

TIME

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FOREIGN NEWS

THE LEAGUE

Vox, et Praeterea Nihil

One Hamilton Foley has incorporated ex-President Woodrow Wilson's speeches in defence of the League of Nations into one small, neat volume.* He has, moreover, added thereto Mr. Wilson's address to the representatives of those nations assembled in Paris to impose peace terms upon those nations vanquished in the World War; a number of criticisms of the League from the now Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Taft, ex-Secretary of State Elihu Root. These latter, the editor of this book asserts, are "not generally known to students and to critics of the Covenant of the League of Nations."

It may be said with justifiable optimism that Mr. Wilson's work in the cause of the League of Nations is well known to the world. Mr. Wilson was to a large extent the originator of the League as it is now working at Geneva, although he took care to say that the idea of a league had been conceived before his time: "I wish that I could claim the great distinction of having invented this great idea, but it is a great idea which has been growing in the minds of all generous men for several generations. Several generations? Why, it has been the dream of the friends of humanity through all the ages. . . ."

Although the intentions of Mr. Wilson regarding the League were and are as sterling in quality as they were integral in composition, it remains in fact that Mr. Wilson is probably the most misunderstood man in the world. His speeches, as set forth in Mr. Foley's book, were delivered to the Foreign Relations Committee of the U. S. Senate and in 37 addresses to the people of the U. S. in his western tour of 1919, after he had returned from Paris for the second time. In these speeches Mr. Wilson, with innate altruism, explained the pros and cons of this heritage of the 18th Century philosophers, and categorically reasoned why and for what purpose the U. S. should enter into this great bond of peace, the hall-mark of Utopian endeavor. What he said is well known—too well known to need elucidation or exemplification; but what is more important is that his stirring appeals have as yet been unrewarded, and, apparently, his high aspirations for the League of Nations are, in Homer's words, "late, late in fulfillment."

The reasons for publishing this

* WOODROW WILSON'S CASE FOR THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS—Hamilton Foley—Princeton University Press (\$1.75).

book at the present time are obscure. In 1919 and part of 1920 these speeches were extremely pertinent to the general situation, but in four years the situation has changed. The Treaty of Versailles was overthrown by the U. S. Congress and separate treaties signed with the hostile belligerent Powers. In the light of these changes the Wilson speeches are shorn of much of their appeal and usefulness. The League itself has been explained in many books, and naturally from many useful points of view. The value of this book, whittled down to the pith, lies in its appeal to scholarship. Students will certainly find in it a useful, concise and handy reference to Mr. Wilson's utterances on the League of Nations.

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The two movements in the modern world which have aimed at stabilizing peace were undertaken at the Congress of Vienna (1814-15) and at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. One of the foremost men in promoting peace at Vienna was Tsar Alexander I (1801-25); one of the foremost at Paris was Woodrow Wilson, President of the U. S. Both these men were high-minded idealists (considering, in Tsar Alexander's case, only the phase of the peace deliberations, because he was in his later years as despotic as had been his forbears).

The Holy Alliance was formed on the initiative of Alexander I. This alliance was formed principally upon moral and religious conviction that war was wrong. The signatories to the Alliance were to bind themselves "to remain united by the bonds of true and indissoluble fraternity; to assist each other on all occasions and in all places; to treat their subjects as members of a single Christian nation; to govern in conformity with the teachings of Christ." The Alliance failed because the parties thereto found themselves in opposition to created enemies. Thereafter it became an instrument for bolstering up absolutism and in influence and practical good it remained in reality, to use the words of Metternich, "a sonorous nothing."

Woodrow Wilson was the moving spirit for the League of Nations in 1919, and there can be no doubt that the League was founded upon moral, thereby connoting religious, principles. The rôle of Mr. Wilson at Paris in 1919 was analogous to that of Tsar Alexander I at Vienna in 1815. Recent events in the League have shown a marked analogy to the fate of the idealistic Holy Alliance. The question of the hour is: Will the U. S. strengthen the League or is it to become a "sonorous nothing?"