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mountaineers and artillerymen can teach him about sliding snow.

There are two such schools — one near Davos and the other on the Weissfluhjoch, a mountain near Davos, some 8,500 feet high. Both have laboratories and film rooms.

It is almost impossible to go far into Switzerland without going through a mountain pass, and many such passes have steep sides which hold snow almost all the year round.

Students in the avalanche schools learn where to shoot at an Alp side covered with snow to start an avalanche in a certain direction. They learn, too, how to help the snow along by artificial means if avalanches are not in season. They even receive instructions about how to start an avalanche of rocks and dirt when there is no snow available. Instruction also includes courses on how to ascertain the danger of natural avalanches and how to delay them until such time as the enemy appears.

"There's one thing about an avalanche," said one of the instructors, "no matter how modern and how well-equipped an invading army may be, they would find it difficult to fight an avalanche."

NEUTRALITY AND ITS CRITICS.

When a country is engaged in a deadly war, public opinion soon becomes critical of the position of neutrals. Deeply convinced of the righteousness of their cause, the belligerents cannot witness without impatience the attitude of those who wish to remain out of the conflict. They soon feel inclined to twist the meaning of the Gospel's words, and to say that those who are not with them are against them, or, worse still, that neutrality is the child of fear. Thanks to the fair-minded statements of the Prime Minister and to the moderating influence of the principal papers, these feelings have only seldom found expression since September last. There have been, however, during the last weeks, a few speeches and articles which may be considered as danger signals. We cannot, in the light of previous experience, rule out the possibility that an anti-neutral prejudice may develop in this country. Such a prejudice might do a great deal of harm and affect the deep sympathy which exists between the Allied and Neutral peoples. The United States, Italy and Japan are not so directly concerned. The situation of the smaller States of Western Europe is far more critical and far more likely to be criticised.

The political régime adopted by these small States enjoyed a greater prestige in the nineteenth century than it does to-day, because, after the Napoleonic wars, neutrality was acknowledged as the necessary complement of the balance of power. The political system in Europe depended on the relative strength of the large States and on the non-interference of the small States. Peace was maintained, on several occasions, because the aggressive Power realised that war involved too many risks, especially as long as Great Britain acted as arbiter between the parties. Any breach of neutrality was strongly discouraged, since it disturbed the balance. Switzerland requested to be granted perpetual neutrality at the Congress of Vienna. Fifteen years later, neutrality was imposed upon the new independent Belgian kingdom by the delegates of the five big Powers gathered in London. It was considered at the time as a somewhat utopian device for preventing a European conflict. Its remarkable success silenced the critics. The same status was applied later, on several occasions, as the best means of ensuring the independence of small and peaceful nations, while providing a political barrier between powerful rivals.

How is it that this régime which was so much in favour up to the end of the last century, and contributed to localise the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, is now looked upon by many people as a mere device to shirk political and moral responsibilities? The violation of the Belgian frontier in 1914 is no doubt a contributory cause of this change of outlook, but the main reason is the substitution, in 1919, of a general international organisation for power-politics, and of the League of Nations for the balance of power.

For twenty years we have ceased to think in terms of *Real Politik,* and have fixed our attention on the Covenant, its sanctions, its regional pacts and its collective security. The failure of these new systems is too recent to allow us to readjust our judgment to the present state of affairs, which is, from the historian's point of view, a return to the nineteenth century policy, an attempt to restore the balance which has been seriously upset by recent developments. Neutrality is no longer considered by the general public as a natural guarantee of independence and security for the small European States, but as an abnormal régime which is no longer justified by modern circumstances. People may recognise that small and exposed countries cannot be expected to take part in the present conflict, but at the back of their mind lurks the suspicion that failure to do so is a confession of weakness. These critics do not even appreciate the heavy sacrifices made by the Neutrals in order to ensure their selfdefence. The larger these forces, the more reason there seems to be for their being enlisted in the service of the "common cause." Disappointed at the break-up of the new system, people are reluctant to acknowledge again the old system. After the signature of the Briand-Kellogg Pact in 1928, Mr. Stimson declared that neutrality was "obsolete." It is now cold-shouldered by many who believed that this pact was not worth the paper upon which it was written.

