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INNES — STORY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS





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THE STORY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Told for Young People

BY

KATHLEEN E. INNES, B.A.



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**The Story of
The League of Nations**

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Told for Young People

By

KATHLEEN E. INNES, B.A.



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The Story of The League of Nations

CHAPTER I

EARLY EFFORTS AFTER PEACE

IN the following pages I want to trace with you the story of the League of Nations. Most people think that it is only a short story, dating back to the year after the end of the Great War, when the League as we know it was formed to see if the nations could avoid war in future and join together to help forward the progress of the world in all sorts of ways. Though this is in a sense true, great steps like the formation of the League are not taken suddenly. For many centuries, men who had seen the miseries of war, and the way things are hindered when people will not join to help each other, had made plans for linking the nations together, and had tried to get them agreed to. We shall learn more of some of these plans presently, but first I want to go back a very long way indeed in

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history to about six hundred years before Christ, and tell you of a very interesting experiment, which was really like a little League of Nations, among some of the cities of Ancient Greece.

There was at that time in Greece a very rich and magnificent temple at Delphi. To worship there, people came from many parts, and twelve cities agreed to join together to watch over the temple and its great wealth. Men from all the cities, small or large, met in council, and each city was allowed two votes. As they had a common object in joining together, each began to feel that the others in the Council were friends and brothers and to see that it would not do for them to fight amongst themselves ; so the members of this AMPHICTYONIC LEAGUE, as it was called, made promises to bring their quarrels for settlement to the League Council, and all the men from the cities who came to the Council took the following oath : “ We will not destroy any Amphictyonic town ; we will not cut off any Amphictyonic town from running water.” The Council settled a good many disputes, mostly to do with the Temple of Delphi, but some others as well. Thus, once when two cities had decided they *must*

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fight out a quarrel, the Council settled what weapons they must use to do as little harm to each other as possible !

If the cities had managed to remain united against outside foes, they would probably never have been conquered by the father of Alexander the Great, Philip of Macedon. But one of the towns asked him to come and help against another, and when he had conquered this city he turned against the one which had asked him in, defeated it, and stayed in the land.

Thus the first attempt at what was a small League of Nations came to an end through the jealousies of its members. The next actual attempt to set up a League was not made till over two thousand years later, in our own day.

Another ancient State, however, left to the world some ideas of unity between the nations which influenced the history of Europe for hundreds of years. You know that the Romans went as conquerors over most of the world known in their days, including our own island of Great Britain. Here and there wherever they went they made people of all nations Roman citizens. Thus, you will remember, St Paul, though a Jew by race, was proud of having been

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born a free citizen of the Roman Empire, and claimed and secured privileges because of that. So there grew up a bond between the different peoples of the Empire which cut across the ties binding together those of one nation only, and this was strengthened by the fact that the Romans ruled wherever they went by the same laws, known all together as the ROMAN LAW. Besides this, they set up always one State religion, and the ideas of a world religion and a world law they left to the Middle Ages, when the Roman Empire herself was broken up.

Before Ancient Rome fell, the nations which made up her Empire had become Christian, and the Head of the Church, the Pope, became recognised as the spiritual ruler of all Christian nations, just as the Emperor was their temporal ruler. That is to say, the aim was still a world religion and a world law, and whether a man was a Gaul from France or an Italian or a German, he owed loyalty first of all to the head of his religion, the Pope, as a Christian, and to the head of the Empire, who was regarded at first, equally with the Pope, as God's representative on earth. In other words, men had begun to see, however dimly, and however poorly

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they carried it out, that there is a brotherhood between men as children of one Father, which should lead them to live together in peace and obey laws wider than the laws of the separate nations.

Both Emperor and Pope were often called upon to settle disputes, when they arose between the nations who recognised their overlordship, and the power of both for many centuries was very great; but in the end the system was doomed to failure. The two Heads, Pope and Emperor, became jealous of each other, and rivalry and discord weakened both. Those over whom they had sway began to doubt their claims, and to ask *why* they should believe what the Pope told them to believe, or obey the Emperor, since these could not themselves agree; the rulers, weakened as they were by strife and corruption, could not give men answers which satisfied the boldest inquirers, and a new spirit of independence swept over Europe, which defied their claims. You have learnt about this new spirit in your history lessons, as it was shown in the Reformation and the Renaissance, and with these movements the Holy Roman Empire came to an end.

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I have told you a little of its story, that you may realise that the idea of peace between the nations through the realisation of human brotherhood and the acceptance of a common law is not new. It failed, as Rome attempted to carry it out, for many reasons we cannot now go into, but we have seen that its failure was partly due to the weaknesses of those who tried to put it into practice, and partly due to its being imposed on men by authority from above, which they presently questioned.

The idea itself was a very great one, and it was not the idea which failed.



CHAPTER II

DREAMS OF A LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND THE MEN WHO DREAMT THEM

AFTER the fall of the Holy Roman Empire the possibility of any bond uniting the nations as a whole seems to have been lost sight of, and a period of very strong national feeling followed in Europe. In different countries, however, a solitary thinker here and there still dreamt of a day when men would agree to co-operate, and to settle the quarrels between nations by reason instead of by force, in the same way as they already settled disputes between individuals; and the dreamers in each country who wrote down their dreams helped to prepare for the day when the Covenant of our present League of Nations was accepted by the Powers who signed the Treaty of Versailles at the close of the War.

