A LIVING ARGUMENT FOR THE LEAGUE

Envoy Extraordinary and Ambassador plenipotentiary of fifty-two nations, secon of one of the oldest and most illustrious families in the British peerage, Lord Robert Cecil comes to these shores to find out why we reject the League and to try to persuade us to change our minds. "The Abraham Lincoln of England," the "soul of the League of Nations," a man with "one foot in the Middle Ages and one in the office of the League"—so he has been from time to time characterized. "Lord Robert Cecil, in his person, in his sincerity, and his fervor, which is something like that of the early Christians, is probably," a Republican editor admits, "the finest and most potent argument for the League of Nations that America is ever likely to see."

With "the League of Nations tied firmly around his neck," our courageous guest plunges "into the seas of American public opinion," which, the Baltimore News remarks, "is an operation that might prove embarrassing to an even more hardened genius than that of Lord Robert."

Lord Robert is hardly off the ship when an Irish Justice of the New York State Supreme Court tells us that another representative of English "special privilege and caste domination" is here "to sell us another gold brick." The visit of "this titled instructor for American democracy," says Senator James A. Reed (Dem., Mo.), "is an occasion for just resentment as a piece of sheer impudence." Mr. Hearst's New York American comes out with a large-type editorial warning against this "foreign propagandist" who comes to urge American voters to accept a policy and a Covenant "they have heretofore ejected."

"What greater interference with the domestic politics of the American people can be imagined? What more defiant challenge to the right of a nation to keep foreign hands out of its individual affairs? What more injurious offense against the supremacy of a sovereign people in the choice of their own policies and in the determination of their own destiny?"

Hardly less worried is Mr. Munsey's New York Herald (Rep.), which calls attention to the fact that Republicans favoring our entrance into the World Court have insisted that the relation between this Court and the League is very filmy, almost negligible. But here is Lord Robert speaking of the League "and its subsidiary, the Court of International Justice," and how will this "set on the stomachs of the Republican voters who fought the League of Nations in 1920 and who voted against the League of Nations in 1920 in casting their votes for Warren G. Harding?"

And there are a number of Republican papers, courteous and friendly enough to Lord Robert, which, nevertheless, would like to tell him that his travels and his arguments are not very likely to advance his cause. The Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegram finds plenty of "reason to believe that American sentiment toward the League, no matter how constituted, is even colder now than it was a few years ago." "The League will have to try some other scheme for inveigling us into its toils," comments the Rochester Post Express: "Lord Cecil the Hermit will get a hearing in the United States, but his crusade will be a failure; he will go home without having aroused the slightest enthusiasm among those who are already enthusiastic for the League."

To Lord Robert's plea that the United States should "share in the task of erecting safeguards against war," the Washington Post, generally believed to be close to the Administration, replies that " Americans believe that the first decisive step toward the realization of a genuine association of nations is the refusal of the United States to involve itself in the fallacious League of Nations."

One of Lord Robert's preposterous reasons for coming to these shores is to find out why the people of this country object to going into the League. Here the newspapers are not unwilling to inform him. Some of the "real grounds" of American opposition to the League are noted by the New York Tribune for Lord Robert's benefit. In the first place, Article X has no place in the picture of a League ruling by public opinion painted by Lord Robert. Then "why let it remain?" Next, "the very name of the League is a handicap in many American eyes," the word "league" having "a connotation of binding obligation which is unfortunate, given the state of the American mind." "This is obviously not a fatal objection, but it must be stated to secure any complete understanding of the American opposition." The Tribune also thinks that much American criticism could be met by such a reorganization of the League as to allow for the handling of purely European problems by European members and of American problems by American members, the Association concerning itself only with "such world-wide problems as the opium question." Lord Robert, concludes The Tribune, "is at his best when he speaks of the uses of conference and the habits of peace and mutual understanding which it can breed. It is to such a body of permanent discussion and agreement that America may yet be led."

This characterization of Lord Robert Cecil's arguments may
be naturally followed by a quotation from his first utterances in this country. He left England on March 21, arrived in New York on the 27th, and at once plunged into the series of addresses and interviews which will keep him busy for the rest of this month and will take him as far north as Ottawa, as far west as Des Moines, and as far south at Louisville. One of the first things he told newspaper interviewers was that the League is now functioning nicely, having "already settled three or four very serious international disputes in Europe." On April 2 he defined the League before a New York audience as "a system of international cooperation and conference, without coercion, without force, without any interference with the sovereignty and complete independence of any of the states which are its members." He added that "if it partakes even remotely of the nature of a superstate, then by all means let it be amended." The League, said Sir Robert emphatically—and he repeated this thought in subsequent utterances—"depends not on force and coercion, but on public opinion made effective in the open discussions in the Assembly and consultations of the Council." In reply to questions the crusader for the League said that the present members "would not display any pettifogging spirit" if the United States wanted to enter the League with reservations. Lord Robert would like to see two changes in the Covenant, first—and here he lines up with Senator Borah—to include some "definite declaration in favor of the abolition of war," and secondly, to expand the League's membership to bring in all important nations. In another speech Lord Robert observed that when critics of the League cease saying that it is ineffectual because it "has no teeth" or "has no big stick," "they object to it because it is a superstate liable to be tyrannical." The speaker had an answer for each criticism. In the first place—

"The truth is that the so-called big stick is one of the least powerful agencies in the world. You can never change opinion by force when you are dealing with a virile people. You will never find that any great movement for the benefit of humanity has been forwarded by war; it is carried along by the same moral and intellectual appeal on which the League of Nations must inevitably rely."

And as for that "superstate"—

"The League can be a useful body without being a superstate. How can it be a superstate when it only asks nations to come and discuss in the open their differences, appealing to the enlightened consciousness of mankind? ... There is no provision anywhere in the Covenant that any nation shall send troops at any time anywhere except under its full consent and approval."

In contrast to the anti-League papers' prediction of hard sledding for the Cecile mission, we find others more friendly to the League, believing with the Philadelphia Public Ledger (Ind.) that the distinguished visitor will find "a field prepared for his sowing." To-day, says the Brooklyn Eagle (Dem.), "the passions and prejudices which politicians stir up against the League of Nations are distinctly subsiding," and "the demand for greater participation in world affairs is coming from many quarters." The Harding-Hughes swing toward the World Court and other League agencies is noted by the New York World, which also sees "the advocates of outright isolation declining steadily in numbers and in influence." "What the League has already accomplished has brought home to a good many former opponents of a 'wicked league' the thought that perhaps there is hope in the League after all," suggests the New York Evening Post. Due to many causes, "there is a growing conviction in this country that the time has come for America to act," we read in the Buffalo Evening News. While "it is not probable that the League of Nations per se will be an issue in the 1924 presidential campaign," it does seem to the Atlanta Constitution (Dem.) that "world markets for American products, supremacy of American ships on the seas, international trading, all of which can be produced only by international amity, will be issues." To the independent New York Journal of Commerce "it seems more and more nearly inevitable as the year 1924 approaches that one of the chief, if not the leading, issues in the campaign should be the League of Nations and our relation to that organization." The New York daily calls for a fair and square threshing out of this issue and concludes that "we ought to become members of the League upon some proper and self-respecting basis." Out in the Middle West the Lincoln (Neb.) Star (Ind.) sees an entirely new line-up on the League of Nations issue in 1924, with the West and the farmers turning to the League side. And it quotes Dr. H. A. Atkinson of the Church Peace Union as saying after a Western speaking trip:

"The Western farmers realize their prosperity depends on opening the markets of Europe, and they are ready to accept the League or any other international arrangement that would stabilize foreign conditions and improve our foreign trade."