A huge tradition believed in a golden age of mankind which lay in the splendid infancy of a primeval past; it looked back to some type or symbol of original perfection, Saturnian epoch, Satya Yuga, an age of sincere being and free unity when the sons of heaven were leaders of the human life and mind and the law of God was written, not in ineffective books, but on the tablets of man’s heart. Then he needed no violence of outer law or government to restrain him from evil or to cut and force his free being into the machine-made Procrustean mould of a social ideal; for a natural divine rule in his members was the spontaneous and sufficient safeguard of his liberty. This tradition was once so universal that one might almost be tempted to see in it the race memory of some golden and splendid realisation, not perhaps a miraculous divine beginning, but some past spiral cusp and apex, some topmost gloriously mounting arc of the cycles,—if there were not the equal chance of its being no more than a heightened example of that very common ideally retrospective tendency in the human mind which glorifies the past out of all perspective or proportion, blots out its shadows and sees it in some haze or deceiving light against the dark immediate shadow of the present, or else a projection from his sense of the something divine, pure and perfect within him from which he has fallen, placed by symbolic legend not in the eternal but in time, not inwardly in his spiritual being, but outwardly in his obscure existence on this crude and transient crust of Earth. What concerns us more is that we find often associated with this memory or this backward-looking illusion, a vague hope far or near, or even a more precise prophetic or religious forward-looking tradition of a coming back to us of that golden perfection, Astraea redux, Saturnia regna,—let us say, a return from the falling line of the cycle to another similar, perhaps even
greater high-glowing cusp and apex. Thus in the human mind which looks always before and after, its great dream of the ideal past completed itself by a greater dream of the ideal future.

These things modern man with his scientific and secularised mentality finds it difficult to believe in unless he has first theosophised or mysticised himself into a fine freedom from the positive scientific intelligence. Science which traces so confidently the nobly complete and astonishing evolution of our race in a fairly swift straight line from the ape man to the dazzlingly unfixable brilliancy of Mr. Lloyd George and the dyspeptic greatness of Rockefeller, rejects the old traditions as dreams and poetic figments. But to recompense us for our loss it has given us instead a more practicable, persistent and immediate vision of modern progress and the future hope of a rational and mechanically perfectible society: that is the one real religion still left, the new Jerusalem of the modern creed of a positivist sociology. The ideal past has lost its glamour, but a sober glamour of the future is brought near to us and takes on to the constructive human reason a closer hue of reality. The Asiatic mind is indeed still incurably prone to the older type of imagination which took and still takes so many inspiring forms, second coming of Christ, City of God, the Divine Family, advent of Messiah, Mahdi or Avatar,—but whatever the variety of the form, the essence is the same, a religious or spiritual idealisation of a possible future humanity. The European temperament—and we are all trying to become for the moment, superficially at least, white, brown, yellow or black Europeans,—demands something more familiarly terrestrial and tangible, a secular, social, political dream of evolving humanity, a perfected democracy, socialism, communism, anarchism. But whichever line we take and whether it be truth or illusion, the thing behind is the same and would seem to be a necessity of our human mind and will to action. We cannot do without some kind of futurist idealism. Something we must labour to build individually and collectively out of ourselves and our life, unless we would be content with the commonness and stumbling routine of a half-made and half-animal manhood,—a self-dethronement
to which that which is greatest in us will never consent,—
and man cannot build greatly whether in art or life, unless he
can conceive an idea and form of perfection and, conceiving,
believe in his power to achieve it out of however rebellious
and unductile a stuff of nature. Deprive him of this faith in
his power for perfection and you slay or maim his greatest
creative or self-creative faculty. In the absence then of any
immediate practicability of that higher and profounder dream
of a spiritually united and perfected humanity, the dream of
social and political meliorism may be accepted as the strongest
available incentive to keep humanity going forward. It is better
that it should have the ideal of a saving machinery than that
it should have no ideal at all, no figure of a larger, better and
sweeter life.

This secular dream of a future golden or half-golden age
of a more perfected, rational and peacefully cooperative society
has taken recently a singular step forward in the effectuating
imagination of mankind and even got as far as some attempt at
a first step towards actual effectuation. In ideal and imagination
it has assumed the form of a political and economic society of
the nations which will get rid of the cruel and devastating device
of war, establish a reign of international law and order and solve
without clash, strife or collision, by reason, by cooperation, by
arbitration, by mutual accommodation all the more dangerous
problems which still disturb or imperil the comfortable peace,
amity and organised productiveness which should be the reason-
able state of mankind. International peace, an ordered legality
and arrangement of the world’s affairs, a guaranteed liberty,
—or for the unfit a preparation and schooling for liberty,—
an organised unity of the life of the race, this is the figure of
the golden age which we are now promised. At the first sight
one has some sense of a lacuna somewhere, a suspicion of a
perfection too external and too well-regulated by clockwork
and a timidly insistent idea that it may perhaps be neither
so readily feasible nor so lyrically enchanting as its prophets
pretend. One may be disposed to ask, what of the spirit and
soul of man, the greatness of the inner perfection which can
alone support and give security and some kind of psychological reality to even the most ideal arrangement of his outer life, — how far that has gone or is likely to go in the near future, or what means or opportunities the new order proposes to offer for its growth and satisfaction. But this is no doubt too esoteric a way of looking at things. The practical western mind does not trouble itself overmuch with these subtleties; it prefers, and rightly enough, since to get something done seems to be the chief actual business of man in life, to hasten to the matter in hand and realise something useful, visible and tangible, good enough for a practical beginning or step forward. It believes besides in the omnipotence of law and institution to make the life of man conformable to his intellectual or spiritual ideals; it is satisfied if it can write down and find sanctions for a good and convenient system of laws, a compact or constitution, set up the mechanical means for the enforcement of its idea, build into effective form a workable institution. Other less palpable things, if they are at all indispensable, are expected to develop of themselves, as surely they ought under good mechanical conditions.

