

of attending its meetings. In the case of Great Britain, the work of the Council, and in part the work of the Assembly, has been hitherto done by Mr. Fisher and myself, although Lord Curzon was able to take the chair at one Council, which happened to meet in London. We are Cabinet Ministers, and are acquainted with the general views of our colleagues; we can therefore, without inconvenience, exercise a certain measure of independent discretion without in every case referring to our Government for instructions. This renders discussion more fruitful and business more rapid than otherwise would be possible; but it is not every member of the League who is in a position to send Cabinet Ministers to Geneva as a matter of course.

DIFFICULTY OF RAISING FUNDS; TYPHUS IN POLAND.

Another difficulty which presents itself in our attempts to use to the full the machinery of the League is due to money. We made an attempt in 1920 to obtain funds by voluntary subscription from members of the League in order to deal with typhus in Poland and the east of Europe. Typhus was at that time, and I fear still is, not merely a great misfortune to the countries bordering upon Russia, the great centre of the infection, but a menace also to nations lying further to the west. Poland was, according to our information, making every effort to deal with this danger; the Council came to the conclusion that she should be supported, and we therefore issued an appeal for funds to the members of the League. The appeal was, on the whole, a failure—a failure partly due no doubt to the financial difficulties which beset the whole world, partly to the fact that most members of the League were remote from the peril with which we were endeavouring to deal. In some cases very liberal subscriptions were offered, but on the whole it was clear that, at least in existing circumstances, such appeals were not likely to succeed.

It is indeed evident that under the parliamentary system the expenditure of the League will always present an easy object of attack. The gain to the world of international co-operation is immense, but it cannot be allocated with any definiteness between the co-operating nations. It is always, therefore, easy for a parliamentary critic to ask what advantage his particular nation derives from the expenditure which it is called upon to make, and in these days of universal poverty such questions fall upon sympathetic ears.

If this very natural frame of mind is permitted to dominate policy, manifestly the League will perish. Some common sacrifice, however slight, is required if any common effort is to be successful. I believe this danger is not negligible, though I am sanguine enough to think that it will be successfully surmounted.

REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE LEAGUE.

So far I have dwelt upon the obstacles which thwart and may even imperil the success of this great experiment. Let me now say a few words upon some of the reasons which require all men of good will to do their best to make it a success; and here I can appeal not merely to speculative theory, but to actual experience. The League has been in existence since 10th January, 1920—say, about a year and a half. In that time it has had to create its machinery, to organize its methods, and to devise means for pursuing what is without doubt a new adventure in the history of mankind. One would have thought that these facts alone would mollify the sternest critic, and that no one would be so unreasonable as to expect in the first eighteen months, during which this infant institution has been in existence, the full authority and efficiency which only time can bring. But even these eighteen months are sufficient, in my opinion, to show to any impartial observer how valuable the League of Nations can be, and how impotent any other organization would be to fill its place.

I am the last person to deride what is commonly called “the old diplomacy.” The old diplomacy has for many generations done much in the cause of peace, and those who see in it merely a costly method of embittering international relations and snatching national advantages completely misread the lessons of history. But there are assuredly many things which the League of Nations has even now shown that it can do which diplomacy could scarcely attempt, and which it certainly could not attempt with success.