

It will be noted that the Convention for Simplification of Customs Formalities is to come into operation on the 27th November, and that the protocol regarding commercial arbitration came into force on the 28th July last. An account is given of the conference of experts which met in Geneva in May, 1924, to inquire into the possibility of revising the present International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

The result of the committee's investigations into the evidence on the trade in worthless goods, and on the treatment of foreign nationals and enterprises, will be read with interest.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ORGANIZATION (FINANCIAL COMMITTEE).

This committee has been much occupied with work in connection with the financial reconstruction of Austria and of Hungary. Information concerning other questions with which it has been dealing will be found on pages 61–65 of Document A. 8, and on page 19 of Document A. 8 (*a*). The Second Committee's report to the Assembly, A. 94, on the work of the committee as a whole, also deals with the scheme for an international loan for Greek refugees. This is a comprehensive scheme for the settlement in Greece of about a million Greeks who sought refuge in the land of their origin after the Turkish victories of 1922 and 1923 in Asia Minor. The financing of this scheme of settlement is being arranged under the auspices of the League, and Greece, under a protocol signed by her, is authorized to issue an international loan not exceeding £10,000,000. The committee's report concludes with a number of resolutions which were passed by the Assembly on the 25th September.

COMMITTEE No. 3.

DISARMAMENT.

I have mentioned earlier in this report the speech which Mr. MacDonald, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, made in the Assembly on the 4th September. That speech gave the impulse to a work which, whatever may be the results which follow, must be considered the greatest the League has performed, for it is concerned with the object of the League, the settlement of international disputes by pacific means.

For four years successive Assemblies have struggled with the problem—years of hope followed by scepticism. Last year's Assembly was memorable for more than one reason. It was the year of the Italian-Greek trouble, and was the year in which the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance assumed the form in which it was sent to Governments for consideration. Before the Fifth Assembly met the position of that treaty had become practically hopeless. Great Britain was only one of many States which declined to have anything to do with it. Mr. MacDonald had declined on behalf of Great Britain. What would he propose in the place of that treaty? The answer to this question is contained in the speeches which he and M. Herriot, the Prime Minister of France, delivered on the 4th and 5th September, and the ideas which were then put into words have borne their fruit in a protocol for the pacific settlement of international disputes, the work of two committees, Nos. 1 and 3, but to a considerable extent the work of two eminent men, M. Politis, delegate of Greece, and M. Benes, Foreign Minister and delegate of Czecho-Slovakia.

The nucleus of this protocol is contained in the resolution introduced by the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and France, and passed by the Assembly on the 6th September, reading as follows:—

“The Assembly—noting the declarations of the Governments represented, observes with satisfaction that they contain the basis of an understanding tending to establish a secure peace—decides as follows:—

“With a view to reconciling in the new proposals the divergences between certain points of view which have been expressed and, when agreement has been reached, to enable an international conference upon armaments to be summoned by the League of Nations at the earliest possible moment:

“(1.) The Third Committee is requested to consider the material dealing with security and the reduction of armaments, particularly the observations of the Governments on the draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, prepared in pursuance of Resolution XIV of the Third Assembly, and other plans prepared and presented to the Secretary-General since the publication of the draft treaty, and to examine the obligations contained in the Covenant of the League in relation to the guarantees of security which a resort to arbitration and a reduction of armaments may require.

“(2.) The First Committee is requested—(*a*) To consider, in view of possible amendments, the articles in the Covenant relating to the settlement of disputes; (*b*) to examine within what limits the terms of Article 36, paragraph 2, of the statute establishing the Permanent Court of International Justice might be rendered more precise and thereby facilitate the more general acceptance of the clause: and thus strengthen the solidarity and the security of the nations of the world by settling by pacific means all disputes which may arise between States.”

No time was lost by Committees Nos. 1 and 3 in getting to work. Each committee divided itself into several sub-committees, and their work, subsequently criticized and amended, ultimately received a form which enabled it to meet with the unanimous approval of the Assembly. It was accompanied by a general report on the work of the two committees (Document A. 135), which, besides providing a full explanation of the various articles of the protocol, furnishes a useful introduction and a historical statement on the subject of the reduction of armaments.

The protocol (Annex IIA to Document A. 135) is an extension and completion of those articles of the Covenant which are concerned with the prevention and settlement of international disputes, and in it the signatory States undertake “to make every effort in their power to secure the introduction into the Covenant of amendments on the lines of the provisions” contained in the articles of the protocol.