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No doubt every writer, every orator, who broaches this subject is convinced that the policy he propounds would greatly benefit the small countries whose security and prosperity are jeopardised by the war. He overlooks the fact that neutrality is not only imposed upon the small European democracies by the position which they occupy on the map, but also by the attitude of a great majority of their citizens who have followed the disintegration of the European situation during the last ten years with increasing disappointment and anxiety.

The British public has not been sufficiently informed of the reaction which followed the failure of the League to check aggression, the estrangement of Italy from the Stresa front, the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet Pact, the collapse of Locarno and the conflict over the Spanish civil war. After each of these crises the smaller nations realised more and more clearly that their hope of finding security in the League or in regional pacts within the League were illusory. The cleavage between the Axis and the Entente split Europe once more into two rival groups and brought it back to the pre-1914 position. Attempts to improve economic relations, like the one made by the Oslo Powers, were not supported by this country. The van Zeeland report was not followed up by any practical proposal. The failure of every step taken to further economic collaboration, combined with increasing political and ideological hostility, brought the catastrophe nearer and nearer. The small Powers did not wait for it to return to neutrality. Singly and jointly, they repeatedly declared during these critical years that they no longer considered themselves bound by the sanctionist clauses of the Covenant. As early as July 1936, the ministers of Holland, Switzerland and the Scandinavian states (including Finland) stated publicly that "as long as the Covenant was only incompletely applied, they would be obliged to take this fact into account in their interpretation of Article XVI." Later, the small States insisted more and more on preserving their complete freedom, pointing out that they could not be expected to take military action against one of their neighbours in a divided Europe. These initiatives were not taken against the League which the small nations had done their best to support in all its activities. They simply acknowledged the *fait accompli*, the return to power-politics, and the obvious fact that so-called "collective security" can only bring about security if it is truly collective.

Anyone who is in touch with Switzerland, the Low Countries or Scandinavia knows that this return to neutrality was strongly supported and in some cases urged by public opinion. It was ratified at Geneva by the representatives of Great Britain and France on the eve of Munich, not only because they considered it justified, but also because they realised that a division of opinion inside these countries would only aggravate the critical situation in which Europe was placed. Collective security being impracticable, they did not wish to weaken national defence.

The position of Belgium in 1936, after the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet pact and the denunciation of Locarno by Germany, affords a good example of this interplay of national and international politics. In March of that year the four remaining Locarno Powers had agreed on close co-operation and military consultations, pending the conclusion of a new Western Pact with the Reich. During the following six months Belgium was neither a partner in the general system of a treaty of mutual guarantee, nor a Neutral, since her staff worked in connection with the British and French military authorities. At that time the military superiority of the Allies was still large enough to justify such an arrangement, even after the estrangement of Italy. Nevertheless, public opinion became restless. It was not so much because the people had lost confidence in the Allies' methods of dealing with post-war problems; it was because they did not wish their country to become the satellite of big Powers, without being able to make her voice heard. They were prepared to join the League, or even Locarno, as independent members of an association; they were not prepared to enter an Alliance as confederates dependent on the protection, however friendly, of two of their neighbours. As a consequence, new military credits were refused by Parliament. The Belgian Government was placed before the alternative of pursuing a one-sided policy, under Locarno, in a divided country, with inadequate defences, or of renouncing their Locarno obligations and adopting voluntary neutrality in a united country, with adequate defences. Their decision for the latter course was inevitable. Its wisdom was recognised a few months later by Great Britain and France, and nothing which happened since could justify any change in their public "Declarations."

The small Western European States were not born yesterday. Some of them are as old as France and England, and possess deeply ingrained traditions. They know from experience that they cannot afford to become their big neighbours' enemies. They know also that it is almost as dangerous for them to become their associates. As long as power-politics remain what they were, and what they have become again since the break-up of the League, these nations cannot hope to preserve their independence, which is the condition of their existence, unless they avoid at one and the same time the Scylla of hostility and the Charybdis of alliance. That is what neutrality means to them. When Switzerland asked to be recognised as a neutral country at Vienna, it was because the Swiss realised that if they took any active share in European conflicts, they could not remain masters in their own land. When the Powers imposed perpetual neutrality on Belgium in 1831, it was because they were convinced that any departure from that policy implied protection or annexation. That disproportion between the strength of the country and that of any of her neigh-

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bours made association on equal terms impossible. There are certain axioms in European politics which will remain true as long as the principle of nationality is not radically altered. One of them is that Great Britain must resist any attempt at establishing military hegemony on the Continent; another is that no small State can afford to enter into any alliance or any system of alliance.

