

THE TREATY'S MORAL FAILURE.

By Felix Adler (The Nation).

It is with a feeling amounting almost to dismay that many thousands of persons in this and other countries have read the constitution of the League of Nations, and the terms of the treaty to be imposed upon the vanquished enemy.

The world is fairly sickened with the horrors of the war through which it has just passed, and men everywhere desire imperatively a settlement which shall prevent, as far as human foresight can avail, the recurrence of such horrors. But the decisions of the Paris Conference insure instead the renewal of wars, and of wars even more desperate than the one just ended.

The dissensions among the dominant Powers at the very outset augur ill for future concord even among themselves. The discontent of certain of the smaller nations with the terms which they are required to accept is palpable, while into the hearts of the vanquished there is now being introduced a burning sense of humiliation and wrong, which must eventually break out into new struggles, unless repressed for decades to come by the continuous application of superior outside military force.

The democracies of England and America are asked to furnish this outside force. Ought they to do so? Democracy hates slavery. It entered the war to put an end to the rule of might. Should it lend itself to bind down with economic chains a whole people, and to re-establish might on a scale more stupendous than has ever previously been attempted or even contemplated?

It is sometimes said that we must be satisfied with the beginnings of a League of Nations, and trust to future development to improve it. But if it begins with the seeds of mischief in its very constitution, future development can only serve to ripen the evil seeds into full-blown fruition. It is said that half a loaf is better than no bread, and that compromises are unavoidable. But no bread is better than a fraction of a loaf if that fraction contains poison; and compromise, while indispensable as to the means by which policies and principles are effectuated, is wholly inadmissible in respect to the principles themselves. To give way in first-rate matters of principle is not to compromise but to capitulate.

We have studied with anxious scrutiny the decisions of the Paris Conference, over-desirous if possible to be satisfied with them, prepared to find imperfections and mistakes, if only we might discover the promised foundations of a new and better order for mankind. But we find instead the worst features of the old order reproduced: the balance-of-power policy, the bald assertion of the rights of conquest, while new provisions have been written into the covenant that greatly enhance its peril. For it is practically a covenant between five Powers. To five Powers supremacy over the world and all its people is for the time being accorded, and they reserve by themselves, by their majority in the council, the right to determine when and under what conditions, however onerous, the nations now excluded shall be admitted. The five Powers, or their executives, and the agents of their executives, are thus invested with an authority the like of which no prince has ever exercised, and the possible abuse of which no imagination can measure.

The war was fought for democracy as against world domination, and literal world domination by a minority of Governments, not even a minority of peoples is now to be the outcome.

The war was waged in the interests of justice, and among the five Powers who are thus practically made the custodians of universal justice on this planet, disputes have arisen at the outset which reveal that the conception of justice entertained by several among them fails to include the rights of the weak, and is restricted in meaning to an equal division between the strong.

The war-profiteering of individuals is rightly censured, but war-profiteering nations are among those entrusted in the new League with the supreme control.

The right of self-determination was announced as a cardinal principle of the new order to be established after this war; alien

rule over unwilling populations was to be no longer tolerated. But in Asia, in the Adriatic, and in Central Europe, this principle has been set aside without a qualm. Feeble nations were to be protected against the strong. But when a robber had entered China, had possessed himself of Kiaochow and the wealth of Shantung, and then a neighbor had expelled the robber, the neighbor does not hesitate to claim the best of what the robber had wrongfully appropriated. And yet, with the ancient names of right and truth upon their lips, the makers of these astonishing arguments ask that they be ratified by the free peoples.

It was announced that the wrong of 1870 must be redressed. A limb had been torn from the body of France, a population had been treated like chattels. Without consulting their wishes, they had been taken out of one political connection and annexed to another, and this on the militarist plea of strategic security, of needful provision to prevent the defeated nation from regaining its own. Fear dictated the wrong committed at that time, and force was employed as the instrument of fear. But now, in the German districts along the Polish frontier, in the valley of the Saar, and elsewhere, the same lamentable mistake is committed once more. Fear dictates the mutilations and the annexations, and force is depended on—the force of the democracies of England and America—to make secure the barriers that fear is building.

And finally, when we consider the punishment of the vanquished enemy, we perceive with a sinking of the heart the same default in application of the principles announced, the same moral insufficiency on the side of the victors. We must be just, it was said, to those to whom we did not wish to be just. But is it just to punish the innocent with the guilty? Is it just to ascribe the crimes of the German rulers, and of those who consciously consented to those crimes, to at least half, nay, more than half, the German people—the women and children, for instance, who had no more voice in deciding what was done, and no more responsibility for what was done, than we had? And yet it is precisely upon the innocent, upon the children especially, that the full brunt will fall of the punitive peace which, under the threat of starvation, the German Government is commanded to sign. It is they who will have to toil with enfeebled strength, and economic resources diminished, for a period no one can foresee how long, to meet the huge indemnities imposed upon them. It is they who will be crushed under the load.

