During the past two weeks, meetings of nineteen men have been held in Colonel House's room on the third floor of the Hotel Crillon, the workshop of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. There the Commission on the League of Nations drew up its Covenant.

There is nothing particularly impressive about Room 351. It is the kind of reception room that may be found in many a French hotel. It is large, high and decorated in the rather elaborate French style. But whatever its appearance may be while it is being used for everyday purposes, it assumed a wholly different look during the meetings of the Commission. In the center of the room, a big round table covered with red cloth. Around the table, nineteen chairs for the nineteen members of the Commission. Slightly behind yet scattered through this circle of seats, a number of other chairs for French and English translators. In the corners, three or four desks, and around the walls occasional chairs for any secretaries whom the members might care to bring with them. All in all, the tables might have been laid for a meeting of the Cabinet or an American board of directors.

In this room the Commission met ten times during eleven days. They came together in the morning, afternoon or evening at hours which would not conflict with the program of the Peace Conference itself whose work envisaged their own, or with that of the Supreme War Council, then
engaged upon pressing questions relating to the renewal of the Armistice. It might be figured out that the meetings averaged three hours in length; but it is hardly appropriate to speak of averages in this connection. No time was set by the Commission for the termination of the day's work. There was a job to be done, and a man's own time was a secondary consideration. Nobody looked at the clock.

It appears inconceivable that a constitution of the League of Nations could have been drawn in thirty hours. It was done, but the bald statement is misleading, for it fails to take certain things into account. It says nothing of a single expedient by which the task of the Commission was cut clearly in half. Whether one spoke in English or in French, it made no difference. As he talked there might be heard the low hum of interpreters translating his remarks word by word and phrase by phrase. Every moment of the thirty hours was made to work, and no time was lost in the slow but prevailing process of retranslation.

It fails likewise to reckon in all the thought which had previously been given to the subject. Each one of the statesmen who sat around the table had formulated definite ideas on the subject, and came to the conferences with an illuminated and active mind. Even before America's entry into the war, President Wilson had stood before the Senate and had advocated the formation of a League of Nations. During the war he had developed his plan in long conversations
with his closest advisors. After the Armistice he had come to Europe, the first President to leave the United States, to urge the consideration of the League as the first and basic problem of the Peace. Colonel House sat beside him at the table.

Lord Robert Cecil with his scholarly mind, his practical sense and his large vision was ably seconded in presenting the point of view of the British Empire by General Smuts, the great Boer leader of other days, a member of the British War Council and the author of a widely read pamphlet on the League idea. Leon Bourgeois, well advanced in years of service at the Hague Conferences in the interests of peace, had with him Larnaude, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the Paris School of Law. Orlando, Italy's vivid prime minister and an eminent jurist as well, had Senator Scialoja as his colleague in expressing the mind of the Government at Rome; while Baron Makino, Japanese Foreign Minister, and Viscount Chinda, her ambassador at London, contributed the keen and quiet opinion of their Far-Eastern country.

Though these five Powers were each represented by two members on the Commission, its deliberations were not dominated by their views. There also sat down to the table Hymans, the Belgian Foreign Minister; Senator Pessoa of Brazil; V. K. Wellington Koo, China's Minister at Washington; Kramarz, Prime Minister of the Czecho-Slovak Republic; Venizelos, Prime Minister of Greece; Dnowski, President of the Polish National Committee; Jayme Batalha Reis, Portugese
Minister to Petrograd; Diamandy, Minister Plenipotentiary of Roumania, and Vesnitch, Serbian Minister at Paris. They included representatives of the Far East, South America and the oldest and the newest States of Europe. This striking group of statesmen, so keenly interested that they presented an unbroken record of attendance at the meetings, contributed to the discussions a force and vision that rivalled that of the greater Powers.

The meetings were business-like to a degree. The members invariably came together on the hour, exchanged a word of greeting as they made their way to their seats, took the documents of the day out of their portfolios, and proceeded with the next article. Each of them found on the table before him all new papers upon which discussion might depend. Every day, as the Commission made progress through the draft, there was laid at each place a revised copy indicating just what had been accomplished. On the day before, if there were amendments to be proposed by any member, he saw to it that they were typewritten and distributed in advance so that each of his colleagues might examine their merits in advance.

The meetings were marked by extreme simplicity. Diplomatic dress had disappeared with the diplomacy of the past. Each man wore what was convenient - dinner-coat, morning-coat or business suit - and the business suit prevailed. There was none of that sense of the overwhelming
significance of the task which is sometimes the death of decision. They went about the matter in a common-place way.

There were no orations. There was no spinning out of useless technical distinctions. Plain speaking prevailed. From the first it was agreed that the meetings should consist of informal interchanges of ideas of which no stenographic report was to be kept. In fact, it was not until the third meeting that Secretaries were named, and even then with instructions to record only amendments proposed, conclusions reached, and a brief analysis of the arguments in order that the trend of thought might be clear. The men wanted to think aloud. Their work was one which called for the frankest and freest examination of all phases of the project. They wanted to shake off the reticence which is provoked by the presence of the court-stenographer. They gave up the privilege of perpetuating their words in order that they might speak with absolute freedom.

President Wilson presided over every meeting except the last. He induced discussion where it was needed. He checked it when it ran too far or became involved in technicalities. He was sympathetic toward every view put forward. He was decisive when he spoke for the United States. Throughout the meetings he secured the delicate balance of practical good sense. At one moment when imagination had lead the Commission far into the future, a smile came over his face as he remarked, "Gentlemen, I have no doubt that the next
generation will be made up of men as intelligent as you or I, and I think we can trust the League to manage its own affairs." And the Commission came back to the thing at hand.

The first meeting, that of the 3rd of February, was very brief. The Commission came together; the President spoke a few words and laid before them a draft plan which they agreed to use as the basis of discussion. So day after day the Draft was held up to the light and criticised and amplified. On the evening of February 12th, at the end of the eighth meeting, the first reading was completed.

Though the project emerged unchanged in principle, the draft had been altered in many details and there were before the Commission various proposed amendments and changes in phraseology. It was decided to put the Covenant into the hands of a Drafting Committee composed of MM. Larbaude, Lord Robert Cecil, Venizelos and Vesnitch for a thorough overhauling.

Late the following evening their work was finished, and the printing press was busy all through the night so that the amended draft might be on the table the next morning. In addition to the satisfaction of a job well done, the American soldiers who set the type and corrected proof and ran the press will treasure the letter of thanks which the President sent them before he sailed. The second reading began on Thursday at ten o'clock, but by one only
the first twelve Articles had been finally adopted. Perhaps with the assurance that the 13th could not fail to mark another momentous event, the President excused himself and left to attend a critical meeting of the Supreme War Council that afternoon at the Quai d'Orsay.

The Commission resumed their work at 3:30 in the afternoon under the leadership of Lord Robert Cecil. One by one they took up the remaining Articles; one by one they were passed upon. At 7:48 Lord Robert, sitting low in his chair and holding the lapels of his coat, read the Twenty-sixth Article:

"Amendments to this Covenant will take effect when ratified by the States whose representatives compose the Executive Council and by three-fourths of the States whose representatives compose the Body of Delegates."

"Is there any objection to this Article?" He waited a moment. "If not, it is adopted. Gentlemen, our work is done. The President of the United States will report our conclusions to a plenary session of the Conference tomorrow."

They left the room.