Good philosophical as well as practical justification may be put forward for this attitude. Form after all is an effective suggestion to the soul; machinery, as even churches and religions have been prone to believe, is all-powerful and can be trusted to create whatever you may need of the spirit. God himself or contriving Nature had first to invent the machinery and form of a universe and could only then work out in its mould some figure of the spirit. Therefore the sign of great hope, the good tidings of peace and good will unto men is not that a new and diviner or simply a more human spirit has been born into humanity, seized upon its leaders and extended itself among its ego-ridden, passion-driven, interest-governed millions, but that an institution has been begotten at Paris with the blessings of Premiers and Presidents, — the constitution of an international society, supported by the armed force of great nations and empires and therefore sure to be practicable, prosper and succeed, has been got into shape which will make war, militarism, oppression, exploitation an ugly dream of the past, induce Capital and Labour, lion and
lamb, to lie down side by side in peace and not, as a wicked Bolshevikism proposes, one well digested inside the other, and in fact bring about before long, sooner it is hoped rather than later, the grand fraternity of mankind. This is good news, if true. Still, before we enter the house of thanksgiving, let us pause a little and cast an eye of scrutiny on this new infant phenomenon.

A just, generous, cordial and valid League of nations is the thing which has been created, it seems, to replace the old unjust Balances of Power and stumbling, quarrelsome Concerts. And if it is to succeed better than the loose, ineffective and easily dissoluble things which it supplants, it must satisfy, one would think, certain conditions which they did not even attempt to fulfil. And one would at first sight fix something like the following as the indispensable conditions. First, this League must draw into its circle in one way or another all the existing nations of the earth; and that it must do on both just and agreeable terms so that they may join willingly and gladly and without any serious misgivings, reservations or heart-burnings; it must satisfy each and all by a fair and effective and, one must add in these democratic days, an honourable and equal position in this new society of the peoples. Since it should command and retain their moral assent and support, if it is to maintain in being an otherwise insecure material adhesion, it must, in order to do that constantly, not only at the moment of formation but in the future, base itself on no self-regarding law or established table of institutions fixed by any arbitrary will of those who for the moment are the strongest but on some firm, recognisable and always evolvable principle of equity and justice, for only where these things are is there a moral guarantee and security. The constitution of the League must provide a trustworthy means for the solution of all difficult, delicate and embarrassing questions which may hereafter endanger the infant and precarious framework of international society, and for that purpose it must establish a permanent, a central and a strong authority which all nations can readily recognise and accept as a natural head and faithful dynamic expression of the corporate being of mankind. These, one would think, are not at all nebulous, fanciful or too
idealistic demands, but the practical necessities of any system of yet loose unification such as now is contemplated, conditions it must from the first and increasingly satisfy if it is to survive the enormous difficulties of an enterprise which, as it proceeds, will have to work out of being most of the natural egoistic instincts and rooted past habits of the international mentality of the race.

This new gigantic bantling which has come into existence with War for its father and an armed and enforced Peace for its mother, with threatening and bloodily suppressed revolutions, a truncated internationalistic idealism and many half-curbed, just snaffled rearing national egoisms for its witnesses and godparents, has not, when looked at from this standpoint, in spite of certain elements of promise, an altogether reassuring appearance. The circumstances of its inception were adverse and except by a tremendous effort of self-conquest in the minds of the rulers and statesmen of the victorious nations, a self-conquest rendered a thousand times more difficult by the stupendous magnitude and the intoxicating completeness of their victory, any at all complete result and auspicious new beginning could not be hoped for. This league now in the last throes of formation has not been a spontaneous creation of a peaceful, equal and well-combined will towards unity of all the world's peoples. It comes into being overshadowed by the legacy of hatreds, reprisals, apprehensions, ambitions of a murderous world war chequered by revolutions which have opened a new and alarming vista of world-wide unrest and disturbance. It has grown out of a vague but strong aspiration, — more among the rank and file of the nations, and even so not equally common to all of them, than among their governing men or classes, — to find some means for the future avoidance of violent catastrophes in the international life of mankind. It has been precipitated into actual and immediate being by the determination of an eminent idealistic statesman with the modified and in some cases unwilling assent of others who shared only partially or not at all his idealism, one man of strong will who aided by a commanding position given to him by circumstances and a flexible obstinacy in his use of them, has been able to impose some shadow or some first incomplete
form of his ideal — the future alone can show which it is to be — on the crude course of events and the realistic egoism of governments and imperial nations. But in present fact the large and complete ideal with which he began his work, has been so impinged upon by the necessities of national passions, ambition, self-interest and by pressure of the force of circumstances — still in spite of all idealism the chief determining factors of life — that it is difficult to put one’s hand on anything in the concrete arrangement formulated and say without doubt or qualm that here is the very embodiment of the high principles in whose name the great war was fought and won. This is not surprising, nor should it be disappointing except to those who trusted more to their hopes than to experience. All we have to see is whether those high original principles were indeed necessary to the future security and evolution of this new association of the peoples and, if so, what chance they have of emerging from the forms in which they now seem to have been rather buried than given a body. And that will depend on the extent to which the conditions already suggested are realised or evolvable from the league’s incipient constitution.

An effective League of Nations must draw into itself all the existing nations of mankind; for any considerable omission or exclusion will bring in almost inevitably an element of future danger, of possible disagreements and collisions, perhaps of a rival grouping with jealousies which must lead to another and more colossal catastrophe. In its ostensible figure this new League does not by any means wear a catholic appearance. Professedly, it is nothing but an association of actual friends and allies. In the front rank stand confident and masterful five great and powerful empires or nations, — the sole great powers left standing by the hurricane in unimpaired strength, and two of them indeed with an enormously increased power, influence and dominion: behind crowd in dimly and ineffectively a number of smaller European and American peoples, those who were allied to them or otherwise on their side in the war, and one feeble and disjointed oriental leviathan; but all these seem to partake only with a passive assent or a subordinate cooperation, — and
in fact with very much of the first and very little of the latter, — whether in the determining of the form of the League or in its control and government. And the immediate professed object of the association is not to knit the world together in the beginnings of a well-conceived unity, — that could only have been done if all the peoples had taken a free and equal part in these deliberations, whereas in fact the whole thing has been hastily constructed in semi-secret conference by the victors of the war, and chiefly by the will of the five leading powers. Its object is to regulate the interests and mutual relations of the members of the League by rule, agreement, deliberation and arbitration and their relations with other states outside the League as much as may be by the same means; it is this only and in the beginning it is nothing more. But a door is left open for the nations still outside to enter in a given time, provided they subscribe unquestioningly to a system which they will have had no hand in framing, though under it they will have to live. On the other hand a door of egress is also provided for any nation wishing to recede hereafter from the League, and if disunion should set in among the greater powers, this dangerous, though under the circumstances perhaps unavoidable provision, may easily lead to the automatic dissolution of even this hesitating first frame of a partial unity.

