

American Membership Not Essential To Nations League

Work of League Going on and America Participating in Much of Its Work Despite Rejection of Membership by Harding and the Senate

By DAVID LAWRENCE

(This is the 11th of Mr. Lawrence's dispatches from Europe dealing with post-war reconstruction problems as they appear to him after five years absence. He finds that the French have made amazing progress in restoring those portions of their country that were devastated in the war, but that their mood after five years is still one of wild war recollections. That is why he started his survey of European reconstruction on the battle fields of France where he says every student of French policy should start.)

Geneva, July 28.—There has been a distinct change in atmosphere here with respect to the prospect of America's taking her vacant chair in the League of Nations. The time was when the absence of the United States was keenly felt and when few people thought the League could accomplish anything without America.

Three years and a half have passed since the League was born and while no doubt the moral influence of the League would have been greater if America had joined there has been built up just the same a greater confidence in the ability of the League of Nations to achieve results without America.

It is much the same as an individual dependent upon a rich or powerful brother or parent being suddenly thrown on his own resources. Qualities of self reliance are developed and talents are brought out which might otherwise have remained dormant.

Thirteen former allied powers composed the membership of the League when it started, but within a short time all other signatories to the Versailles treaty except the United States had joined. Then came all 13 countries which had been neutral during the war, including Scandinavia, Holland, Spain and Switzerland. New republics born from the war applied and were admitted and finally three former enemy powers, Austria, Bulgaria and Hungary were received into the family.

There is a strong undercurrent of opinion in favor of admitting Germany if she applies. Certainly Turkey will come in next autumn as the new Lausanne treaty entrusts to the League important administrative functions of special interest to Turkey.

Today when the rolls are called, 52 nations have a right to participate in the deliberations of the League. If there was for a time any danger of a rival association of nations being set up, that danger is past. Even the Washington conference on armament limitation and Far Eastern affairs failed to provide any permanent machinery to keep on considering and checking up on many questions and principles raised by that meeting and probably the League itself will some day be found keeping a watchful eye on the problems growing out of the Washington treaties.

With practically every nation in the world in the League and with no

danger of a rival institution being created to break down the organization already formed, the League has gained momentum and strength. If America comes in, so much the better, but the nations are finding the League valuable as an international mechanism for the settlement of dozens of intricate questions. The humanitarian and health work of the League is making a deep impression on the whole world and even the United States Government sent official representatives to the opium conference recently conducted under the League's auspices. Incidentally, the writer, in examining the minutes of that meeting, came across the following statement made in a speech by the Right Reverend Bishop Brent, who was President Harding's appointee to the opium conference:

"The League of Nations, with whom through you we are treating in this matter represents the greatest association of nations in all history solemnly bound by agreement to think and act in terms of mankind."

Although there is an impression in America that the League is dead, it is a fact that the United States Government directly and indirectly keeps in touch with League work and Americans have sat on some important commissions in conferences conducted by the League.

People in the League think that ultimately America will join. They have heard President Harding say "no," but they think his voice is that of one political faction and that even he has turned favorably toward one of the greatest of the League's achievements, namely, the establishment of a permanent Court of Inter-

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national Justice. So they feel that in time American sentiment will swing to the League. It may take five or ten years, but what is that in the life of an organization whose members think it will, in time, become the greatest moral influence for the preservation of peace in all history?

Both President Harding and Secretary of State Hughes have wished the League success for the sake of Europe, but have professed to believe it could benefit America. Time alone can tell whether the policy of States will benefit from the policy of aloofness.

Certainly the League is no longer thinking in terms of America, but is proceeding confidently on its way to help make the whole world progressively better in the age-long struggle between greed and higher morality.

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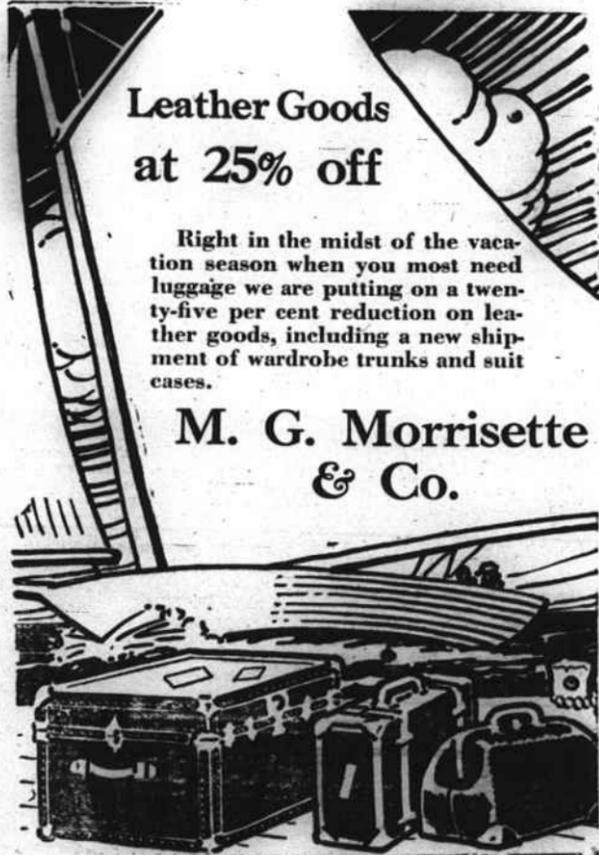
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