One of these early plans for a League of Nations was drawn up by an Englishman, the

well-known Quaker, William Penn, in 1693. He was moved to make it by the terrible things he had seen happen in war, which, he says, must move to pity anyone but a "statue of brass or stone"; and so he puts forward his plan for "the present and future peace of Europe." He points out that if Governments were always just, the causes of war would be removed, and he suggests that the princes of Europe should meet together regularly in a sort of Parliament to "establish rules of justice" towards each other, settle differences, and oblige any who refuse to agree to their decisions to submit. At the time he was writing, Penn foresaw that there would be difficulties as to who should preside at the Parliament of Nations, who should enter the room first, and who should sit at the top of the table. For the rulers thought a great deal of what is known as "precedence." He, therefore, suggests a very clever way out of the difficulty. He says the room in which the princes, or their representatives, meet shall be round, with several doors; and that the table too shall be round and the representatives take it in turn to preside at the meetings. He also suggests, that since

the big nations may try to force the smaller to vote in the way they wish, when a vote is taken it should be secret, by ballot, like our votes for a member of Parliament. Then, he says, shrewdly enough, no one will try to force or to buy votes, for they will soon see that anyone who would take money to vote one way is quite likely to be dishonest enough to take it and vote as he had meant to all the time. Voting on special occasions at the League to-day is by secret ballot. Penn makes the curious rule, for which you can perhaps think out some reasons, that every representative must attend each meeting of the "Parliament," and must vote on each question. In his day there was not such a difficulty over language as there is to-day, because all the people likely to take part in such a Parliament would know Latin, and he proposes that this language, or French, should be allowed.

He points out that there are plenty of good public acts to help forward, "learning, charity, manufactures," and so on, on which men could spend their money and their energies better than in destruction, and he concludes :

"By the same rules of justice and prudence by which parents and masters govern their

families and magistrates their cities and princes and kings their principalities and kingdoms, Europe may obtain and preserve peace among her sovereignties.”

More than two hundred years have passed since Penn wrote those words, but I am sure you will find it hard to think of any good reasons why they should not at last be proved true.

Frenchmen, more I think than the men of any other nation, have devoted thought to the making of plans for the setting up of a League of Nations. At any rate this is the case from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and the present League owes much to their plans. I can only tell you of one here, but some day you will find much that is interesting in others. Within a few years of Penn's plan the Abbé St Pierre published what was called *A Treaty of Perpetual Peace*. It laid down that all the Christian rulers of Europe should send deputies to a Congress or Senate, which should always be sitting, and that this Senate should settle all international disputes. If any nation refused to agree to a decision the others were to lend troops to enforce it. No nation might try to increase its possessions by force. If a State was per-

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sistently disobedient it was to be disarmed and to pay all the costs of the war which it had caused. You see that the working out of this scheme depended on all the nations being sure as to who was in the wrong, and being willing to lend their armies to punish the "guilty" State, two very doubtful things, as we have found out in trying to make agreements under the present League; but it is always helpful to have difficulties clearly put, and to have discussion as to how they may be solved. This is the great value of many of the early plans for a League, and Abbé St Pierre is very practical and sensible as French thinkers generally are.

The next plan I want to tell about was drawn up by a great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, and was entitled *Towards Perpetual Peace*. He wrote it at a time when his country was in the midst of a long series of wars with France, during the French Revolution. Just at the time there was a truce, but they were soon fighting again. Kant believed that men must one day come to see that they should behave to each other as fellow-citizens and fellow-members of the human race, so that war would become impossible. Here we see again the idea of

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universal brotherhood, though Kant did not come to the idea through religion, but through reason and his ideas of right and wrong. He thought that men would one day understand that it was wicked to injure each other, and he also held that, at last, they would realise it was foolish. Then, he believed, the free nations of the world would come together into a union (or federation) of free States and make no more wars. But he saw that there were a great many things in the world which, when he wrote, prevented this. Thus, rulers often made secret treaties with each other, which led them into wars. They took lands by conquest and interfered with each other's affairs. They did things in wars which left ill-feelings behind, and they did not take the advice of wise men (or philosophers) as to how to keep peace. Kant advised the rulers to change all this ; and when we come to talk of the League to-day I want you to notice how far we have followed his advice.

One more dream I must tell of before I close this chapter, the dream of a Russian, a dream which nearly came true.

Not so very long before you were born, in

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1899, Czar Nicholas II, the ruler of Russia, determined to do what he could to put a stop to the preparation for war which was going on throughout the world. He felt that this rivalry in building war-ships and making guns must one day lead to a terrible war, and he thought that if the nations could meet in a Conference, and agree to reduce their armies and navies, and to settle certain disputes by law in a Court, the terrible conflict which he saw ahead might be avoided. In 1899, therefore, he invited the nations to send representatives to a Conference at the Hague, the beautiful little city which is the centre of government in Holland. There they tried to work out some of the difficult problems connected with quarrels between the nations, and they arranged for a Court of Arbitration to meet at the Hague to settle disputes that were referred to it. A Peace Palace was built at the Hague to be the meeting-place of the nations, and the different countries made presents to it. Thus, its iron gates were given by Germany; the granite to build its walls came from Scandinavia; the British Commonwealth gave stained-glass windows; Japan sent silk curtains; China sent lovely vases to ornament it; the United States

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gave beautiful statues ; while wood came from South America. The nations met again for a fresh Conference in 1907, and were about to meet a third time, when the War came. All hopes seemed shattered, and the Peace Palace seemed a mockery. But I shall have something more to say in another chapter about the work of the Court which had been set up, and you will also hear later on to what important purpose the Peace Palace, which during the War seemed a useless failure, has been put to-day.