But the facts and forces of the situation are perhaps more favourable than ostensible paper provisions. The nations not yet included are with two great and perilous exceptions small and inconsiderable and their position outside will be so disadvantageous, they will be at every turn so much at the mercy of this formidable combination, — for the five dominant powers will easily be able, if they are determined and united, to enforce their will vigorously against all dissidents, — that they may be expected to subscribe more or less readily to its terms or at any rate to enter in after a few years’ experience of exclusion. The Great Powers too are not likely to have strong reasons for breaking asunder for some years to come, and time may perhaps, provided no new revolutions sweep across the world, confirm the habit of united action. We may assume that here we have in
fact, though not yet in name, the beginnings of a council or an imperfect federation of the world's peoples.

But the constitution of this Council and the conditions under which the variously circumstanced nations are admitted into or brought under it, have a still more baffling appearance. They do not at all correspond with the democratic idealism of the human mind of today but rather strike one as a structure of almost mediaeval irregularity, complexity, incoherent construction, a well-nigh feudal political building with some formal concessions on its ground floor to the modern canon of liberty and equality. A unification of mankind may proceed very much on the same lines as past unifications of smaller peoples into nations or empires. It might have been brought about by the military force or the political influence of some powerful king-state preponderant by land and sea, —_pampotent par terre et mer_, as Nostradamus prophetically described the British Empire, — not necessarily despotic and absolute but easily first among equals; and that I suppose is what would have happened if Germany had come up top dog in the struggle instead of a very much mutilated and flattened undermost. Nor is it at all certain that something of the sort will not eventually come about if the present attempt or crude sketch of a system should come to grief; but for the moment this contingency has been prevented or at least postponed. That possibility eliminated, the unification may still take the form of an oligarchy or hegemony of great powers, leaders and masters of the herd, with the weaker rabble rest hanging on the flanks or posteriors of their mighty bellwethers and following them and their omnipotent decisions in sometimes a submissive and approbatory, sometimes a mutinous and discordant chorus; something very much of this kind is what this new league has certainly been in its formation and is likely to turn out in its execution. But there was also the vain present hope or dream, the strong future though far-off possibility of an equal, just and democratic federation of the peoples in which the dwarf and Goliath nations, the strong and the weak, the wealthy and the less wealthy, the immediately successful and the long or temporarily unfortunate, — who may yet have better gifts, have
done really more for mankind than the arrivistes among the nations,—will have, as is the rule or the ideal in all democratic bodies, in law and in initial fact an equal position, and there will be only a natural leadership and influence to differentiate by a freely accorded greater weight and voice. These were the three possibilities, and they represent respectively the ideal of the past which is said to have been buried in the grave of imperial Germany, the fact of the present which is a fact only and to none an ideal, and the ideal of the future, loudly trumpeted during the war, though there is none now, except the vanquished, the subject and the revolutionary, so poor and weak as to do it reverence.

The initial constitution of the League is almost frankly oligarchic in its disposal of the international balance of power,—not quite an absolute oligarchy, indeed, for there is certainly a general assembly which is so far democratic that all its members will exult in the dignifying possession of an equal vote. Honduras and Guatemala may, if the fancy pleases them, indulge themselves in some feeling of being lifted up to an equality with imperial England, America, the new arbiter of the world, and victorious France. But this is an illusion, a trompe l’oeil. For we find that this general assembly is in no sense the governing body but only a secondary authority, a court of approval and reference, to which the powerful executive nations will refer, mostly at their own discretion, this or that doubtful question for discussion. In practice and fact the new sovereign of the world under this constitution,—jagadīśvaro vā?—will be the executive body of the League of Nations. But there the five great powers will sit in a secure and formidable permanence, while a changeable selection of representatives picked out from the common herd will diminutively assist their deliberations, assisting or discussing in the giant obscurity of their shadow. One can easily see how the superior management of the world's affairs will go under these conditions and in fact have already had a taste of its quality in the process of this formation and this building of a basis for what it is still hoped by many will be a long or even a permanent peace. Evidently in such a governing body the Great
Five will determine the whole policy and action; nothing will readily pass which will be at all displeasing to these new masters of the earth, or let us say, to this new composite hegemony, — for its decisions will at no time be guided by that perilous, ductile and variable thing, a majority, but must be by unanimity. What in principle is this system but a novel, an improved, an enlarged and regularised edition of the Concert of Powers — liberalised a little in form because buttressed by a democratic general assembly which may, indeed, as circumstances develop and conditions change, become something, but may equally remain a dignified or undignified cypher, — but still in essence another and firmer Avatar of that old loose and dubious body?

Even something of that historic device, the balance of power, though now much changed, shifted, disjointed and perilously lopsided, still remains subtly concealed in this form of a novel order. And that element is likely to pronounce itself later on; for where there is no impersonal governing principle and no clear original structure in the international body, its motions must be determined by a balance of interests, and the balance of interests can only be kept reasonably steady by carefully preserving an established balance of power. That was the justification of the old armed order; it is likely to be a necessity of this new system for regulating chaos.

