson, in his address to the Senate on this subject, omitted to give a plan (if he has any) for carrying out his ideas.

It is not a sufficient answer to say that because these schemes are worked out in the respective nations, they may be worked out in a League of Nations. In the separate unit, the plan of representation is formed by the vote, or with the assent of the majority, for the supposed best interests of the people, according to their condition and numbers, and does not involve the possibility of lowering the rank of the nation, or a departure from its traditional or announced international policies. It is for internal purposes only.

As soon as the standing of a nation is involved, a new element enters into consideration. The plan adopted for domestic government might be fatal to representation and influence in an international body.

I can think of no plan or basis but which, if adopted, would unfavorably

affect both great and small Powers, and it is inconceivable that nations so affected would consent to such adoption.

Is it the purpose of the remaining Powers, in that case, to compel consent? If so, then a new world-war will begin at once, with indefinite continuance.

The foregoing will apply, I think, not only to questions of national honor and policies, but to strictly justiciable questions, capable of settlement by a finding of facts and an application of legal principles. For a permanent court or congress, the nations would insist on a proportionate representation; else there would be no check to the jealousies and ambitions of the smaller Powers.

Even if the representatives of the Powers affected are not allowed to sit in a matter involving themselves, their strength for future action, in other questions, would be considered, and would operate as a deterrent to any marked injustice or extravagant judgment.

The whole scheme, therefore, it seems to me, is based upon the plan of representation, which presents a maze of difficulties.

The establishment of a World Court seems to me like the dream of an idealist; but, being open to a contrary conviction, I have written this with the purpose of bringing out the views of others, not as to its desirability, but its possibility.

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[Whatever objection may reasonably be urged against the projected World-League for Peace, the objection that it is "the dream of an idealist" is not, as our correspondent seems to think, a crushing one. Every great liberalizing movement that has in the past lifted humanity a little higher above the brutes has had its origin in "the dream of an idealist." Lincoln dreamed an idealist's dream. Those who insisted that the abolition of slavery was a fantastic impossibility were "practical men." And what nation today is, *par excellence*, the nation of "efficiency," of practical men? We leave the inevitable answer, with its implications, to be brooded upon by our valued correspondent.—EDITOR.]

IS THE PEACE LEAGUE A BROKEN REED?

SIR,—In criticizing the article, "The League to Enforce Peace," appearing in the January number of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, my object is to counteract a false sense of security that might arise from the acceptance of the principles underlying the programme of the League.

Without discussing the wording of the programme, the objection is to the assumption that the provisions of this agreement, or any similar one, would be lived up to by the signatories. It is the objection mentioned by Mr. Lowell—that it would prove ineffective.

My contention is that the actuating motive of nations in their international relations has been (with a few possible exceptions) self-interest, and will remain the same for a long time to come, and therefore the members of the League would fail to perform their part of the agreement in cases where it was not to their interest and advantage to do so.

In reasoning as to the probable courses of Governments under certain conditions that may arise in the future, the best we can do is to deduce their courses of action from what history tells us they have done in similar

cases in the past. Is it reasonable to assume that international morality will exist on a higher plane in the near future than in the not distant past?

Let us take up the two cases cited by the writer to prove that "self-respecting nations are apt to fulfill their agreements to take up arms," viz., England and France in 1914. As for the treaty safeguarding the integrity of Belgium, of which treaty England is a signer, it is obvious that a continuation of the state of affairs as they existed before the war—that is, the control by England's friends of the southern side of the channel—was almost necessary to England's control of the sea, upon which fact her existence avowedly depends. Self-interest demanded that she inject herself into the struggle, and she can quite truthfully state that the reason was the violation of Belgian sovereignty. It was not the mere fact of the breaking of a treaty that impelled her to this course, but the fact that she was vitally interested in the preservation of the terms of the treaty. To prove the latter statement, it is only necessary to consider the joint action of the Allies in Greece, *in direct violation of the 1st and 2d Articles of the Fifth Hague Convention to which England is a signatory* (with certain reservations under Articles 16, 17, and 18). It may be contended that the Allies occupied Saloniki at the virtual invitation of the Greek Government; it cannot, however, be held that they are remaining there at the Government's behest, or even with its passive acquiescence. No! Expediency requires them to remain.

As regards the participation of France in the war, again self-interest was at the bottom of it. France and Russia are in an alliance, the terms of which, very properly, are dictated by self-interest. The plight of France, with Germany victorious over Russia, can be imagined. The possibility of escape from the economic restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Frankfurt was in itself almost enough to justify France in the course she took, from the point of view of expediency. It must be borne in mind that I do not place the invasion of Belgium in the same category as the occupation of Greece, nor am I at present concerned with the ethics of expediency as a policy. I simply desire to impress the fact that the treaties and agreements that have been made have been adhered to or violated in accordance with the dictates of self-interest, and to suggest the probability that future agreements will be effective in the same measure.