CHAPTER III

BROTHERHOOD THE DREAM OF A NATION : THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE FAILURE OF ITS IDEALS

THE wars in the midst of which Kant wrote his plan for perpetual peace were, as we have mentioned, the wars of the French Revolution. These wars were due, in the first case, to the terrible oppression of the poorer classes and peasantry of France by their rulers, but the way to revolution had been prepared by writers and thinkers who taught people that all men have equal rights ; that government should only be " by consent of the governed " ; that men are born free, and should behave to one another like brothers. The revolutionaries took as their motto, " Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood," and it was to secure these that they began to fight. Their first victory in Paris was the destruction of a famous prison, the Bastille, which seemed to them to stand for all the tyranny and oppression they hated, and

great were the rejoicings in the name of Liberty when it fell. It was not only in France that men rejoiced, believing a new age had dawned for humanity. Our poet Wordsworth has told us that men felt :

“ Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven.”

Alas ! for men's hopes. They soon learnt that when violence is once let loose it is not easy to stop it, and that to give men power through force turns them into tyrants, who believe only their own way is right, and presently even come to think that they may use all sorts of means, terror, and oppression in their turn, to oblige others to obey them and to think as they do. The French Revolution went on to what is known rightly as the Reign of Terror, and when it ended, the figure that emerged was not the figure of Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood, but that of Napoleon Buonaparte.

One more attempt was, however, made towards the building up of a new Continent which should not have wars, when the statesmen met at Vienna after the fall of Napoleon, to resettle Europe. And here, as at the Hague at the end of the century, it was a Czar of

Brotherhood the Dream of a Nation

Russia, Alexander I, who led the way. Hopes ran high that the nations would disarm and form a "republic of Christian States," as Alexander had proposed as much as ten years earlier. They talked of a peace of justice, which should respect the rights of small nations, and of the birth of a new law between nations. Alas! again, for men's hopes. When the Treaty of Vienna was signed in 1815 the new map of Europe showed two things: first, a fear of France, which had made the statesmen forget justice; and secondly, a scramble by the Powers for what they could each get hold of and keep. The Holy Alliance, which was formed to keep peace in Europe, turned into a tool of the rulers to put down every popular movement in any country.

Yet not everyone lost hope. Before the Revolution took place the Scotch peasant poet, Robert Burns, had declared his belief:

"It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that."

And Shelley, poet and prophet, growing up in the time of despair after the failure of the Revolution, could still foresee the day when

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“ Love ” would fold “ over the world its healing wings,” and could hear in the west wind

“ The trumpet of a prophecy ; O wind
If winter comes, can spring be far behind ? ”

The cause of Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood seemed to have failed ; but by ways that men did not think of as likely to have such results, and often by events that were little noticed at the time, the nations, in the remaining years of last century, were drawn closer together than they had ever been before, by developments in travel, by scientific discoveries, and by great increase in the use of arbitration. These we will talk of in the next chapter, closing this one with the words of another poet, Arthur Hugh Clough, written not very long after the Revolution :

“ For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.”

The poets wisely teach us to look for “ what the centuries tell against the years.”

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE LEAGUE CAME NEARER THROUGH THE CENTURIES

IN the year 1291 a little nation set an example to all the others of what might be done to avoid wars. That little nation was Switzerland, where the League of Nations now has its headquarters. Before that time the people of the different Cantons, or districts, of Switzerland, who often spoke different languages, had had frequent quarrels which led to fighting. They were also surrounded by nations who attacked them and tried to take away their country. Presently they saw that they would not be able to resist the enemy outside if they went on quarrelling with each other, and in 1291 the leaders of three of the Cantons met together and made a perpetual treaty of arbitration; that is to say, they promised never to fight each other any more if a dispute arose, and they agreed instead to let "the wisest" among them settle their disputes

for ever. That treaty was never broken, and Switzerland grew into the united and prosperous little State that she is to-day.

Although no other States were so sensible in such early days as to make "perpetual treaties" to let their quarrels be settled by judges instead of by war, it quite often happened that the Pope, or some ruler famed for his wisdom, was appealed to to decide a quarrel, and by the nineteenth century it was becoming more and more usual for States to submit their disputes to judges or to agree beforehand that they would use arbitration over nearly all differences that might arise between them. Indeed it almost began to look as though the practice might grow so common that war between civilised nations would grow out of date. In the hundred years before the Great War broke out in 1914, about one hundred and sixty disputes between nations were settled by arbitration, and in the fifteen years before the War more than one hundred and fifty treaties were made by which the nations agreed not to fight out their quarrels unless, as the phrase goes, their "honour or vital interests" were at stake; and actually, in the very year of the

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War, the United States of America and Great Britain made a treaty together promising to submit *every* kind of dispute to arbitration.

This all seemed very hopeful, and even looking back after the Great War, there is one thing that remains very hopeful about the treaties that were made, and the cases where nations used arbitration. It is, that where arbitration was tried it was always very successful. The nations who were judged in the wrong and fined, or told to make amends in some other way, always did so as quietly as a person who has been judged in a Law Court, and there was not ill-feeling afterwards. I will give you a few examples.

You know that one of the most common causes of wars has been disagreement over land boundaries. In the year 1813 such a disagreement arose between Canada and the newly formed United States. It was not many years since our Colonies, which are now the United States, had won in war a freedom which foolish treatment had made them desire, and had cut themselves off from Great Britain. It would have been very easy, therefore, to work up ill-feeling between Canada, which remained

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our Colony, and the new States, and to enter into war with them. Fortunately, however, the men who had to decide how to act were wiser than to do this. They agreed to accept a judgment by arbitration. The question of the boundary line between the United States and Canada was settled in a peaceful and friendly way, once for all, and—since both sides agreed to it—a wonderful decision was taken. It was arranged that all along those thousands of miles of boundary there should be no forts and no soldiers. The result has been peace for over a hundred years ; and another result which we should not forget is that men who would have been obliged to spend years of their lives keeping guard along thousands of miles of borders on either side, were left free to give those years to the development of their country, or to some other fruitful work.