This creation is a realistic practical construction with a very minimum concession to the new idealism: it has been erected by statesmen who have been concerned to legalise the actual facts and organise the actual forces which have emerged from the world-war; a few inconveniently new-born and of a menacing significance have been barred and boycotted, blockaded or pressed out of existence: it is hoped also to secure their system against attack by any resuscitable ghost of the past or violently subversive genius of the future. From that point of view it has been constructed with a remarkable skill and fidelity to present realities, though one may be tempted to think with an insufficient allowance for obscure but already visible potentialities. The correspondence between fact and form is accurate to perfection. Five powers have been the real victors of the war, three of them
central and decisive forces who now actually control the world by their will, and two others who intervened as less powerful subsidiary strengths, but can put in some effective claim and material weight into the future balance of forces. This fact is reproduced in the constitution of the governing body; it is these five who by virtue of their wealth and force are to have in it a permanent voice, the three great ones to strike the major chords and determine the general harmony of the concert, the two others to bring in, as best they can and when they can, minor chords and unessential variations. Then there are the great number of small or weaker nations who have at their command minor material effectives and, though incapable of being principals in any very great conflict may be useful as minor auxiliaries, the free peoples, allies included from the beginning by right, neutrals invited to participate in a settled organisation of peace though they did not throw their weight into the decision of war, enemies, old or new, who may be admitted when they have satisfied more or less onerous or crushing and disabling conditions. These will make the general assembly: some of them will have from time to time an uncertain voice in the governing body; the rest will be the mass, the commons, the general body who will possess some limited amount of actual power and some kind of moral force behind the executive. Labour too has been made by the War a great though as yet incoherent international power, and the League, wishing evidently to be wise in time and make terms with this formidable new fact, recognises at its side Labour in a special separate conference.

But there are also new Asiatic peoples who cannot now be admitted, because they are infants and unripe; there are subject and protected nations for whom the war was not fought and who cannot share in the once hoped-for general freedom, but must trust to the generous and unselfish liberalism of their rulers and protectors; there are African tribes who are the yet unmanufactured raw material of humanity. These are to be left under the old or put under a new control or are to be entrusted to the paternal hands of this or that governing power who will be in the legal style of the new dispensation, not masters and conquerors, — for
in this just and miraculous peace there are no annexations, only rectified arrangements of control and territory,—but trustees, mandatories. A mandate from the League will be the safeguard of these less fortunate peoples. For we are, it seems, about to live in quite a new moralised world in which the general conscience of mankind will be wide awake and effective and the League is there to represent it. As its representative it will take a periodical report of their trust from the trustees,—who also as the great powers of the League will be themselves at once mandatories, leaders and deputies of this same general conscience. All existing forces are represented in just proportions in this very remarkable constitution.

The idealist may find much to object against the perpetuation and hardening of the unideal existent fact on which the system of the League is founded, but undoubtedly that system has a good deal to say for itself, can urge very urgent considerations from the point of view of practical possibility. One indispensable condition of its success is a solid central authority, strong and permanent, capable of enforcing its decisions, and it must be an organ which all nations can accept as the natural head and faithful dynamic expression of the corporate being of mankind. As far as is at all practicable at the moment, here is, it may be said, just such an authority. The international body of mankind is still an amorphous mass, its constituent peoples unaccustomed to act together, heterogeneous by virtue of their various degrees of development, organised power, experience, civilisation: a free general assembly, a parliament of the world, an equal federation of mankind, is out of the question; even an equal federation of free and civilised peoples is likely to be an incoherent and futile body incapable of effective corporate action. What is to enforce and give practicality to the general needs and desires if not the power, influence, authority and, where need is, the strong arm of the great nations and empires acting in concert but with a due regard for the common interests and general voice? Who else are to determine preponderantly the decisions they will have to enforce or can give to them a permanent principle or sustained practical policy? No combination of little American republics
and minor European powers could dictate a world policy to the United States, France and the British Empire or could be allowed to play by the blind rule of a majority with these great interests. But in the League the various constituents of the corporate body are so ranked and related as to give precisely a faithful dynamic expression of it in its present conditions; whatever evolution is necessary can be worked out through a general control and a periodical revision of treaties and relations. In brief, the whole international condition of the world is a chaos that has to be brought into order and shape, and that is a work which cannot be done by an idyllic idealism or an abstract perfection of principles which are not in correspondence with the actualities of things and, if prematurely applied, are likely to bring in a worse confusion, but can only be accomplished by a strong and capable organised Force which will take things as they stand, impose a new system of law and order on this chaos, some firm however imperfect initial framework, and watch over its development with a strict eye on the practical possibilities of progress. On that safe and firm basis a slow but sure and deliberate advance can be made towards a future better law and ideal order. There is another side to the question, but let us suppress it for the moment and give full value and weight to these considerations.

But all the more indispensable does it then become that the principles of the progress to be made shall be recognised from the beginning in the law and constitution of the League, or at least indicated in such a way and so impressed on its system as to ensure that on those lines or towards the fulfilment of those principles its action should proceed and not be diverted to other, baser, reactionary or obstructive uses. The declaration of general principles and their embodiments and safeguards in the democratic constitutions promulgated in the eighteenth century were no barren ideologists’ formularies,—any more than the affirmation of constitutional principles in earlier documents like the Magna Charta,—but laid down the basis on which government and progress must proceed in the new-born order of the world and were at once a signpost and an effective moral guarantee for the assured march of Democracy.
We look in vain in the constitution of the League for any such great guiding principles. The provisions for the diminution of the possibilities of war, the creation of some new small nations and the safety given to those that already existed can hardly be called by that name. There is here no hint of any charter of the international rights and duties of the peoples in a new order making at once for liberty and union. The principle of self-determination over which the later stages of the war were fought has been ruthlessly thrown overboard and swallowed up in the jaws of a large pot-bellied diplomatic transaction, — it may be only for a time like the prophet in the stomach of the whale, but for the nonce there is an almost perfect disappearance. Some infinitesimal shadow of it we see in petty transactions like the arrangement about Schleswig-Holstein, but for the rest the map of the world has been altered very much in the old familiar fashion without any consistent regard to nationality or choice, but rather by the agreement and fiat of armed victorious nations. A famous pronouncement during the war had denounced the theory of trusteeship, that cloak which can cover with so noble a grace the hard reality of domination and exploitation, — things now too gross in their nakedness to be presented undraped to the squeamish moral sense of a modern humanity. But in this after-war system that very theory of trusteeship is glorified and consecrated, though with the gloss of a mandate subject to examination — by a body whose action and deliberation will be controlled by the trustees. Subject nations are still to exist in this world; for the system of mandates is only to be applied where a previous subjection has been abrogated, it is to be applied to some of the Asiatic or African peoples who lay under the uplifted scourge of the now fallen empires; the rest who had the advantage of milder masters, the remaining subject peoples from Ireland to Korea, have no need of any such safeguard!

