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NEARING THE ABYSS
A FEDERATED EUROPE
FOUNDATIONS OF VICTORY
FACING THE FUTURE

THE SEVEN PILLARS OF PEACE

by

LORD DAVIES

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ON THE AUTHOR AND HIS BOOK

The author of this book, who died in June 1944, was well known in many spheres. Those who move in the worlds of politics, public service, philanthropy, business, agriculture and sport were all familiar with his name, and his achievements on behalf of the many causes and enterprises which he served so energetically earned for him a prominent place among his fellow-men.

But undoubtedly it was as a pioneer and a crusader in the field of international relationships that he made his deepest mark, and it will be for his service in that capacity that he will be most clearly remembered.

Lord Davies' critics, and even many of his friends, frequently maintained that his ideas and proposals in the sphere of world affairs were idealistic and utopian. Up to a point that may have been true, but the early exponents of all great reforms have always been belaboured with the same cudgel, and most of us will admit that if it had not been for the voices of the prophets crying in the wilderness throughout the centuries man would not have progressed as far from his original state as he has to-day. All social and political history shows that what was dismissed as utopian idealism yesterday may be recognised as the essence of practical realism to-day.

In 1920, when Lord Davies first advanced the idea of an International Police Force, our hopes for the elimination of war were centred on the League of Nations. Perhaps it was natural that at the conclusion of the most violent upheaval which had convulsed the world up to that time we should take an optimistic view of the prospects of the new League. Most of us were impatient with any suggestion that the great experiment would fail, and were in no mood to listen to those who sounded a note of alarm. But from the distance of to-day and with the experience of the years that have intervened in

mind, we see that Lord Davies and the few who supported him were all too right. We know now that the League of Nations was an inadequate instrument, that when the test came it proved unable to fulfil its essential task. Whether we entirely agree with the theory or not, we are forced to admit that there is some cogency, at least, in the argument that the second World War could have been avoided if a more effective organisation for the regulation of world affairs had been brought into being in 1919.

To-day, in 1945, the nations have a second chance. If they should fail to make the best use of it, a third upheaval, which may well bring about the final extinction of our civilisation, seems almost inevitable sooner or later.

During the years that lie immediately ahead, exhaustion can probably be relied upon to dictate peace. But, after the nations have enjoyed a breathing space, who can say with any assurance that the friction of conflicting interests or the expansionist tactics of a predatory power will not produce a new conflagration?

This is undoubtedly a time for hard thought, for only by applying ourselves determinedly to what the author of this book once described as "The Problem of the Twentieth Century" can we hope to find the solution. What the right solution is it is obviously beyond our competence to suggest, and opinions differ widely as to the course that is most likely to bring us to the goal. But of one thing we can be sure—that the solution is not likely to be found unless the masses of the people all over the world begin to exhibit a far greater interest in their own well-being, and cease to regard international affairs as a queer and "lofty" business which is completely and utterly beyond their scope. It is to their lot that it falls to fight the wars and to bear all the suffering and hardship which are inevitably entailed. It is their right and their duty, therefore, to keep themselves informed of what is going on and to insist that the relationships of nations are conducted in a manner of which they fully approve.

Perhaps it has been in this way that Lord Davies and those like him have made their greatest contribution. They have

been persistent in exhorting us to wake up to the fact that "the world is our concern," and in breaking down the apathy which, though still widespread, formerly amounted to an almost total blackout. In the pursuit of his efforts to galvanise the people, Lord Davies took a prominent part in building up the League of Nations Union and the International Federation of the League of Nations Societies. At one time the former included nearly a million members, and although its strength has now waned most lamentably, those who directed its affairs during its early years undoubtedly achieved a large measure of success in their "educational" endeavours. At a later stage Lord Davies' name became identified with the New Commonwealth Movement, which he was instrumental in founding in 1932, when he finally despaired of inducing the League of Nations Union to adopt the only policy which he regarded as realistic.

It would be inappropriate here to attempt to examine the merits of this policy, but among the many schemes which have been advanced for the preservation of peace it possesses one unique quality in that it is based upon the fruits of experience and really consists of the application to the affairs of nations of those fundamental principles which have produced law and order in our civil communities. In this volume Lord Davies goes a long way beyond the programme of the New Commonwealth and brings forward proposals which may still seem inapplicable to the world with which we have to deal. Nevertheless, the scheme bears the hall-mark of that soundness, mingled with far-sightedness, which always characterised his work.

At a time when the thoughts of all of us are directed towards reconstruction, we present this volume in the hope that it may serve in clarifying the issues that perplex us and in helping "the common man" to make more swift and certain progress towards the vital goal.

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