In the middle of last century, when the Northern States of America were fighting with the Southern States over their right to break away from the Union of the States rather than be denied the right to keep negro slaves, we, who were neutral in the war, let a ship, known as a privateer, escape from Birkenhead, to go on a

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raiding expedition against the North. This ship, called the *Alabama*, destroyed one steamer and over sixty sailing ships before she was sunk after two years of adventure, and when the war was at an end damages were claimed against us. For nearly ten years tiresome discussions were carried on and no agreement could be reached, and then at length it was decided to accept the arbitration of an impartial, neutral body which met at Geneva. The decision was given against Great Britain, and we paid a fine of over three million pounds. By this time we had realised that we were responsible as a nation for the wrong that had been done, and the paying of the fine settled the matter and left no ill-feeling behind. Many another case of such peaceful settlements might be told, but I will just tell of one more, where our King, Edward VII, was called in to act as arbitrator.

The boundary between Chile and Argentina, two of the States of South America, runs high up in the mountain range of the Andes. For some years a bitter dispute was carried on as to the exact line of this boundary. Feeling ran very high on both sides, and preparations for war were kept up. At last, in 1896, the two

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countries agreed to ask Queen Victoria to arbitrate between them. A report was made by men who went into the claims of both sides ; this took some years, and by the time it was finished Edward VII was ruling over us. He, therefore, gave the final judgment, which both nations accepted. Then a bishop in Argentina made a proposal which was supported warmly by a bishop in Chile. It was that a huge statue of Christ should be set high up in the Andes, to stand there as a lasting symbol of the peace which had been made. This statue was cast from some cannon, which might have been used in the war, from a fort in Argentina, and it was dragged, partly by soldiers and sailors, almost to the top of a pass over twelve thousand feet up the heights. There it stands, a figure of Christ, holding His right hand up in blessing and in His left a cross. Under it are the words : " Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust, than Chile and Argentina break the peace which they have sworn at the feet of Christ, the Redeemer." After the setting up of the Hague Court we took to it a quarrel with the United States which had dragged on for ninety-two years. It was a dispute about fishing rights

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in the waters round Newfoundland. What we could not settle, the Court settled quite quickly, and both sides were satisfied with the judgment.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the practice of arbitration increased so much in the nineteenth century was, that men began to realise that as the countries of the world were drawing together, almost in spite of themselves, in so many ways, wars would be far more destructive in all sorts of directions than in the past. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Sir Robert Peel was sent for from Italy to form a Government and become our Prime Minister, he took as long to get home as Cæsar would have taken in the century before the birth of Christ. Through all those ages there had been next to no advance in quick methods of travel. You, who have grown up in an age of trains, motors, and aeroplanes, do not realise how recently the world has been drawn closer by their development. A prime minister now, who happened to be travelling in Italy, could get home in a few hours, and he could be sent for by wireless in a few seconds. Yet an aeroplane first made a flight in 1889, and one did not succeed in flying half a mile till 1896. When

William Penn went to America the journey took three months at least. To-day it can be done in a steamer in four days, and a message can be sent by wireless from Land's End to New York in six seconds. The inventor of the wonderful process by which this is possible is still not an old man. He was born in 1874 and, as you know, his name is Marconi.

As a result of all these developments in steam and electricity, trade and intercourse of all kinds have grown very greatly between the nations, till we have come to be indebted to other countries for the commonest things we use every day. If you will think for a minute of the things on your breakfast table, you will realise this at once. The flour for your bread may come from Canada or Australia; the coffee from Brazil; the tea from India or China; the oranges for marmalade from Spain; the butter from Denmark or even New Zealand, and so on. In war we must go short of these things, and we can no longer supply ourselves with what we need.

Again, if a new discovery to-day is made in science, no one thinks it is the property of one nation. Marconi is an Italian, but his dis-

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covery is used by all the world. Great pictures, great music, and great books become the common possession of mankind, and international prizes, like the Nobel prizes, left by a great Swede, are given for the finest achievements of men or women of any race. In all these ways we have cut across the bounds of nationality, and think of men as one race, or as we learn from Scripture, as children of one Father.

So you see that trade and travel, discovery and invention, science and art, are all pointing in the direction of the civilised nations joining together and helping one another forward, instead of thinking of themselves as rivals ; and all this means that the nations have, even if unknown to themselves, been long preparing gradually for the building up of a "League of Nations."

CHAPTER V

THE GREAT WAR AND WHAT CAME AT ITS CLOSE

As you know, from 1914 to 1918 all the chief countries of the world were engaged in a great war. Many causes led up to it, through long years of international jealousies and suspicions ; but the deed which let war loose was the murder of the Austrian Archduke in the little Bosnian town of Sarajevo. This led to a quarrel between Austria and Serbia, since Serbs were accused of the crime ; and all the chief nations and some of the small ones became involved in the war which followed. Our chief Allies were France, Italy, Russia, Japan, and, later on, the United States of America ; against us were Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria. The War went on for over four years, by sea and land and in all parts of the world. It was not only soldiers and sailors who fought and suffered in this war, but the

The Great War and what came at its Close

ordinary people, including women and children, who could not go to the Front. For aeroplanes were freely used by both sides to bomb towns from the air, and the men in them could not tell whom they were killing and injuring. They simply had to obey orders and do everything they could to ensure that their country might win the War. All sorts of ships other than warships were sunk, because they were bringing provisions to England. Meanwhile, knowing that if the people were starving, the men at the Front would in the end starve too and be unable to fight, we and our Allies did all we could to prevent Germany and Austria getting food, and as time went on we succeeded and they failed. Here in England we were very short of certain foods. Tea, meat, and butter were rationed—that is to say, each person was only allowed a very little fixed quantity each week; and other things were difficult to obtain. In Germany, as our blockade was more effective, they were worse off. Little children got all sorts of diseases due to privation. Old people too suffered very severely, and such illnesses as consumption became more and more common. They also ran short of clothing, and cold added

to the miseries of want of nourishment. It was the only way to win the War, and the sufferings of what is called the civilian population will be the only way to win future wars—if we have them.