It may be that all this denial of a too ideal principle of liberty was inevitable; for we must, we are now told, not be in too great a hurry to get from midnight to midday; the law of the times and seasons must be observed, a mitigated darkness must first come and then twilight and then dawn and then the
glad confident morning before we can live in the golden noon of a universalised liberty and justice. But meanwhile what other guiding principle, what embodied idea of law and right, what equitable and equal balance of obligations is to be the firm basis of the new order? We find none, only a machinery for the diminution of the chances of war, not for their removal, by compulsory arbitration, by the threat or actuality of armed force and economic pressure; for the revision of treaties; for the secured possession of colonies, dependencies, markets, frontiers, ports, mandates; for the international discussion and settlement of the conflicting claims of Capital and Labour. There is a system of immediately practicable relations, an attempt to affirm and to secure a new status quo, a provision for minor manipulations and alterations; but there is little actual foundation for a new and nobler world-order. A preparation for it may have been the intention of the institutors, but the fulfilment of their intention is left very much at the mercy of the uncertain chances of the future. The idealism of the founder has so far triumphed as to get some limited form of a League of Nations admitted and put into shape, but at every other point the idealist has gone under and the stamp of the politician and diplomat is over this whole new modern machine,—of the mere practical man with his short sight and his rough and ready methods. It is a leaky and ill-balanced ship launched on waters of tempest and chaos without a chart or compass or sailing instructions.

Well, but in other times devices as rough and unbecoming have been the foundations of great structures, and if this League can be kept in being there may be some chance of getting it suffused with the principles and ideals for whose realisation the vague heart and conscience of mankind, baffled always by its own lax complicities, is beginning to thirst and weary. But to the eye of the critic this new pact would seem to carry in itself the ominous seeds of its own future mutability and perhaps dissolution. For first of all the League is entering into being with a very limited and feeble enthusiasm on its behalf even in the nations which are interested in its maintenance; America does not seem to be in a quite flawless harmony of agreement
with its President in his self-satisfaction over the shapely beauty of his nursling; the world of Labour and socialism is critical, dissatisfied, distrustful, uneasy, simmering over into brief and uncertain but wide-spread and menacing strikes and formidable demands and murmurings. These are not favourable signs. The League will need all the support and hearty acquiescence it can get to overcome the difficulties that it will meet in constructing the world according to its own idea and fashion, a task which will not end but only be just beginning when peace is concluded, and it is doubtful whether it will have what it needs in any but the most grudging measure. Not enthusiastic support, but a sort of muttering acquiescence for want of any chance of a better thing at the moment is the general mood of the world’s peoples whose interests it proposes to manage. A poor starting wind for so momentous a voyage.

But let us suppose the system accepted and under way,—what are the actual facts which will meet it in the future? Its system will stand for a long time to come for the nations conquered in the war as a perpetuation of their downfall, diminution and disgrace; it will be to them a gaoler and inflicter of penalties, a guardian of tasks and payments with an uplifted scourge. It need not have been so, if a generous and equal peace had been made or, better, if apart from all such questions, there had been a peace based not on the will of a conquering might, even though better-minded than the might it conquered, but on clear and undeniable principles, such as the utmost possible self-determination, equal opportunity, equal position for the world’s peoples; that would have been indeed a peace without any other victors or vanquished than vanquished force and wrong and victorious equity. But the leading nations have chosen to impose a diplomatic peace in which the league which imposes it figures as an administrator of criminal justice. The vanquished nations, now for the most part democracies and no longer the old aggressive militarisms which made the war, were, it is said, criminals and breakers of peace and the penalty inflicted is far too light in comparison with their crimes. It may be so in literal terms,—though a criminal justice inflicted by one of two parties
in a quarrel on his beaten opponent and not by an impartial judge is apt rightly or wrongly to be suspect to the mere human reason and at best much of what is called justice is only legalised revenge,—but still it may be that nothing but justice or even less than justice has been done. But that makes no difference to the fact that a number of new democracies, vigorous and intellectual peoples, born to a new life which should have been one of hope and good will to the coming order, will be there inevitably as a source of revolt and disorder, eager to support any change which will remove their burdens, gratify their resentment and heal their festering wounds. They may be held down, kept weak and maimed, even though one of them is laborious, skilful, organised Germany, but that will mean a weakness and an ill-balance in the new order itself, and if they recover strength, it will not be to acquiesce in their inferior place and the perpetual triumph and greatness of their ancient rivals. Only in a legalised system of equal democracies can there be some true chance of the cessation of these jealousies, enmities, recurrent struggles. Otherwise war will break out again or in some other form the old battle continue. An unequal balance can never be a security for a steady and peaceful world-system.

Pass, if this were the only peril of the newly inaugurated system. But this league seems also to stand for a perpetuation of a new status quo to be arrived at by the peace which is being made its foundation. The great powers, it would seem, have arrived at a compact to secure their dominions and holdings against any future menace of diminution. This arrangement is of the nature at once of a balance of power—but with all the dangers of an unequal balance—and of an attempt to perpetuate for ever certain at present preponderating influences and established greatnesses. That attempt is against all the teaching of history and all the perennial movement of Nature; the league which stands committed to it is committed to a jealously guarded insecurity and the preservation of an unstable equilibrium. It is not certain that the constructing powers will themselves remain consistently satisfied with the terms of their compact or able to resist that urge of national and of human destiny which is
greater than any diplomatic arrangement or the wills of govern-ments and statesmen. But even if that unheard-of thing be realised between them, a durable international friendship and alliance, it may serve for a time, but will it serve for a very long time against the world’s urge towards change? Power rots by having and security, and those who are powerful today to impose their will on the nations, may not always keep that force in spite of their bulk and wealth and armed magnitudes. Then there are old sores perpetuated and new sores opened by this arrangement of a hastily made peace of devices and compromises. Whether the Balkan question will be permanently settled is at least dubious; but there will be now the question of a German Bohemia, a particoloured Poland, perhaps a Saar region with its wealth in the possession of a foreign power, an insoluble question of Yugoslav and Italian, a new question of Tyrol, an Irish trouble and a Korean trouble in which the League cannot interfere without deep offence to England and Japan and which yet clamour more and more for a settlement, a Russian chaos. There is a Mahomedan world which will one day have a word to say about the new status quo. There is the whole question of Asia and Africa, which is the most formidable but of which much need not be said, for its issues are patent to every eye. The partition of Africa between a few European powers with all its economic advantages can be no permanent solution. Asia is arising in the surge of an upward wave and cannot always be kept in a condition of weakness, tutelage and vassalage. When the time comes, how will a league mainly of European and American peoples deal with her claims? Will Europe be content to recede from Asia? Will the mandatories be in any haste to determine their mandate? Can there be any modified perpetuation of present conditions which will be at all compatible with an equality between the two continents? These are questions which no imperfect sketch of a league of nations on the existing basis can decide according to its phantasy; only the onward moving world-spirit can give them their answer.

