

tion; historically and juridically they form part of Finland. The whole subject was investigated on the spot by an International Commission appointed by the League, which, like some of the Commissions, enjoyed the advantage of having on it an American representative. Their elaborate report was unanimous. They decided that the Aaland Islands belonged to Finland, but they used their good offices to secure the largest possible measure of autonomy for the Swedish population affected by their decision. We have evidence that this concession, voluntarily granted by the Government of Finland, would never have been obtained at the instance of any external Power other than a League of which Finland, in common with most civilized Powers, was itself a member. It would be difficult to find a clearer instance of the manner in which, under favourable circumstances, the League may contribute to the cause of international peace.

IF THE LEAGUE WERE TO DISSOLVE.

Two further observations I will permit myself before concluding. The first is that if the League were to dissolve, a new Peace Treaty would have to be framed, and new machinery would have to be devised for carrying out the duties with which the League has been entrusted.

CRITICS OF THE LEAGUE.

The second observation is especially addressed to the British critics of the League. They must be well aware that for many generations the main anxiety of British statesmen in their Continental policy has been to preserve the peace, and to prevent the domination of any particular Power over its weaker neighbours. Those two aims have not always been compatible, and the first has had more than once to be abandoned in order to obtain the second. They were not compatible, for example, in 1914. But if the League of Nations reaches its full strength and stature, if it be supported by the great moral forces of the world, peace and national independence will be secured without resort to arms. If in the future there should again arise a Power greedy of domination, it will find itself confronted not merely by defensive alliances between a few interested States, but by the organized Forces of the civilized world. If that hope is to be accomplished it can be only by a League of Nations; and when I consider the services already rendered, or in course of being rendered, to the cause of international co-operation, by the League, mutilated though it be by the absence from its membership of some who might have been among its most powerful supporters, I cannot doubt that few calamities would be greater than the abandonment of the great experiment to which we have set our hand. Should that calamity occur, it is not in the lifetime of this generation that a serious effort will again be made to substitute the rule of justice in international affairs for that of force; and the horrors of five years of war will have been endured in vain.
