

THE JUBILEE  
OF THE  
International Arbitration  
League.

ABOUT THE LEAGUE AND ITS  
FOUNDER.



INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION LEAGUE,  
39, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.1.

## FIFTY YEARS' RETROSPECT.

The history of the International Arbitration League is the simple story of a workmen's enterprise for Peace. Without the least class bias, its affairs have been mainly in the hands of men belonging to the working classes, and usually active members of Trade Unions. From the earliest days to the present this has been a feature of the League, and its value to the cause it serves has been recognised by many distinguished men outside the ranks of Labour, who have generously helped it with money.

### THE FOUNDER.

William Randal Cremer, the Founder of the International Arbitration League, was born of humble parents in the little Hampshire town of Fareham, on March 18th, 1828. It was in what has been aptly called the Hungry Forties that he commenced to earn a few shillings a week, when the 21b. loaf cost 8d. During a long life he never tired of warning his fellow countrymen against any return to the fiscal system which largely brought about such a state of affairs.

Apprenticed to the trade of a carpenter, he went to London as a journeyman in 1852, and seven years later he is found taking an active part in the nine hours' movement. He was an original member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, but soon afterwards seceded and became a member of the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners, and remained a paying member till his death.

Before he came to the work of his life he had a useful preparation as a politician and social reformer. He acted as secretary of the Workmen's Committee on behalf of the Northern States in the American Civil War, became secretary of the historic body known as the International, helped to organise the reception to Garibaldi in London, was a leading figure on the Executive of the Reform League, and unsuccessfully contested Warwick twice as a Parliamentary candidate.

### BIRTH OF THE LEAGUE.

The International Arbitration League owes its origin to a meeting called by Cremer on July 21st, 1870, although that was not its title until 18 years afterwards. It was first known as the Workmen's Peace Committee, and underwent several changes of name. From the beginning until his death, in 1908, Cremer was Secretary of the League.

Amongst those who were associated with it at its birth were many of the best known men in the Trade Union world and the political life of that day: George Odger, the Radical shoemaker; Mottershead, the Spitalfields weaver; Guile, the able general

secretary of the Friendly Society of Ironfounders; Benjamin Lucraft, an original member of the London School Board; and a number of other leaders of public opinion.

It is worthy of note that there are now three members of the Council of the League, each of them taking an active part in its business, who were amongst these pioneers—Mr G. Procter and Mr. A. Flint, both

members from the first, and Mr. C. Greedy, whose connection began but a year later.

The League was not long without an official organ, for in 1872 the first number of the " Arbitrator " appeared, and it still continues to be a useful medium for the spread of the League's principles.

#### SOME OF THE OFFICERS.

The League has been particularly fortunate in retaining its officers for a long period. Up to its Jubilee, for instance, it had only had two Presidents The first was Mr. Edmond Beales, the President of the Reform League, a high-handed man of the middle class, who died in 1882. He was followed by Mr. Thomas Burt, who, happily, is still with us and continues to hold the position. As is well known, he was for many years the trusted leader of the Northumberland miners, and one of the first workmen to enter the House of Commons, in which he remained long enough to become its " Father," retiring in 1918.

For 38 years Mr. Howard Evans acted as Chairman of the Council of the League, and for all those years, and longer, he was the right-hand man of Cremer. Howard Evans wrote " Our Old Nobility," a favourite text-book of eager Radicals, and he was one of Joseph Arch's lieutenants in his promising rural revival. An able journalist, he was for some years editor of the official organ of the Liberation Society His successor in the Chairmanship, Mr John Morgan, was a trusted friend of Cremer, and was called to the chair by the unanimous vote of the Council. Mr. Howard Evans also acted as Treasurer, a position now held with much acceptance by Mr. Paul Descours.

#### AIMS OF THE LEAGUE.

Simplicity has been throughout its history the characteristic of the League's aims. It has not encumbered itself with doctrinaire views, but consistently urged arbitration as a substitute for war. Before it was a year old it framed a constitution which welcomed all who accepted the simple proposition that war between civilised nations was unnecessary, and that means could be devised to settle international disputes more equitably by the process of law than by the sword. That remains to this day the only test of association with the League.

#### LEAGUE OF NATIONS ANTICIPATED.

Cremer and his colleagues were men of affairs, and they early began their constructive work for Peace. In a Manifesto of the League, issued in 1871 and written by Howard Evans, occurs this passage: "We are not fanatic dreamers; we are not Utopian theorists . . . we are practical politicians, and we have calculated the opposing forces. We have measured the obstacles abroad and at home, and are confident that, sooner or later, a substitute must and will be found for war." After 50 years this description of the men who have controlled the policy of the League holds good.

Within eight months of the initial meeting the League had to its credit a modest but practical plan for the creation of an international authority, a not unworthy forerunner of the Covenant of the League of Nations, now, happily, an accomplished fact. There is a close

resemblance in some of the operative clauses of this scheme and the institution brought into existence at Paris.

A High Court of Nations was the name given to the earlier plan. Its preamble proclaimed the failure of armaments to keep the peace of the world; all separate and independent States were to have an equal number of representatives; a code of international law was to be drawn up; the jurisdiction of the Court was to be confined to the external relations of States; and a defaulting State was to be internationally outlawed, diplomatic and commercial intercourse being altogether suspended. In the Covenant of the League of Nations several of these features find a place.