It was said in the beginning that we must distinguish between the masters of Germany and the people, and to the people the appeal was made to disembarrass themselves of their masters. They have done so. But has this fact been allowed to make a difference in our treatment of them? Has not every artifice of propaganda been used to spread distrust of the change that has taken place, in order thereby to justify the harshest measures which the chauvinistic group among their conquerors might dictate? We were reminded in the beginning that there are two Germanies—Germany, a path-finder in science and philosophy, a Germany dear to the lovers of music and the arts, the Germany of Dürer and Beethoven, of Goethe and Kant; and the other a militarist Germany—and that the one was to be destroyed in order that the other might reap the fruit of the elevation of mankind. But has this distinction been remembered?

Germany, the American Secretary of the Navy exultantly said not long ago, is impotent for all time to come. The German people, the English Premier said, is convulsed like a broken-backed creature, crushed in a savage conflict. And yet a people of sixty millions is still a member of the body of humanity; and when one of the members of the body decays the rest must suffer with it, both spiritually and materially. And when a people is rendered impotent, and made to bite the dust in agony, the nobler gifts with which it is endowed perish within it. It ceases then to produce anything in science and the arts which the human family can rejoice in; it is no longer an asset and becomes a canker. Is this a result which

the democracies of England and America, which thoughtful men anywhere, desire or can regard with satisfaction?

In view of all these considerations, therefore, I urge upon the Senate of the United States, that whatever other alterations in the covenant of the League may be deemed wise, the following deep-cutting change should receive immediate and supreme consideration; namely that its constitution be so amended as to put the people themselves instead of the Prime Ministers and Executives in control of the League, the

delegates to become a true international parliament, with due representation for the working classes of all countries.

Further, I urge that if for the time being Germany and Russia are excluded from the executive council, yet the delegates of their parliament shall be immediately invited to membership in the international parliament, and that to this parliament be remitted the task of so revising the treaties as to bring them into better accord with those principles of genuine justice which alone can guarantee an enduring peace.

Censuring the President.

From The Public.

The main charge against President Wilson appears to be that he conceived high ideals but failed to realize them all at once. He set forth democracy in such glowing terms that he inspired a new hope in the oppressed in all lands; yet at the Paris Peace Conference he failed to embody all these aspirations in the treaty. But by what code of morals is a man to be condemned utterly because in contending against other men for an ideal he is forced to content himself for the time being with something less than the whole. Where or when has a political or social ideal been attained at a single stroke? Is not all progress a matter of growth? Have not all ideals been attained step by step?

It was the taunt of the Bolsheviks at the beginning of the revolution that America was not free because this or that restriction remained. And those Americans who bemoan our lapse from democracy, and commiserate us on the loss of the liberties bequeathed us by the Fathers forget that few of the privileges now enjoyed by a large part of the people were recognized at the time of the framing of the Constitution.

Men who signed the Declaration of Independence owned chattel slaves; property was a necessary qualification for voting, and woman suffrage would have been considered preposterous. Yet the man who penned the Declaration, as well as those who signed it, took the first step toward their realization, and left to future generations the duty of completing the work.

President Wilson went to Paris inspired with the highest ideals of any modern political leader. He met from other countries men less devoted to those ideals. Necessity compelled an agreement. He did not get all that he sought, nor all that he should have gotten. But that is not to say that his mission was a failure, or that his work should be condemned.

Sober reflection will convince open-minded men that the President not only secured much at the Conference, but that he provided a means for obtaining all else that was there withheld. What would have become of the new nations stretching all the way from the Baltic to the Adriatic but for his championship? Granted that the terms imposed upon Germany are too severe, and that the disposal of the Saar Valley is wrong and will have to be corrected, the means of correction have been provided in the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Every act must be weighed against the alternative choice. Would Mr. Wilson's critics have exercised so much to take it all? Has he not shown the greater wisdom in maintaining friendly relations, and securing the adoption of machinery that must necessarily continue his purpose as the world broadens its ideals?

It should not be forgotten that a democratic government never can rise far above its own people. And just as the men who signed the declaration that "all men are created equal" were obliged to bow for the time being to those who maintained chattel slavery, so President Wilson, who declared for self-determination, has been compelled to accept modifications at the hands of other Governments whose co-operation was necessary. He stood as the representative of the United States; yet the voters gave him an adverse Congress, and the Senate bluntly declared it would not approve his acts.

Why then lay the blame for such failure as there has been upon him? Should he not rather be congratulated for what he has accomplished in spite not only of foreign opponents, but of the opposition of his own countrymen?

AMERICANIZATION.

From The Nation.

