

refugees, the organization of a defence against the epidemics from the east of Europe, achieved with very little expense and with absolutely complete success. Or you may take its social activities: the great efforts and the successful efforts it has made to strengthen the fight against opium; to extirpate the horrible traffic in women and children, which is one of the disgraces of our civilization; the assisting and protection of Native races; and a very large part of its work which is subsidiary to the League, but in a sense a part of it, its work in the International Labour Organization. Or you may take its economic work: the great amount of work it has already done to facilitate the increase of transit between nations, or the smaller matters that it has had something to do with, to relieve the hindrance caused by passport regulations, or the work which it has done quite lately, the other day, to induce the nations to agree on a convention for the enforcement of commercial arbitration, a thing of immense importance to the commercial interest all over the world. Or you may take its financial work: I need not go back on the old Brussels Conference of 1920, although I still think that was a very considerable effort towards the financial re-establishment of the world, and that it deserved better practical success than it actually achieved. Or you may take the better-known and more striking success, the very, very considerable steps that have been taken towards the financial rehabilitation of Austria—very remarkable work—I have not time to deal with it in any detail, but the Conference is well aware of the very remarkable success that has been achieved in that direction. So remarkable is it that Hungary is asking us to help her in the same kind of way, though, I hope, with less contingent financial liability than in the case of Austria; and unhappy Greece, which has been saddled with a terrible financial problem of providing for a million refugees—*i.e.*, a quarter of her whole population—in addition to the existing population, is asking us to facilitate the raising of a loan for that purpose, and the establishment of a scheme for the settlement of these refugees on a sound economic basis. Or you may take its administrative work: the administration of Danzig, the administration of the Saar, the various administrative duties which have been thrust upon it, or have been offered to it, by the Lausanne Treaty; or you may take the number of other cases—I will not weary the Conference by enumerating any more—from what is called the intellectual co-operative work, which I think perhaps has more the sympathy of our continental neighbours than ourselves, down to a conference for fixing the movable feasts of the Church so as to have a fixed holiday instead of a movable one. All this work has been done, and, I think, with very great and remarkable success, and, considering the immense amount of advantage that has accrued to the populations of the world, with wonderfully little expense. I do not believe it could have been done in any other way than by the existence of the League.

Improvement on Previous Procedure.

If anybody who is familiar with these things considers what, under the old system of a diplomatic correspondence and special conferences perhaps called of a partial kind, which have no machinery to carry them out between their summoning, if you consider that, I think you will agree that the work could not have been done except by the League. The truth is that the League really has done splendid work in all these respects, and, as Lord Curzon said the other day, the League has exercised a wholesome and conciliatory influence in world politics. I do not think it is right to underestimate the immense importance of all these kinds of activities in that conciliatory influence on the larger political questions which have to be transacted between nations. But, of course, all that is comparatively a minor matter.

Status of League in International Disputes.

The second object of the League is the object of achieving international peace and security; and any one may well say, "How can you make any claim for the League if you consider the condition of Europe now, after the League has been in existence for three or four years?"

I feel the force of the observation. But, in the first place, I must point out that the League is only what the Governments composing it choose to make it. It is for them to say. As I have already explained, it is not a super-State, it has no coercive jurisdiction—it is for the Governments to say how much or how little work they entrust to the League. The League was not asked to deal with the Russo-Polish War, and it was not asked to deal with the Turco-Greek War; it was not asked to deal with the question of reparations; and it is those three big questions more than anything else that have been responsible for the unrest which still prevails in Europe. No doubt, of course, it may be said that if it had been asked to deal with those three big questions it would have failed. All one can say is that that may be so, but the organizations which have attempted to deal with them have not been pre-eminently successful. On the other hand, as every one knows, in the number of smaller questions which have been entrusted to the League, the League has succeeded in allaying the difficulties and disputes which have come before it. I need not recount the circumstances of those disputes—the question of the Åland Islands; the question of Upper Silesia; the question of Albania and Serbia, which was a very dangerous question; and even the question of Vilna, which many people regard as one of the least successful matters; but war between Lithuania and Poland was prevented. I think no one can deny that the work of the League did not meet with complete success, yet it did do this: it prevented any further fighting on the subject, and stopped the fighting which was already in progress.

Italian-Greek Crisis.

But all these are smaller questions, and that is why the recent Italian-Greek question is of such enormous importance in the history of the League. It was the first occasion on which an international dispute of the first order—one which might easily have led to serious wars in Europe—it was the first big question that had come before the League, and it is for that reason that I hope the Conference