#### SOME OF THE LEAGUE'S WORK.

Much good work has been done in France, the democratic government of which appealed strongly to Cremer and his co-workers. Meetings were held in Paris from time to time, and these undoubtedly contributed to the better relations which ultimately were brought about.

In Germany Cremer was less fortunate in his efforts to popularise international arbitration, largely due to the autocratic methods of the ruling authorities.

Probably it was in his attempts to promote an Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty that Cremer did his best work. In the first year of its existence the League was alive to the supreme importance of this question, when a resolution was passed congratulating Mr. C. Sumner on his Memorandum to the Senate in favour of a High Court of Arbitration, and three years later similar action was taken in connection with a like motion in the House of Representatives by Mr. Boardman. Anglo-American co-operation is a tradition of the League.

This interest in the question was followed up later, and two Memorials from Members of Parliament were presented to President Cleveland—one in 1887 and the other in 1895. Both urged the conclusion of an agreement between the two countries whereby reason would have taken the place of force in the adjustment of any dispute which might arise. On each occasion the principles

embodied in these Memorials found much favour on the other side of the Atlantic—indeed, in 1897 the Treaty only failed to pass the Senate because the majority was not large enough to secure the required two-thirds vote. Much time and money were spent by the League and its Secretary in these attempts to give to the world an Anglo-American lead towards arbitration, the harvest of which was to be reaped later, the Bryan Treaty being the richest of the results of these and other endeavours.

#### CREMER AND THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION.

Not only did William Randal Cremer found the International Arbitration League, but he initiated the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a body which seeks to do a similar work as the League in the Parliamentary sphere. Membership is confined to those who belong to Legislative Assemblies, with a few ex-members who have been elected

by reason of special services. From a mere handful the Union has grown until in 1914 no less than 3,500 members, belonging to 23 different Parliaments, were enrolled. Cremer acted as hon. secretary of the British Group until his death, and his successor holds the same post. Without any official connection, the League has always been in close touch with the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

#### THE CREMER TRUST FUND.

In 1903 the full Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Cremer, amounting to nearly £8,000, which was a striking tribute to his world-wide reputation as a worker for international peace. With a rare self-denial, he devoted the entire sum to the endowment of the League he had formed and for whose cause he had so long striven. The late Mr. Andrew Carnegie was so struck with Cremer's act that he gave £1,000 to be added to the fund.

So that the money thus set apart for the work of the League should be used for the purpose intended, the Cremer Trust Fund was founded and placed in the hands of trustees, reliable men selected by Cremer himself.

One of the conditions of the Trust Deed is that there must be raised each year a certain sum over and above the income from the endowment, otherwise the League forfeits the right to receive anything from the Cremer Trustees. The object of this provision was to prevent the League becoming a stagnant concern—a very laudable one, but it means that outside financial support is a continual necessity of its existence.

#### AFTER CREMER'S DEATH.

On July 22nd, 1908, Sir Randal Cremer (who had been knighted in 1907 by King Edward VII.) passed away in his 81st year, and was succeeded by Mr. Fred Maddison, who was at the time M.P. for Burnley. Some time before his death Cremer expressed a wish that he should follow him, and Mr. Maddison was actually elected by the Council as prospective Secretary, this decision being endorsed at a meeting called for the purpose after Cremer had passed away.

Mr. Maddison's first task was to organise a Labour deputation to Germany to present a fraternal address to the workers there, the drafting of which was the last task performed by Cremer as Secretary of the League. It turned out a great success, there being two meetings held in Berlin. The first was organised by the Social Democrats, at which there were over 20,000 people, and at the second, held under the auspices of the Hirsch-Duncker Group of Trade Unions, there was a crowded attendance, though necessarily much smaller in numbers than the earlier gathering. At both meetings the address was unanimously accepted.

Some time afterwards a return visit to London was paid by a number of German Trade Unionists, and fraternal greetings were exchanged.

Just before the war a meeting was held at The Hague and Dutch friends were entertained in London.

The League took an active part in the movement, headed by the late

Sir Frank Lascelles, to promote an Anglo-German understanding, and, though it was frustrated by the machinations of the military caste, the League is hoping to renew its efforts in the same direction in Germany.

Intercourse with the peoples of other nations is part of the recognised work of the League, and, as occasion serves, it will be continued. Since Cremer's earlier activities, however, circumstances have changed considerably. In France, for instances, the kind of propaganda he carried on is no longer necessary, or even possible. But other fields of endeavour remain to be cultivated, the most urgent of all being Germany.

Each generation has its own peculiar problems, and thus the League has had to concentrate on regular educational work, which is done to a larger extent than ever before. The League has always had its own special position amongst Peace organisations, and this was strikingly brought out during the war, throughout the whole period of which it carried on an active educational campaign on behalf of a sound internationalism.

Fifty years ago Cremer and a band of workmen declared to their countrymen that a law-governed world was possible. The League of Nations is the embodiment of that great idea, and the task devolves on their successors to help create that volume of informed public opinion and goodwill without which it can never become a real League of the Peoples. This they are now doing to the best of their ability.

March 18th, 1920.

*"Sir Randal Cremer: His Life and Work," by Howard Evans, originally published at 5s., can now be had at 1s 6d, post free, from the office of the International Arbitration League, 39, Victoria Street, London, S.W. 1.*

# International Arbitration League

(FOUNDED BY WILLIAM RANDAL CREMER IN 1870),

39, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W. 1.

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