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Leaflet No. 12.

PRICE 2d.

The League of Nations Union.

A British Organisation founded to promote the formation of a World League of Free Peoples for the securing of International Justice, Mutual Defence, and Permanent Peace.

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THE SANCTIONS

OF THE

LEAGUE.

LONDON :

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1. The League of Nations having been formed and provision made for adjusting disputes by means other than war, the question remains whether the bonds which keep the League together are sufficiently strong to stand the strain to which they may be subjected, and whether the members of the League can be relied upon to use the means provided for them. At present the chief purpose of the League, the chief inducement to nations to join it and become loyal supporters of its principles and rules, is the avoidance of such another horror as the last war. The sceptic asserts that this is an inducement that will not always be potent, that memories are short, and that a new generation will grow up to which national aspirations and rivalries will make a stronger appeal, at least in times of excitement, than will the desire for peace. It must be admitted that history gives some support to this view, but it must equally be admitted that the dread of another war of nations amongst the peoples of the principal powers is at present sufficiently strong and is likely to last sufficiently long to give time for new methods to be tested and to gain support if they are effective. At the present time the obligation to support the principles of the Covenant is mainly moral, though material inducements are, as will be explained, not lacking. The members have pledged themselves not to have recourse to war without first applying the provisions of the Covenant for the settlement of disputes. The framers of the Covenant evidently hoped that the moral obligations would become a material obligation as and when the authority of the League became established and recognised.

2. Many critics of the League, some friendly and some hostile, have declared that the absence of material sanctions at the outset of its career is a fatal weakness in its constitution. They have asserted that it must have sufficient force directly under its control to enable it to enforce its decisions if those decisions are to be respected, and that no human law can be effective unless it has force

behind it. They have therefore asked for the creation of an international army under the sole authority of the League. Such a measure would involve the preparation of an entirely new Covenant, fundamentally different in principle to that which has been accepted. The League as constituted is an agreement voluntarily accepted by its members, who in all essentials preserve their autonomy. It does demand some surrender of national independence, in that nations aforesaid, and particularly the more powerful nations, recognised as much or as little of the obligations of international law as suited their purpose. They interpreted that law themselves in accordance with their power to enforce their interpretation upon others. Just as the physically powerful individual surrenders some of his personal liberty in the general interest when he accepts the obligations of civil law and does not knock his neighbour down or seize his property, so the powerful State surrenders something of independence for the common good when it agrees to refer its disputes with other nations to discussion instead of settling them in its own way. Further than that the Covenant does not go in the direction of interference with the affairs of the members of the League, and it could not go further without setting up a super-government, a permanent organisation above and more powerful than any State or group of States. The world is clearly not yet ready for such a revolution in its affairs.

3. It is difficult to conceive of an international army uncontrolled by an international government. Either the men composing such a force would be specially enlisted on the lines of an expanded and glorified Foreign Legion, or the forces would consist of a number of contingents supplied by the members of the League. In the first case the force would tend to become a sort of prætorian guard, the commander of which would, if he were a man of strong character and ambition, possess enormous power and be the target for endless intrigue. It is not difficult to picture in such circumstances the rise of a new Napoleon, who would reorganise the governments of the world according to his taste. It is, however, difficult to imagine the peoples of modern nations agreeing to the creation of a body with such power and beyond their control. In the second case the difficulties and dangers are almost equally great. There would still be a military force for which no permanently constituted government was responsible, since only the Secretariat of the League is permanent; there is still the difficulty of command, for a time will

come before long when there is no soldier of such pre-eminence that there will be no rival claimants to his position: there is the natural unwillingness of nations to send their sons abroad in time of peace except under their own control; there are the difficulties of language and of obtaining uniformity of training and equipment and organisation in an army composed from a number of nations, and there is the difficulty of regulating the size and number of such contingents. If the armed forces of the League are limited to contingents from a few of the Great Powers, the League is open to the charge that it is nothing more than a Junta of those Powers, formed by them to impose their will with a minimum of trouble and expense upon the remainder of the world. If they are composed of a large number of small contingents provided by any members of the League who may wish to be represented by military force, they will tend to become a joke in the military world. It has been suggested that the League should have a monopoly of all the most deadly weapons of war, such as tanks, poison gas, heavy artillery, and bombing aeroplanes, and that the construction and ownership of such weapons except by the League should be prohibited. Here again the difficulty of control arises unless a supra-government is constituted, and it is easy to foresee endless differences of opinion arising as to what categories of weapons should and should not be under the control of the League. We, for example, and France have great possessions bordered by uncivilised or semi-civilised peoples, not under the jurisdiction of the League. Are we to be prevented from policing our frontiers in the most efficient and economical manner? Are we to be compelled to send our men to fight without the most efficient equipment? If the League were to loan us some of the special equipment, of which it had control, for a specific purpose and for a limited time, our soldiers would be without experience of the latest methods of employing such equipment; while such equipment maintained in Europe would not be available for use in case of a sudden emergency on the North-West Frontier of India or on the borders of the Sahara. On the other hand, could the League be reasonably expected to grant a special licence to Great Britain and France, entitling them to use weapons denied to other Powers?