None of these dangers and difficulties are as yet formidable in their immediate incidence, but there is another problem of a
pressing, immediate insistency and menace which touches with its close foreshadowing finger the very life of any new international system and that is the approaching struggle for supremacy between Capital and Labour. This is a far other matter than the clash of conflicting imperialisms in the broad spaces or the wrangle of quarrelsome nationalisms snarling at each other’s heels or tearing each other in the narrower ways of the Earth; for those are questions at most of division of power, territory and economic opportunity on the present basis of society, but this means a questioning of that basis and a shaking of the very foundations of the European world-order. This League is a league of governments, and all these governments are bourgeois monarchies or republics, instruments of a capitalistic system assailed by the tides of socialism. Their policy is to compromise, to concede in detail, but to prolong their own principle so that they may survive and capitalism be still the dominant power of a new mixed semi-socialistic order, very much as the governments which formed the Holy Alliance sought to save the dominance of the old idea of aristocratic monarchy by a compromise with the growing spirit of democracy. What they offer is better and more human conditions for the labourer, even a certain association in the government of the society, but still a second and not a primary place in the scale. This was indeed all to which Labour itself formerly aspired, and it is all to which the rear of its army still looks forward, but it is already ceasing to be the significance of the Labour movement; a new idea has arisen, the dominance, the rule of labour, and it has already formulated itself and captured a great portion of the forces of socialism. It has even established for a while in Russia a new kind of government, a dictatorship of the proletariat, which aspires to effect a rapid transition to another order of society.

Against this novel idea and its force the existing governments are compelled by the very principle of their being to declare war and to struggle against its coming with all the strength at their disposal and strive to mobilise against it whatever faith in existing things still remains in the mind of the peoples. The old order has still no doubt strength enough to crush out of
existence, if it wills, the form which this coming of Demogorgon
has already taken and to make a more or less speedy end of
Russian Bolshevism. The Bolshevist system, isolated in a single
country, weakened by its own initial crudities and revolutionary
violences, struggling fiercely against impracticable odds, may
well be annihilated; but the thing which is behind Bolshevism
and has given it its unexpected virility and vitality, cannot be so
easily conjured or pressed out of being. That thing is the trans-
ference of the basis of society from wealth to labour, from the
power of money to the simple power of the man and his work,
and that cannot be stopped or prevented,—though it may be
for a time put off,—not because labour any more than wealth
is the true basis of society, but because this is the logical and
inevitable outcome of the whole evolution of European society.
The rule of the warrior and aristocrat, the Kshatriya, founded
upon power has given place to the rule of the Vaishyas, the
professional and industrial classes, founded upon wealth and
legalism, and that again must yield to the rule of the Shudra, the
proletariate, founded upon work and association. This change
like the others cannot be accomplished without much strife and
upheaval and there is every sign that its course will be attended
with the shattering violence of revolution.

It is proposed indeed to the new force that it shall work
itself out calmly, slowly, peacefully by the recognised means
of Parliamentarism; but Parliamentarism is passing through a
phase of considerable discredit, and a doubt has arisen in the
minds of the workers whether it is at all a right or possible
means for their object and whether by a reliance upon it they
will not be playing into the hands of their opponents: for Par-
liament is actually a great machine of the propertied classes
and even the Parliamentary socialist tends easily to become a
semi-disguised or a half and half bourgeois. The new order of
society would seem to demand the institution of a new system
of government. If then a new order of society is bound to come
with its inevitable reversal of existing conditions, and still more
if it comes by a revolutionary struggle, how will a system of
a League of Nations based upon existing conditions, a League
not really of nations but of governments, and of governments committed to the maintenance of the old order and using their closer association as a means for combating the new idea which is hostile to their own form of existence, be likely to fare in this earth-shaking or this tornado? It is more likely to disappear than to undergo a gentle transformation, and if it disappears, another system of international comity may replace it, but it will not be a League of Nations.

We will suppose, however, or even trust, that the League, embodying in spite of appearances the best combined statesmanship of the world, circumvents all these perils, weather every storm and leads forward the destinies of mankind in the paths of an at first more or less uneasy, but eventually firmer increasing peace and mutual accommodation. What is it then that it will have at the beginning or in the end actually accomplished? It will have made some beginning of the substitution of a state of law for the older international status which alternated and oscillated between outbreaks of war and an armed peace. That, no doubt, if at all firmly done, will be a great step forward in the known history of human civilisation. For it will mean that what was founded in the unit of the nation centuries ago, will be now at last founded in the society of the nations. But let us not leap too easily at what may well be an unsound parallel. What civilised society has done most effectively from the beginning is to substitute some kind of legalised relation, legalised offence and defence, legalised compensation or revenge for injuries in place of the state of insecure peace and frequent private or tribal warfare in which each man had to claim what he considered to be justice by the aid of his kin or the strength of his own hand. At present the persistent survival of crime is the only remnant of that earlier pre-legal state of natural violence. But for an organised society to deal with the refractory individual is a comparatively facile task; here the units are nations with a complex corporate personality, great masses of men themselves too organised, representing the vital interests, claims, passions of millions of men divided by corporate, powerful and persistent exclusivenesses, hatreds, jealousies, antipathies which the
founding of this would-be all-healing League and new society of peoples finds much acerbated, much more pronounced than in the days before the deluge when a tolerant and easy cosmopolitanism was more in fashion, and which its dispositions seem calculated to deepen and perpetuate rather than to heal and abolish. And it is on this incoherent mass of peoples void of all living principle or urgent will of union that a status of peace and settled law has to be imposed and this in a period of increasing chaos, upheaval and menace of revolution.