It is said that at least forty million men, women, and children perished in and through the War, and of these about ten million were soldiers. Quite apart from the suffering, what a terrible waste of life! Could it not have been prevented? Yes, it could, if men had agreed to settle all their quarrels by arbitration instead of by force.

We have seen that a great many disputes before 1914 had already been settled that way, and that there were a great many promises between the nations to submit certain kinds of disputes to arbitration. The Court at the Hague, also, could have been called to settle the quarrel. But Austria claimed that this was a dispute which touched her "honour," and such questions had not been submitted to the Court. She and Germany feared, too, that arbitration might not be quite fair, though this could surely have been arranged. Then, too, men's passions in the different countries had been worked up to such anger with one another that they v. 5re

The Great War and what came at its Close

ready for war ; while to call the Court, or to arrange arbitration, would take time, and each feared the other if they could not strike at once. The armies were ready, and the means of peaceful settlement were not.

So the War came.

It was the most terrible war in history, affecting more people than had ever been affected by one war before. It was so terrible that men realised that civilisation could not go on if such wars were repeated. We should end by destroying each other, because we would not agree to control our passions and our desires for conquest. It was this feeling that led thinkers, among the statesmen this time, to try to end war by an agreement which would prevent fighting among the civilised nations in future. This agreement forms what is called the Covenant of the League of Nations and is the first part of all the treaties of peace.

On 28th April 1919, in a hall in Paris, President Wilson, the President of the United States, rose at the Peace Conference to propose the formation of a League of Nations. Exactly two months later, on 28th June, the anniversary of the day of the Sarajevo murder, the Peace

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Treaty with the Covenant of the League of Nations was signed by the representatives of thirty-two nations in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Thirteen other States were invited to join the League and did so, and since then ten more have come in, making a total of fifty-five.¹ Unfortunately, the United States did not join in the end, and Germany and Russia are still outside; but more than three-quarters of the peoples of the world are represented already in the League.

We must now look at the Covenant and see what has been promised in our name. The word Covenant means "the coming together," and in it the nations have come together, or agreed over twenty-six points, known as the Articles of the Covenant. The first seven articles make the arrangements for the Parliament of the Nations, about which you shall be told in the next chapter when we talk of the League at work. After that come the articles with the promises, which all the nations who join the League undertake to keep. These are, remember, part of a treaty we have made, and we must know of them and see that or

¹ March, 1925.

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statesmen keep them. Most important of the promises is Article 12. By it the nations agree that if any dispute arises amongst them likely to lead to war they will submit the matter either to arbitration or judicial settlement, or to inquiry by the Council, and they agree in no case to resort to war until three months after the award has been given. You see they do not promise not to go to war at the end of that time, but that they should agree to wait, first, while the whole quarrel is inquired into ; and then, if they do not agree with the judgment, to wait again for three months after it has been made would most likely mean that at the end of it all they would make up their quarrel some other way. Very important, too, is the article which asks the Council to set up a Court, known as the Permanent Court of International Justice, because it is always ready to judge any case that is brought to it. This has been set up, and its eleven judges, chosen by secret vote of all the members of the League, come from eleven different countries, including the United States (though they are not in the League), an Eastern country, Japan ; and such little countries as

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Denmark and Holland, as well as Great Britain. This Court does not meet at Geneva. It meets in a building we have already talked about, which, at the outbreak of the War, seemed, as we have seen, to have lost its usefulness ; it is the Peace Palace at the Hague. Perhaps if a PERMANENT Court had been sitting there in 1914, with great judges from so many different countries ready to judge fairly any disputes, the Great War would have been avoided. Another very important promise made by the countries is that they will register at Geneva all treaties they make with one another, and not have secret treaties. This removes a great cause of distrust between the nations.

Other articles of the Covenant settle what the nations are to do if one of them breaks its promises, and how they are then to help each other, and so on. You will read them all one day in the Covenant itself. I want here just to mention two more things which the nations belonging to the League have agreed about.

When the War ended, and Germany was beaten, she was obliged to give up the Colonies she had owned in different parts of the world ; but the men who drew up the Covenant felt

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that the victorious nations should not just seize these Colonies as though the people living in them had no rights and no desires. So they decided that the Colonies should not be given outright to one victor or to the other, but that they should be put in the care of nations who should act in governing them on behalf of the League, since "the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilisation." Some Colonies in Africa were in this way put under our care; some under France. Islands near to Australia and New Zealand were entrusted to *them*. Palestine is our mandate, as these "trusts" are called; France controls Syria; and Belgium and Japan also have mandates. But no country can do just as it likes in the country entrusted to its care. Each year it has to submit a report of how it is caring for the natives and how it is looking after the country to a committee at Geneva, and to answer all sorts of questions which the committee asks. Such rules are made, and have to be kept, as that no natives may be trained as soldiers in a mandated district; and slavery, of course, must not be allowed. You will realise that this is a great advance on the old idea of seizing

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Colonies and using the natives simply to work for the white man. First and foremost comes the white man's duty to those he rules.

In another important article the nations promise to try to secure in their own countries, and in the countries with which they trade, "fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women, and children," and to "endeavour to take steps in matters of international concern for the prevention and control of disease."

