

TEN YEARS
OF
WORLD CO-OPERATION

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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OF
WORLD CO-OPERATION

Foreword by
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SECRETARIAT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS
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FOREWORD

THE aim of the present volume is to present a simple record of the work done by the League during the first ten years of its existence—to set forth briefly and impartially the principal events, the progress which has been accomplished, and the methods which have been devised for dealing with the problems that have arisen. The book is divided under different headings, but it must not be forgotten that all League activities are closely related to one another and interact on one another. All must be taken into account if the reader seeks to understand and realise the true meaning of the record.

This book cannot arrogate to itself the name of history. It is a statement of facts. It seeks neither to discern the causes of events nor to estimate their effects, still less to relate particular causes and effects to those general laws of historical truth which it is the historian's highest function to illustrate and to establish. It is, if not strictly what is called an official document, at any rate a document produced under the limitations by which the official is hedged. It is not even the raw material of history. That will be found in the official publications of the League, which already form so immensely rich and varied a source of information on almost every question of international affairs. It is, as I have said, simply a record which may, I hope, prove useful to the student and a source of indications to the more advanced scholar and to the historian.

I cannot altogether regret that the limitations imposed by their official position have prevented the compilers of this book from attempting to judge the facts which they relate, or to place the history of the League in its true relation to the events which preceded its establishment, or have taken place during its existence, but apparently outside its field of action. These

are matters for the historian, and they are also, to my mind, matters in regard to which the historian, if he is wise, will wait at least another decade before he attempts to form his final judgments. The League of Nations is not static; it is alive and dynamic, influencing and being influenced by the other forces whose inter-play is moulding the political aspect of the world to-day. It is too early yet to attempt to lay a finger on this decision and that and to sum up their effects for good or evil. It may well be that, ten years hence, some decisions which seemed of little importance when they were taken may prove to have had effects beyond any present calculations, while others which seemed of importance at the time may, seen in their true perspective, appear to have been almost matters of indifference.

Nevertheless, I think we may venture on two judgments in full confidence that the historian of the future will not greatly disagree with them. First, that the mere creation of the League and its continued existence during these ten years is one of those great facts which inevitably stand out as landmarks in the history of the world. One of the drafters of the Covenant said a short time ago :

“ Looked at in its true light, in the light of the age and of the time-honoured ideas and practice of mankind, we are beholding an amazing thing—we are witnessing one of the great miracles of history. . . .

“ The League may be a difficult scheme to work, but the significant thing is that the Powers have pledged themselves to work it, that they have agreed to renounce their free choice of action and bound themselves to what amounts in effect to a consultative parliament of the world.

“ By the side of that great decision and the enormous step in advance which it means, any small failures to live up to the great decision, any small lapses on the part of the League, are trifling indeed. The great choice is made, the great renunciation is over, and mankind has, as it were at

one bound and in the short space of ten years, jumped from the old order to the new, across a gulf which may yet prove to be the greatest break or divide in human history. . . .”¹

The second judgment which I venture to put forward is that, during this space of ten years, the League has definitely, and greatly, grown in strength—that is to say, in its hold on public opinion throughout the world and on the Governments and Administrations through which public opinion acts. There are many indications of the truth of this ; very few against it. This is not, however, the place to attempt to prove it. I content myself with recording the fact that I, at any rate, have been led irresistibly to these convictions as a result of my close association with the work of the League in all its forms from its beginning.

ERIC DRUMMOND
(*Secretary-General*).

¹ General Smuts at Oxford, November 9th, 1929.

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