Consider, for a moment, our own administration of international relations. Has it been such as to warrant a belief that the United States would sacrifice its own interests for the sake of adherence to a principle? In other words, would the United States go to war with England—or, to use the words of the programme, "use forthwith both their economic and military forces against" England, for example—because England should fail to carry out the terms of the agreement in some controversy with Persia? Would France declare war on the United States because we committed technical acts of hostility against Hayti before submitting the question at issue to a "Council of Conciliation"?

Mr. Lowell says "the Monroe Doctrine has prevented foreign nations from acquiring possessions on this continent for nearly a century . . ." I differ most emphatically. It has not been the Monroe Doctrine that accomplished this result: it has been "the sanction of ultimate force" of which he speaks later in the same connection. It has simply happened that the threat of the force behind the Monroe Doctrine has been sufficient to

outweigh the desire to violate it, and the desire to violate it varies directly with the advantages to accrue from its violation. When the time comes that the advantages to be gained by its violation justify the attempt to oppose the force behind it, that attempt will be made, and will succeed or not depending on the forces that clash.

There is another consideration that enters into this discussion: and that is the fundamental difference between municipal law, which concerns cases involving individuals or groups having the same standing before the law, and international law. An international tribunal legislates between states. Now do all states have, in point of fact, the same standing? Most unthinking people, I am convinced, will indignantly deny the intimation that there is any difference; but let us look at facts as they are, not as they possibly ought to be. In their dealings with China, have the great Powers conceded the same rights to her that they have conceded to each other? Has Germany conceded the same rights to Belgium as to Switzerland? Have England and Russia conceded the full rights of a sovereign state to Persia? To come nearer home: Has the United States in her dealings with Mexico, Nicaragua, San Domingo and Hayti acknowledged their sovereign rights to the same extent that she has in her dealings with Germany and England? Our Government itself is founded on the submission of the weaker to the more powerful—on the submission of the minority to the majority. That being the case, could we, ought we, to pledge ourselves on occasion to sink our own interests in furthering the interests of, say, Hayti, as we might conceivably have to do in carrying out the provisions of the "programme"?

If it were reasonable to suppose that the requirements laid down in the programme of the League to Enforce Peace would be carried out: if all states should be willing to sacrifice their independence of action to the extent necessary to carry them out in all cases: then this league would be effective. In the nature of things, however, it cannot be. The "will to live" is too strong to be hedged about by agreements and understandings. I do not mean to say that the League would be without influence, and possibly, in certain cases, a strong influence; but I do mean to say that it would be effective only in those cases where small affairs are involved, and that it is unreasonable to assume that nations are going to the extreme of war in cases where they are not directly concerned, and solely to carry out the provisions of an agreement. That time may come. It has not yet come. Let the League be formed, but don't let us imagine that it will function in all cases. Let us realize that so long as the world is becoming populated at the present rate by races and nations whose interests are so divergent and inimical, our only protection lies in the threat of force—force employed by ourselves: not force employed by a league of nations actuated by a desire to keep their word.

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P. S.—In the use of the words "interest" and "self-interest" I have not been absolutely accurate. A more exact expression of the meaning to be conveyed would be "supposed interest," or "what is thought to be self-interest under the circumstances."

[With due respect for our esteemed correspondent, we think his contentions are preposterous. To imply that all nations are incurably selfish and

faithless, and to say that "self-interest," or "supposed interest," was at the bottom of France's participation in the war, implies so many intellectual and spiritual inhibitions on the part of the writer that we are at a loss for an adequate reply.—EDITOR.]

VIRGIN BIRTHS

SIR,—After reading Dr. McKim's article on the virgin birth of Jesus, I wish to say that, although for a confirmed rationalist like myself it is almost inconceivable that any one can seriously believe this miracle, nevertheless the writer at least deserves credit for being thoroughly consistent in his position. He is right in recognizing that Christianity can not abandon this miracle without abandoning them all, and that it is impossible to separate the supernatural element of the Gospels from the human.

As to the truth of this miracle, while practically admitting that science has no record of a child's ever having been born without a human father, Dr. McKim asserts that "we have no experience in all the range of scientific knowledge which can serve as a criterion by which to judge this marvelous fact which the annunciation brings before our minds. This phenomenon stands entirely by itself. There is no other example we can compare with it."

Now I want to ask, will Dr. McKim deny that comparative religion is a science? And if he is familiar with its principles, will he assert that the virgin birth is unique in that field? Has he read of the virgin birth of Dionysius in the *Bacchae* of Euripides, and of the virgin births, or even births from a human father and a divine mother, of the numerous other similar characters in mythology?

However, I am not a Christian. Christianity, while it no doubt contributed greatly to civilization, must give place to a more advanced system in which the good element of its doctrines will be included, along with other elements, in a new and larger conception.

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