How they have tried to fulfil these promises we shall see in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER VI

GENEVA, THE HOME OF THE LEAGUE. THE LEAGUE AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE AT WORK

IT was not settled in the Covenant where the League of Nations should have the permanent seat for its meetings, in the same way as our Parliament, the House of Lords and the House of Commons, has its seat at Westminster. Presently it was decided that a small neutral nation, which had taken no part in the War, except that of helping suffering wherever it could, would be the best country in which to meet; and the town of Geneva, the capital of one of the Cantons, or divisions, of Switzerland, was chosen. Geneva is a beautiful city of French Switzerland, on the shores of the lovely lake which bears its name. The old town, with its quaint houses piled up the slopes to the citadel, crowned by the Cathedral, is on the south side over a bridge which spans the lake. In

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the Cathedral you can still see the chair which belonged to the great Reformer, Calvin, when he lived and preached in Geneva in the sixteenth century, and made it in those early days an international centre for the spread of the ideas which brought about the Reformation. Not far off is the University, where students of many nationalities come to study, and across the gardens opposite to its buildings is a wonderful monument of the Reformation, in stone against the ancient wall of the citadel, with Calvin and Knox and other Reformers as huge central figures. Over on this side of the lake, too, is the Hall of the Reformation, where at present the Parliament of the Nations, the Assembly of the League, meets.

The Assembly is the larger of the two bodies which make up what we have called the Parliament of the Nations. It generally meets in September, but it can be called together at any time if that seems necessary. To it every country in the League may send three representatives, or delegates; and each delegation, as the three together are called, has one vote. The delegates' seats are on the floor of the Hall, and to avoid any question as to who shall

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sit in front and who behind, the rule has been made that the delegations shall sit in alphabetical order, according to the French names for the different countries.] The order is therefore a little different from the English alphabetical order.

Among famous Englishmen who have been as delegates, and have done much work for the League, are Lord Robert (now Viscount) Cecil, Professor Gilbert Murray, and Mr Ramsay MacDonald—a Conservative, a Liberal, and a member of the Labour Party ; so you see people from all parties support the League. It must be noticed too, that not only the white nations, but what we call the “coloured” peoples have their representatives at Geneva. In the row behind France, next to Italy, sits the Japanese delegation. In the middle, just in front of the platform, you will find the Chinese. Among the Indians there has been Prince Ranjit Singhi, the great cricketer, and near the back on the same side is a delegation from Siam.¹ In 1924 there was a very picturesque delegation from Abyssinia, which was admitted a member on the promise being given by the King to put

¹ The positions of course change as fresh members enter the League.

down slavery in its boundaries. These delegates were very black indeed, with coal-black hair, and they dressed in black satin headgear, with long black cloaks to match, over full white trousers, tied at the ankle. Most of the delegations are men only, but a few countries have always sent women to act as what are called substitute-delegates. The substitute-delegates take the place of the chief delegates sometimes on committees, and so on. Women come from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, and Roumania, and for the last two years Great Britain has sent one woman (1923 and 1924). At the top of the Hall are two platforms, one slightly further back and raised above the other. On the upper one sit the President of the Assembly for the year, chosen by ballot on the first day; the Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond; and the Chief Interpreter, a man wonderfully clever in languages, Monsieur Camerlynck. For, as you can imagine, the difficulty of language, where men meet together to discuss things from so many different lands, is very great. All speeches as a general rule are either made in French and translated into English, or made in English and translated into French. Many

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people think it would be a good thing if the nations could agree on a common language like Esperanto, and there are men and women in the League who are working for this. To help all in the Hall to hear what is said, there are now trumpet-shaped loud-speakers high up near the ceiling, which make it possible for speeches to be heard all over the building. The public sit in a top gallery, and the representatives from different papers in a lower one, as it is very important they should hear all that goes on.

The first business of the Assembly is to vote for a president, and a man good at languages is chosen. Thus, in 1924, the President was Monsieur Motta, a Swiss delegate, who could talk French, German, and Italian, each as his native tongue. To cast their votes, the delegates are called, one from each delegation, in alphabetical order, to come to the platform and drop the vote in the ballot-box. Each delegation has one vote. On the first day, too, committees are elected to work at the details of the questions which will later on be discussed by the Assembly. Of the work of some of these we shall have more to say in another chapter.

On the other side of the lake, in the newer

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part of the town, stands a fine building, which was formerly a large hotel. This has been taken for the present as the Headquarters of the Secretariat of the League. Here, too, sits the smaller body of the League Parliament when it meets in Geneva, the Council. On the Council are representatives from Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan, and from six other nations chosen from time to time by the Assembly. It is easier for so few to come together than for the whole Assembly, and they meet more often. The first meeting was in London, and another was held there a few months later, in St James's Palace, both in 1920. The Council has, as part of its work, to listen to and try to settle disputes which might lead to war between the nations. Thus, at its first meeting in London, it settled a dispute between Sweden and Finland as to who should own some islands claimed by both in the Baltic, the Aaland Islands. It has done a great deal too to fight disease, and to help refugees and give relief where needed in Europe; of this work we shall hear in the next chapter. During the meetings of the Assembly the Council always meets too at Geneva.

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The Secretariat is the permanent body of men and women who live at Geneva and work hard all the year to carry out the decisions of the Council and the Assembly, and to prepare for the meetings of these bodies as they come along. Directly under the chief secretary, or Secretary General, Sir Eric Drummond, who is a Scotsman, there are a Japanese, an Italian, and a Frenchman, and there are several Americans working on the Secretariat.

A little way out of the town, on the same side of the Lake as the Secretariat, is yet another building used for the present by the League. This was a boys' school, and it is now allotted to the work of the International Labour Office. We have seen that in one of the articles of the Covenant the nations promised to try to secure "fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women, and children." To fulfil this promise an office was set up when the Peace Treaties were signed, to be at Geneva as part of the organisation of the League, "though not under the direction of the Secretariat."