The various plans for Americanization that have come before us seem to fall into three categories. Some of them are obvious devices to influence the foreign vote toward one or another political organization. Others are devices, equally obvious, to facilitate the exploitation of foreign labor. Others, again, which it is a pleasure to believe are wholly disinterested, serious, and well-intended, seem to be devices for indoctrinating the foreigner with the superiority of our language, habits, cultural institutions, and practices over his own; devices, in short, for making him, whether for better or worse, as much as possible like ourselves. With the first two classes we shall not now concern ourselves beyond remarking their essential dishonesty; but we may perhaps profitably discuss the nationalistic philosophy upon which the third class is based.

That it is the bounden duty of the foreigner to forget his own ways as speedily as possible, and to learn ours, to forego his own language and cultural specialties and make the best fist he can at ours, is a pleasing assumption on our part, and in some respects justified; for like every civilization on earth, ours has some points of notable superiority over others. Still, most of these the foreigner knows of before he arrives; they are what attracts him here. As to the rest, and as to the notion that he should generally conform to our habits and ways merely because they are ours and to the complete discouragement or exclusion of his own, the situation should be looked at somewhat more from the standpoint of the foreigner than most of the Americanization plans that we have examined

appear to do. After all, if the superiority of our civilization is at all points such as we assume, would not the foreigner be apt, in time, to discover it for himself; and is the process of assimilation really expedited by our inflexible attitude toward him? The very small amount of imagination necessary to put oneself in his place will answer these questions at once; and then one is on the way toward a sound policy of Americanization.

The American people can do nothing, we are convinced, to Americanize foreigners. There is no machinery that is competent; perhaps our sublime faith in the omnipotence of machinery, especially the machinery of organization, is one of the very points at which the foreigner shies off from our attempts. It is not a case for machinery, not a case for doing, but a case for being. We can be something that will Americanize immigrants and assimilate them rapidly and naturally, of their own motion; and that something is very different from the figure we have hitherto appeared before them. It would seem that the remarkable fact of the present exodus of foreigners would cause our people to look twice at the ground of their assumptions about their own civilization. These foreigners have had the benefit of enormously high wages. They have saved their money; and now that the war is over, they are going back to Europe in shoals, and according to their statement, going to stay. Now, if our civilization possessed intrinsic powers of attraction commensurate with the opportunity it offered these people to get work and lay up money, it is unlikely that so many would be leaving it. For

the present generation of us, perhaps, it does possess those powers; our demands upon it are few; what it has largely the work of our own hands or our fathers', and we are laudably proud and contented. But looking at the situation from the standpoint of the foreigner, we find that for him it possesses hardly any power of attraction at all.

We may then stand our ground stolidly and say, so much the worse for the foreigner. Resentment is natural; but if translated into action, it does the America of the next generation a great disservice. That America will be a better place than this, its life will be larger; we want to have it so, our children will make it so. Then let us not deny them the powerful help of the foreigner, though we ourselves have been too preoccupied or too unintelligent to recognize its value and accept it for use in fashioning the America that now is. Let our children weigh the criticism of the foreigner without prejudice, realizing that it is apt to be more objective than our own or even than theirs, and turn upon him and demand his cultural contribution toward remedying the defects he alleges. The foreigner says that our civilization does nothing for the claims of the intellect, of beauty, of the poetry of life, of the social instinct. When we complain of his ingratitude toward our efforts to make him like ourselves, he quotes Burke to the effect that "there should be in every country a standard of manners that a well-formed mind would be disposed to relish. For us to love our country, our country ought to be lovely"—and tells us quite plainly that our country, despite its

many points of superiority, is not lovely; that our civilization, with all its power and wealth, is not interesting, that it lacks amenity, is not amiable. Our children, then, as the iron force of prejudice inevitably loosens, will say, Very well, help us make it so. Give us your contribution toward a larger life in exchange for what you have got from us in the things wherein we excel. This is Americanization, practicable and salutary; but it will not be done by committees or programmes, but by the grace of a new spirit.

Then the new generation will look back at us who prided ourselves on being good business men, and marvel how we could be so unbusinesslike as to have these rich potential resources of civilization under our hand and never tap them. It is conceivable, they will say, that New York could have harbored more Italians than Rome and yet they were encouraged to leave no more of a characteristic mark on the general culture of the city? How is it possible that great settlements of Slavs and Celts, quick-witted, sentimental people, naturally well-mannered, lived so long in our Middle States without being laid mercilessly under contribution against the dismal and illiberal ideals of social life prevailing there? Then they will read, perhaps, of our inept proposals to Americanize these people by machinery—proposals as of those who would do all the teaching and none of the learning, all the giving and none of the taking, all the preaching and none of the practicing—and be thankful for the knowledge that Americanization is possible only according to the manner of spirit that Americans themselves are of.

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