The national society succeeded only in proportion as it developed an indivisible unity and a single homogeneous authority which could both legislate, or at least codify and maintain law, and see to the rigorous execution of its settled rules, decrees, and ordinances. Here the work has to be done by an institution which represents no embodied unity, but rather a jamming or stringing together of very strongly separate units, and which does not legislate, but only passes very partial and opportunist special decrees *ad hoc*, and to enforce them has constantly to resort to intimidation, blockade, economic pressure, menace of a wholesale starvation of peoples, menace of violent military occupation, — things which prolong the after-war state of unrest and recoil in their secondary effects upon the countries whose governments are engaged in this singular international pastime. It is not difficult to see that a better system and a better means must be found if the latest strong hope of humanity is to turn out anything more than one other generous illusion of the intellectuals and one other chimerical wave of longing in the vague heart of the peoples.

Even the national society has not been able after so long a time and so much experience to eliminate in its own body the disease of strife between its members, class war, bitter hostility of interests and ideas breaking out at times into bloody clashes, civil wars, sanguinary revolutions or disastrous, grimly obstinate and ruthless economic struggles which are the preparers of an eventual physical conflict. And the reason is not far to seek. Law for all its ermine of pomp and solemn bewigged pretension of dignity was in its origin nothing but the law of the stronger
and the more skilful and successful who imposed their rule on the acquiescent or subjugated rest of the people. It was the decrees of the dominant class which were imposed on the previous mass of existing customs and new-shaped them into the mould of the prevailing idea and interest; Law was itself a regulated and organised Force establishing its own rules of administration and maintaining them by an imminent menace of penalty and coercion. That is the sense of the symbolic sword of Justice, and as for her more mythical balance, a balance is a commercial and artificial sign, not a symbol of either natural or ideal equity, and even so this balance of Justice had for its use only a theoretical or not always even a theoretical equality of weights and measures. Law was often in great measure a system of legalised oppression and exploitation and on its political side has had often enough plainly that stamp, though it has assumed always the solemn face of a sacrosanct order and government and justice.

The history of mankind has been very largely a long struggle to get unjust law changed into justice, — not a mystic justice of an imposed decree and rule “by law established” claiming to be right because it is established, but the intelligible justice of equality and equity. Much has been done, but as much or more still remains to be done, and so long as it is not established, there can be no sure end to civil strife and unrest and revolution. For the injustice of law can only be tolerated so long as there is either in those who suffer by it a torpid blindness or acquiescent submission or else, the desire of equity once awakened, a ready means to their hand of natural and peaceful rectification. And a particular unjust law may indeed be got altered with less of effort and difficulty, but if injustice or, let us say simply, absence of just equality and equity pervades a state of things, a system, then there must be grave trouble and there can be no real equilibrium and peace till it is amended. Thus in modern society strikes and lockouts are its form of civil war, disastrous enough to both sides, but still they are constantly resorted to and cannot be replaced by a better way, because there is no confidence in any possible legal award or “compulsory” arbitration which can be provided for under the existing conditions. The stronger side
relies on the advantage which it enjoys under the established system, the weaker feels that the legalised balance of the State exists by a law which still favours the capitalist interest and the domination of wealth and that at most it can get from this State only inadequate concessions which involve by their inadequacy more numerous struggles in the future. They cling to the strike as their natural weapon and one trustworthy resource. For that reason all ingeminations and exhortations to economic peace and brotherhood are a futile counsel. The only remedy is a better, more equal and more equitable system of society. And this is only a particular instance of a situation common enough in different forms under the present world-order.

The application is evident to the present international attempt and its hopes of a legalised and peaceful human society. The League of Nations has been established by victorious Force, claiming no doubt to be the force of victorious right and justice, but incapable by the vice of its birth of embodying the real non-combatant justice of an equal and impartial equity. Its decrees and acts are based on no ascertainable impersonal principle, but are mainly the decrees, the *sic volo, sic jubeo* of three or four mighty nations. Even if they happen to be just, they have this fatal vice that there is nothing to convince the mind of the losing parties or even the common mind that there is behind them any surety of a general and reliable equity, and as a matter of fact many of them have aroused very generally grave dissatisfaction and hostile criticism. And the Supreme Council, that veiled hieratic autocrat of the situation, does not seem itself to appeal to any distinct higher principles in its action, even when such do actually exist and could be insisted on with force and clarity. At the time of writing, there has been a case of the denudation of a suffering and now half-starved country by the army of a small occupying power—victorious not by its own arms, but by the moral and economic pressure of the League—and the council has very rightly interfered. But it has not done that publicly on grounds that have anything to do with international justice or humanity or even the rudiments of international ethics, such as they are, but on this ground that the property of the
vanquished country is the common spoil, or, let us say, means of compensation of the victors and this one little rapacious ally cannot be allowed to appropriate it all by main force to the detriment of its greater fellow-administrators of a self-regarding justice,—who may even as a result find Hungary thrown as a starving pauper on their hands instead of serving their will as a solvent debtor! If this realistic spirit is to be the spirit of the new international system and that is to persist, its success is likely to be more formidable to humanity than its failure. For it may mean to the suffering portions of mankind the legalisation and perpetuation of intolerable existing injustices for which there could have been a hope of more easy remedy and redress in the previous looser conditions. If this league of nations is to serve and not merely to dominate mankind, if it is to raise and free, as it claims and professes, and not to bind and depress humanity, it must be cast in another mould and animated by another spirit. This age is not like that in which the reign of law was established in individual nations; men are no longer inclined, as then they were, to submit to existing conditions in the idea that they are an inevitable dispensation of nature. The idea of equity, of equality, of common rights has been generalised in the mind of the race, and human society must move henceforward steadily towards its satisfaction on peril of constant unrest and a rising gradation of catastrophe.