The Labour Office holds its own conferences every year, and to these come four representatives from each country that is a member,

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including Germany. At the head is a Frenchman, Monsieur Thomas, and next to him is an Englishman. On the staff, men and women of about thirty nationalities meet and work together. Here information is collected about conditions of labour all over the world, and any one who needs it can obtain this information. At the conferences what are known as conventions are passed and sent to the different governments. If these are accepted they become part of the law of the country. In this way the hours of work in some countries, where they were long indeed, have been improved. This has happened, for example, in India ; while in Japan, where very small children were allowed to work in factories, the age has been raised by agreement with a "convention." Again, in Persia, where tiny children of five sat all day in factories to help to make those beautiful Persian carpets we admire so much, the Government has also forbidden the employment of such young children. Thus the members of the League are doing *something* to keep this promise.

CHAPTER VII

SOME OF THE THINGS THE LEAGUE HAS DONE

WHEN the League of Nations came into being in 1920, Europe and parts of Asia were in a terrible state from the effects of the War. When peace was made our own prisoners were returned home, but from the countries in the centre and east of Europe a great many men had got right across Russia into different parts of Siberia. Here they were in camps under the most dreadful conditions. They were left without proper food or clothing and without medicines or medical attention. Typhus and infectious diseases of all sorts ravaged the camps unchecked, and hundreds died of cold and sickness and want of food. Though the camps were no longer prison camps, the men had no means of getting home. Russia was in revolution, and they could not cross through her territory without special arrangements. Altogether, about two hundred and fifty thousand men were in this

plight, while about the same number of Russians were still kept in Germany. This state of affairs was brought to the notice of the League, and the great Norwegian Arctic explorer, Dr Nansen, was asked to undertake the task of restoring these poor men to their homes. Helped by the Swedish Red Cross, and with a good deal of private help in money, he began the work. He persuaded the different countries to let the men pass through their lands; he chartered ships and arranged for special trains; and by the time the Second Assembly met the work was done.

Dr Nansen has been at all the Assemblies of the League as a delegate from Norway. He is very popular, and there is always great applause when he gets up to speak. He is tall and straight, and has blue eyes, which seem to look into the distance as though he were still exploring new countries. Again and again, when help for prisoners or for refugees has been urgent, Dr Nansen has been turned to. He acts quickly, and he "gets things done." No doubt he feels that his work for the League of Nations is as valuable for mankind as any of his earlier adventures.

Some of the Things the League has Done

It is Dr Nansen who has acted as High Commissioner for the League in the help given over settling and finding work for about a million Russians who fled from Russia at the Revolution ; and in the middle of the Third Assembly it was he who received a telegram saying that Greek refugees were pouring into Constantinople and its surroundings from Asia, where Greece had been fighting Turkey and had been beaten. These refugees, the telegram said, would starve if food was not sent to them at once. In twenty-four hours money had been voted by the Assembly ; various governments, including our own, promised further sums ; and flour for bread was immediately sent to the spot. Since then, Dr Nansen, helped very much by Americans, has worked to secure the settlement of these refugees in new homes in Greece.

You will also remember that another promise made by the members of the League in the Covenant was to work for the " prevention and control of disease." To fulfil this promise a great deal has been done.

After the War, diseases in Europe were very much increased. In the eastern countries, Poland and Russia, there was very great danger

of terrible epidemics, which might sweep over to us in the west of Europe. The first needs were such things as soap, clothes, and medical stores of all kinds, and these the League raised money to send. The goods were distributed by a committee set up by the Council. As refugees who had fled from homes where fighting had taken place during the War began to return, they often brought with them the terrible fever known as typhus. This spreads where there is dirt and overcrowding. The committee, therefore, asked for funds to equip bath-houses and places where the refugees could be disinfected, their old clothes burnt, if need be, and new ones supplied. They also themselves equipped fifty hospitals, to work chiefly in Poland. All this, no doubt, stopped the diseases from spreading, and saved a great many lives far from where the work actually took place.

Besides all this, the Health Committee under the League is going on now to inquire into the causes and cures of certain diseases ; it is arranging for doctors to travel about to study how treatment is carried on in different countries ; and it is collecting and sending out valuable information about disease all over the

Some of the Things the League has Done

world. You can imagine how useful all this is likely to be in the fight with disease in future.

Another promise the nations make in the Covenant is to work to "achieve international peace." We have seen a good many ways in which they have begun to carry this out, through arbitration and the setting up of the Permanent Court. I will just give you one more example of how the League has stopped a war. Away in the Balkans, where the new State of Jugo-Slavia has been set up, the question of just where one boundary ends and another begins has always been a source of quarrel. In 1921 the Serbs (of Jugo-Slavia), after a dispute with Albania about the border, suddenly invaded North Albania, and burnt about one hundred and fifty villages. They knew that this was in defiance of the League, and one of their papers even had as a heading to an article: "Which is stronger, the Serbian Army or the League of Nations?" They were soon to find out. A meeting of the Council was called to consider what to do, and to agree to measures to cut off Serbia from trade and so on if she went on fighting. Immediately, the Serbian Government found no one would lend it money and

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the Serbian money went down in value. When the Council met in Paris everything was done publicly, and very soon the Serbs and the Albanians—whose representatives were both there — agreed to withdraw troops from both sides of the disputed border, and to let the border be settled by a commission sent by the League. So the dispute ended. If Serbia had marched on to the sea, as she intended, Italy would probably have been drawn into the quarrel, and a big war might have resulted.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FUTURE. HOW YOU MAY HELP THE LEAGUE

You have heard how the League came into being, what it stands for, and some of the things it has done and hopes to do. It can only continue, however, and become strong and succeed in its aims, if the people in the different countries take an interest in what is done. This does not mean that we should never criticise what is done ; but it does mean that we should think for ourselves what we should like such a League to do to help forward the peace and happiness of all nations, and that we should support the League in its work for these ends. To think about it, then, and to take an interest in what it does is our first duty, and it is one that each one of us can carry out if we will take the trouble.