Nothing shows better the inveterate tendency of certain representatives of the big States to subordinate the interests of smaller States to their own than a criticism levelled at the League on the ground that the latter were over-represented in the Assembly, and might have been able to out-vote the former. This is considered by Streit and his Federalist followers as "undemocratic," since every nation should, in their view, be represented according to the figure of its population, the individual, not the Government, being the unit of the system. In their sincere efforts to establish future international justice they are promoting a régime which would wipe out the influence of the small nations from the international field. Would it not be wiser to recognise that the Council of the League (controlled by the Allies) played throughout the dominant part in world affairs, and that no important decision could be reached without their approval? For many years public opinion among the Neutrals has been criticising the Powers, not for allowing too much scope to the smaller nations, but for allowing them too little, and, finally, for ignoring them altogether. It is to be feared that Federalism will not become popular among the smaller democracies as long as it appears as an ingenuous plan to subordinate them to their leading partners. It might afford a great many material advantages which they would not find in the old system of balance of power, but, in its present form, it would deprive them of the right to control their foreign defence and foreign trade policy by compelling them to delegate this right to an international body upon which they would be virtually incapable of exerting any appreciable influence. How could Finland or Denmark, with their small populations, have a chance to oppose in the Federal Congress any policy supported by France, for instance, or Great Britain and the Dominions, let alone the United States? The mere fact that these small countries enjoy a constitutional régime is not a sufficient guarantee that their aspirations and interests coincide with those of the real leaders of the new Commonwealth.

Such schemes, it is true, are not for to-day, but they show nevertheless that even the most enlightened representatives of American and British public opinion cannot entirely rid themselves of the self-assurance of the strong when dealing with the weak. Conscious that they entertain no annexationist ambition, they fail to see that the smaller States might possibly lose in entering an association which would ensure their security and economic stability. There is, nevertheless, a psychological problem which no statistics can overcome. Just as the representative of a big Power is apt to become patronising, so the representative of a small Power is apt to become touchy. We should beware of despising or underrating these susceptibilities. Governments may take their decisions on other grounds, but the popular support on which they depend rests frequently on these fragile and irrational sentiments.

The difficulty is a very real one, and it should be faced in due time. There is no doubt about the sympathy of the small Western nations for Great Britain and France, to whom they are bound by a common outlook, a common culture and unforgettable memories. But there are two principles which are sacred to them and which cannot be questioned without alienating part of their public opinion. The first is the right to retain their neutrality, which they consider as the only guarantee of security left to them, now that the League system has failed. The second is the right to retain their individuality, what they call their independence, their right to manage their own affairs in their own way. Any doubt expressed on these points provokes at once a discussion on the shortcomings of Versailles and on the negative policy followed ever since.

There is, perhaps, as much exaggeration in these views as in the conviction generally entertained in allied countries to-day that the recurrence of the 1914-18 struggle could in no circumstances have been avoided. The failure of the League was due to all its members, and it might be objected that if the smaller States were not satisfied with its policy, they should have opposed it openly, and if necessary severed all connection with it. Had they agreed together in time on certain political principles, as they agreed on economic principles, the Oslo Powers might have made their influence felt. The risks involved by the adoption of a more independent and positive policy ten years ago appears small indeed compared with those which have to be faced to-day. It would be useless to try to allocate responsibilities for the catastrophe. But it would be still more useless to ignore or gloss over the fact that the inhabitants of the small European countries have not yet overcome the disillusionment resulting from the present conflict, and entertain serious doubts concerning the recurrence of the two evils which have done so much harm during late years, vindictiveness and wishful thinking.

However painful, these things should be said; for they are the natural result of a long period of doubt and uncertainty, during which selfish and unselfish motives have been so strangely mixed that it has become difficult for outsiders to disentangle them. Neutrality is not, as often supposed, a painful necessity enforced upon small countries too weak or too timid to join in the struggle. It is the deliberate choice of their people, the inevitable reaction of the failure of Versailles. If the last Peace Treaty had been a true Peace Treaty, and the League a true "Society of Nations," such a reaction might never have occurred, but, things being what they are, no other result could be expected. Nothing is more likely to jeopardise future hopes of a satisfactory settlement than the development of an anti-neutral prejudice in this country. Preservation of the smaller nations of Western Europe, not only as "buffer States" but as truly independent States in internal and external affairs, has always been one of the main principles of British policy. It is not merely the outcome of nineteenth-century Liberalism, still less that of twentieth-century self-determination. It is also a primary condition of British security. Both idealism and realism point in the same direction. Any pressure exerted on the small democracies to induce them to join the big democracies in this war would be a denial of traditions followed by

England ever since she played a prominent part in European politics.