That means that the whole spirit and system of the league will have to be remodelled, the initial mistakes of its composition rectified and the defects inherent in its origin got rid of, before it can be brought into real consonance with the nobler hopes or even the pressing needs of the human race. At present it is, to reverse the old phrase, a pouring of an old and very musty wine into showy new bottles,—the old discredited spirit of the diplomacy of concert and balance and the government of the strongest, of the few dominant kingdoms, states and empires. That must disappear in a more just and democratic international system. The evil legacy of the war with its distinctions between “enemy”, allied and friendly nations or more favoured or less favoured peoples, will have to be got out of the system of the
league, for so long as it is there, it will act as a virus which will prevent all healthy growth and functioning. A league of nations which is to bring a real peace and beginning of justice and ordered comity in progress to the world and a secret council of allied governments imposing as best they can their irresponsible will on a troubled and dissatisfied Europe, Asia and Africa are two very different things, and while one lasts, the other cannot be got into being. The haphazard make of the League will have to be remoulded into a thing of plain and candid structure and meaning and made to admit that element of clear principle which it has omitted from its constitution. An equal system of international rights and obligations, just liberties and wholesome necessary restrictions can alone be a sound basis of international law and order. And there can be no other really sound basis of the just and equal liberty of the peoples than that principle of self-determination which was so loudly trumpeted during the war, but of which an opportunist statesmanship has made short work and reduced to a deplorable nullity. A true principle of self-determination is not at all incompatible with international unity and mutual obligation, the two are rather indispensable complements, even as individual liberty in its right sense of a just and sufficient room for healthy self-development and self-determination is not at all incompatible with unity of spirit and mutual obligation between man and man. How to develop it out of present conditions, antipathies, ambitions, grievances, national lusts, jealousies, egoisms is indeed a problem, but it is a problem which will have to be attended to today or tomorrow on peril of worse things. To say that these developments are impossible is to say that a league of nations in the real sense as opposed to a league of some nations for their common benefit, a dominant alliance, is an impossibility. In that case the present institution called by that imposing name can only be an enlarged and more mechanised edition of the old Concert or a latter-day Holy Alliance of the governments and will sooner or later go the way of its predecessors. If that is so, then the sooner we recognise it, the better for all concerned; there will be less of false hopes and misdirected energies with their burden of
disappointment, unrest, irritation and perilous reaction. To go on upon the present lines is to lead straight towards another and greater catastrophe.

To insist on these things is not to discourage unduly the spirit of hope which humanity needs for its progress; it is necessary in order that that hope may not nourish itself on illusions and turn towards misdirecting paths, but may rather see clearly the right conditions of its fulfilment and fix its energy on their realisation. It is a comfortable but a dangerous thing to trust with a facile faith that a bad system will automatically develop into a good thing or that some easy change is bound to come which will make for salvation, as for instance that Europe will evolve true democracy and that the League of Nations, now so imperfectly established, will be made perfect by its better spirit. The usual result of this temper of sanguine acceptance or toleration is that the expected better state makes indeed some ameliorations when it comes, but takes into it too a legacy of the past, much of its obscure spirit and a goodly inheritance of its evils, while it adds to the burden new errors of its own making. Certainly, the thing which was behind this new formation, this league of governments, is bound in some way or other to come; for I take it that a closer system of international life is sooner or later inevitable because it is a necessary outcome of modern conditions, of the now much closer relations and interactions of the life of the human race, and the only alternative is increasing trouble, disorder and ultimate chaos. But this inevitable development may take, according to the way and principle we follow, a better or a worse turn. It may come in the form of a mechanical and oppressive system as false and defective as the industrial civilisation of Europe which in its inflated and monstrous course brought about the present wreck, or it may come in the form and healthy movement of a sounder shaping force which can be made the basis or at least the starting-point for a still greater and more beneficial human progress. No system indeed by its own force can bring about the change that humanity really needs; for that can only come by its growth into the firmly realised possibilities of its own higher nature, and this growth depends on an
inner and not an outer change. But outer changes may at least prepare favourable conditions for that more real amelioration,—or on the contrary they may lead to such conditions that the sword of Kalki can alone purify the earth from the burden of an obstinately Asuric humanity. The choice lies with the race itself; for as it sows, so shall it reap the fruit of its Karma.

And that brings us back to the idea with which we started and with it we may as well close, however remote it may sound to the practical mind of a still materialistic generation. The idea which Europe follows of an outer political and social perfection reposes, as far as it goes, on a truth, but only on one half of the truth and that the lower half of its periphery. A greater side of it is hidden behind the other older idea, still not quite dead in Asia and now strong enough to be born again in Europe, that as with the individual, so with the community of mankind, salvation cannot come by the outer Law alone; for the Law is only an intermediate means intended to impose a rein of stringent obligation and a better standard on the original disorder of our egoistic nature. Salvation for individual or community comes not by the Law but by the Spirit.¹ The conditions of individual and social perfection are indeed the same, freedom and unity; the two things are complements and to follow one at the expense of the other is a vain heresy. But real unity cannot come to the race, until man surmounting his egoistic nature is one in heart and spirit with man and real freedom cannot be till he is free from his own lower nature and finds the force of the truth which has been so vainly taught by the saints and sages that the fullness of his perfected individuality is one thing with a universality by which he can embrace all mankind in his heart, mind and spirit. But at present individuals and nations are equally remote from accepting any such inner mantra of unity and we can only hope at most that the best will increasingly turn their minds in that direction and create again and this time with a newer and more luminous insistence a higher standard of human aspiration. Till then jarring leagues of nations and some mechanical dissoluble

¹ We in India have also yet to realise that truth — not by the Shastra, but by the Atman.
federation of the race must serve our turn for practice and for a far-off expectation. But only then can the dream of a golden age of a true communal living become feasible and be founded on a spiritual and therefore a real reign of freedom and unity when the race learns to turn its eyes inward and not any longer these things, but mankind, the people of God and a soul and body of the Divine, becomes the ideal of our perfection.