There are other ways in which we can all help forward the work of the League. To help to

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add to the understanding and friendship between nations, we should work hard at languages that we may be able to talk freely to members of other nations when we meet them. Then, we should try always to be fair to the members of other nations. Sometimes, because people differ from us in their ways, we are inclined to laugh at them or make fun of them, or even to dislike them. We forget that our ways seem just as strange to them. Sometimes, too, we are very touchy if "foreigners" make fun of, or are disagreeable to us. We must try to judge fairly in every case, and not to let our judgments be prejudiced because we have to judge about a foreigner. A friend of mine has a story that when she was a little girl her brother used to tease her by making grimaces at her. One day she complained to her mother about him. "Well," said her wise mother, "the grimaces can't hurt you, dear, if you don't look at them." Sometimes in our relations with other nations we have to learn not to look if they do things which seem annoying to us.

These all appear perhaps very unimportant ways of helping forward the League of Nations ; but if you think a minute I feel sure you will

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see that they are the most important ways of all. For the League is a great tool in our hands, there for our use, if we are ready to use it well and wisely. It can only act in the right spirit, if the right spirit of mutual helpfulness and co-operation is in the people behind it. The youngest is not too young, and the oldest is not too old, to begin to-day to create that right spirit, which alone can help the League of Nations to bring about a better world.

NOTE

Various societies in Great Britain work in different ways in support of the League of Nations. The one which has this support, and the spread of information about the League, for its main object, is the League of Nations' Union.

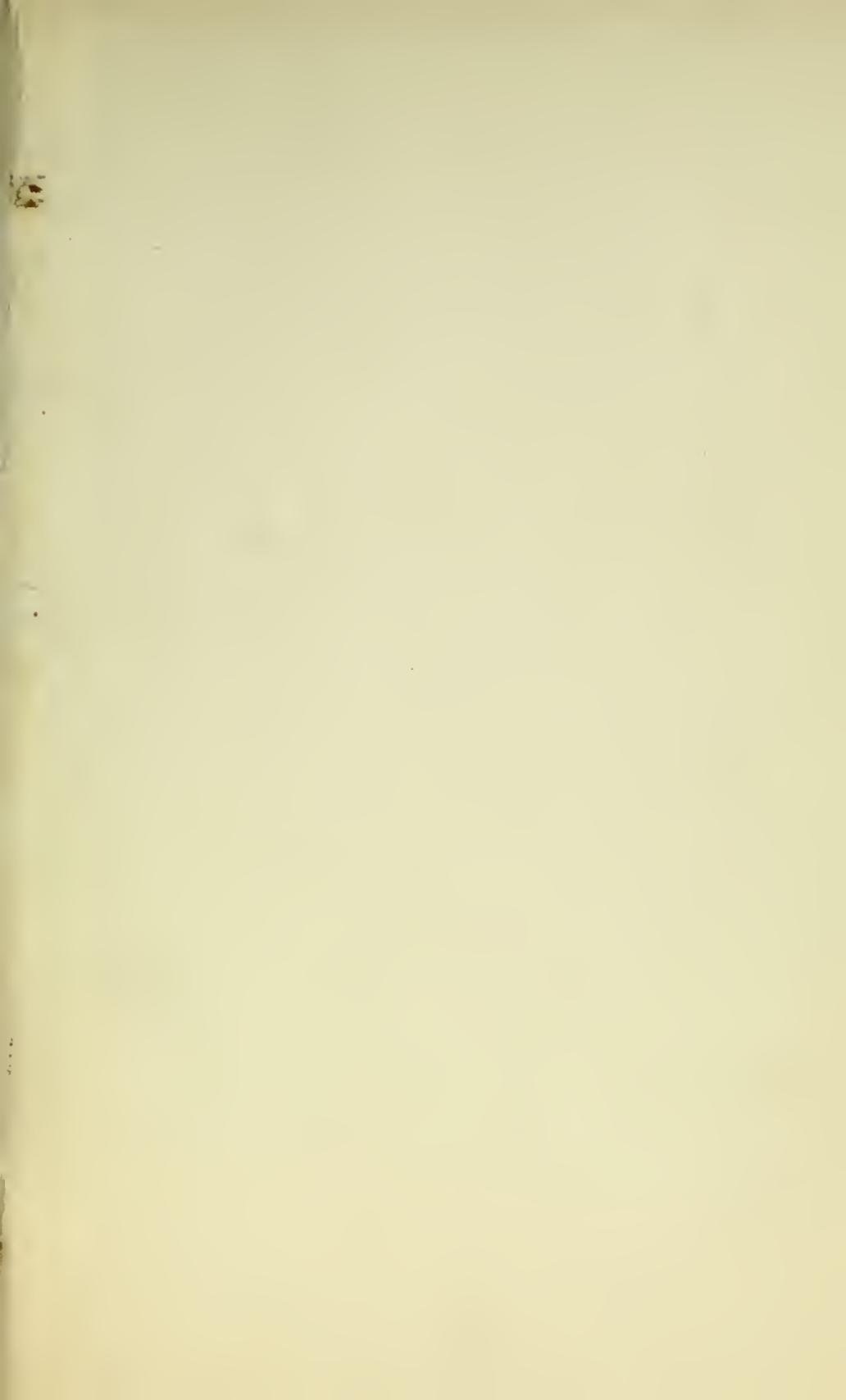
There are local branches all over the country, and its headquarters are at 15 Grosvenor Crescent, London, S.W. 1.

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