Reluctance to recognise the freedom of smaller nations may nevertheless affect the most enlightened and far-sighted critics. When American or British Federalists, for instance, speak of the desirability of enlarging the political unit they are convinced that they are not prompted in doing so by national ambition. They are shocked at the objections raised by the representatives of the smaller democracies and inclined to attribute them to reactionary obstructionism. Some of them go farther and consider such unwilling partners as negligible quantities, derelicts of the past. The fact is that there exists throughout the world a big power mentality and a small power mentality, which exerts its influence beside the democratic mentality or the autocratic mentality. Whether national sovereignty leads to the same abuses in a strong State as in a weak State is a question worthy of some consideration. The solution of our future difficulties does not lie in suppressing it, but in limiting its range of action.

There are two tendencies, among belligerent countries, with regard to these peace proposals. The first is to ignore them altogether and to "get on with the war." We know, from bitter experience, the results to be expected if this opinion prevails. The other is to prepare peace while waging war, and to try to avoid the repetition of certain faults which contributed to the failure of Versailles. Most of those engaged on this work recognise that non-belligerent co-operation will be indispensable, either in the framing of the settlement or in the economic reconstruction which must inevitably follow. How can such co-operation be effective if most Neutrals become involved in the conflict as they were in 1914-18, or if neutrality, the last bulwark of international law, is to be undermined in the countries which have dedicated themselves to its defence?

Emile Cammaerts.

In Contemporary Review (March).

THE HELVETIA CLUB OLD FRIENDS DINNER AND DANCE.

This pleasant function took place on Thursday, March 28th, at the Club's premises, Gerrard Place, W.1.

Some eighty members and friends had gathered together for the occasion and the hall looked very festive; the floral decorations of the tables proving particularly attractive, proclaiming that spring really is here, at last, after the long and arduous winter which now happily lies behind us.

While the Old Friends were sipping their cocktails, the welcome announcement resounded that dinner was served. It proved very excellent and the various courses, which were being done full justice to, came round with commendable dispatch.

The Club's genial friend and well-wisher, Mr. Alfred Schmid, was in the Chair, supported on his left by Mr. A. Indermaur, President of the Helvetia Club. The organisers had thought of everything and even table music was not lacking, whose lively strains added to the enjoyment of the meal.

After the loyal Toasts had been proposed and honoured with real enthusiasm, the Chairman rose to bid the assembly a hearty welcome. Mr. Schmid expressed his pleasure at having been asked once again to take the Chair at this function, an annual event going back a considerable number of years, during which it had steadily gained in popularity. He spoke of the three stalwarts, who conceived the idea of the Old Friends and referred to Mr. A. Wyss as the only one present. He also spoke, in the most appreciative terms, of the President, Mr. A. Indermaur, saying that he lived for his office and the Club and that nothing was too much for him in furthering its interests and its well-being. The spontaneous applause, which greeted these remarks, testified to the high esteem in which the President is held. The Chairman concluded by referring to the regretted absence of Mrs. Indermaur and wished to convey to her the best and heartiest wishes of all those present for a speedy recovery from her recent serious illness.

Mr. A. Indermaur then rose to reply and warmly thanked Mr. Schmid for kindly having consented to take the Chair and, in particular, for the generous sentiments expressed towards Mrs. Indermaur and himself. The President voiced his pleasure at the good number present, wishing them one and all a happy evening. Finally he assured the members that he was, as he had ever been, at the entire service of the Helvetia Club, a declaration which was punctuated by prolonged applause.

The next speaker was Mr. A. Wyss, who proposed, in his usual humorous vein, the toast to the Ladies and the Guests, to whom he extended a special welcome. He expressed his pleasure at the fair sex having braved the black-out, but regretted that, owing to war conditions, this Dinner and Dance had to be planned on a less elaborate scale than in former years. He said he knew that he could count on every one's appreciation of the circumstances which, however, should not be a bar to spending a thoroughly enjoyable evening, offering complete relaxation from the stress of everyday-life. Mr. Wyss's lively discourse was also warmly cheered.

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