4. On all these grounds the provision of the League as constituted, with special sanctions of its own sufficient to enable it to enforce its behests, appears to be at present impracticable, and to involve a change in its constitution so drastic as to be far beyond anything which its members are ready to accept. This does not mean that there

should not be a police force directly under the control of the League to act, as it were, as the advanced guard of the potential power of the League, or maintained for the purpose of safeguarding some territory for which the League has itself accepted a mandate, but this is obviously very different from an international army formed specifically to maintain the peace of the world or to punish any breach of such peace. That an international army has not been created does not mean that the League is without sanctions. By Articles XVI. and XVII. of the Covenant, if a member State resorts to war in disregard of the Covenant, and if a non-member State refuses to submit itself to the jurisdiction of the League, they are *ipso facto* decreed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, who are pledged to sever at once all trade and financial relations with the States in question, and to prohibit all intercourse, whether financial, commercial, or personal, between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking States. This will be in effect as terrible a weapon as the papal excommunication was in the Middle Ages. It means the immediate establishment of a blockade far more complete in its effects than was the blockade of the Central Powers during the Great War. Devastating as was the effect of that blockade it was at no time absolute, for intercourse between Germany, Sweden, and Holland went on until the very end, while in the early years of the war the Central Powers were able to draw supplies from other sources. Now recent history has shown that no nation, or considerable group of nations, can hope to wage a great war if it is dependent upon its own resources alone, without risking utter ruin. The Great War has demonstrated the interdependence of civilised nations. The risks involved in facing an absolute blockade are so tremendous, therefore, that it is difficult to conceive of any State being ready to accept them. If a group of nations were formed sufficiently large to be independent of the rest of the world and to defy the blockade, it would mean that the League had failed beyond remedy, and that Europe had reverted to the pre-war balance of military power. The threat of blockade, or, as it is sometimes termed, the economic weapon, should, if the League is a real League of Nations, be a more effective means of preserving peace than the balance of military power. It supplies a very material inducement to members of the League to observe the terms of the Covenant, and to non-members to hesitate before they reject its intervention.

5. While it appears that until the Covenant is radically changed, and until the members of the League are

prepared to give it powers and functions far more extensive than it possesses at present, it is neither desirable nor possible to attempt to provide the League with large naval, military and air forces; it is of the highest importance that the League should be able to undertake obligations which may require force for their observance, or to display force as a warning to a delinquent State. It is at least probable that the solution of the problems of Armenia and of the Dardanelles might have been reached more quickly had the League been able to create and maintain forces of sufficient strength to enable it to take these districts directly in its charge. The creation of such forces would not raise the difficulties and objections which, as has been pointed out, would be involved in the creation of an international army. They would not be of sufficient size to make them a target for intrigue or ambition, they would be employed for a specified purpose, and they would be of a size which would make the constitution of an efficient and homogeneous body practicable. There are numerous precedents for the constitution of a force composed of elements from a number of countries. The French Foreign Legion and Garibaldi's Ten Thousand are examples. There is no reason to suppose that there would be any difficulty in enlisting such a body of men. There might be some differences of opinion as to the language to be employed and the equipment to be used. The equipment must come from the arsenals of the member States, but there would be no loss in military efficiency if different States furnished each a portion of the equipment, and the force was provided, say, with a British rifle, a French gun, Italian aeroplanes, and German transport. As the forces here contemplated would be small, it would be necessary, if efficiency is to be preserved, to provide a career for its officers; but this might be arranged by lending officers of the armies of the member States for limited periods as we have done in the case of Persia and of Egypt. In short, there would not seem to be any military difficulties in the way of this proposal which could not be overcome by goodwill, while the creation of comparatively small forces to enable the League to undertake specific tasks which would otherwise be beyond its power, would materially increase its power for good and improve its status.

6. It is not difficult to conceive of many situations arising in which the action of a small force under the control of the League might be beneficial for other purposes than the policing of a given district. Even a comparatively small disturber of the peace may prove

troublesome if the power most closely affected is unable for political reasons to take action, and others Powers are unable to arouse sufficient interest amongst their own people to warrant their engaging their troops at a distance from the homeland. The d'Annunzio incident is a case in point. A small international force which would represent the authority of the League and act as the advanced guard of the forces of its members might, by timely action, nip in the bud a disturbance which if neglected would prove grave. The difficulties in creating such a force would not be great: the chief problem would be its location in time of peace, since there would always be a suspicion that the member in whose territory the force was quartered was exercising an undue influence over it. The creation of a force for general purposes, and not for a particular mission, might, however, raise the question of principle in an acute form, and it is for consideration whether this is wise in the present state of the League's development. It would appear to be more prudent to begin with the special force necessary for the control of a given area and to allow a police force for general purposes to develop gradually out of that. If, for example, the League were to assume control of the Dardanelles and to create a force to hold the Straits, it would not be difficult to increase that force eventually so that a part should be available for general purposes.

7. There is no logical reason why the police forces at the disposal of the League should be entirely military in character. There are, indeed, many reasons why it might be easier to create a naval police force than a military one, and why it might be on occasion the more effective of the two. People are accustomed to see their sailors departing for far-away waters in time of peace, and there would, in the case of a naval force, be little of the prejudice which might prevail in the case of the despatch of a land force on a distant mission in which the peoples of the members of the League finding the force were but remotely interested. The location of a naval force for general purposes would not present the same difficulties as the location of a land force. There is the further important consideration that ships cannot invade territory, and this should go far towards removing any suspicion that the force would be exploited for illegitimate purposes. On the other hand, history has shown that even a single cruiser showing the flag at the right time and place is often a potent ambassador and able to enforce respect for decisions which might otherwise be disregarded, while a cruiser, or even a squadron, can act much

more promptly than a military force, and time is usually a most vital consideration.

8. The general conclusions, then, are :—

1. That the creation of an international army at the disposal of the League is not practicable under the present conditions.

2. That the Council of the League should have the authority and the resources necessary to enable it to create the police force or forces required for the control and protection of specific territories or districts.

3. That an international military police force for general purposes would be of great value for the purposes of the League. Such a force should, however, be allowed to develop gradually out of the police force indicated in the preceding paragraph. The creation of a naval police force might be undertaken at once, provided a suitable base for such a force can be found.