

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN HISTORY

THERE has probably never been a time in human history in which verbal homage has not been paid to the blessings of peace; and no conqueror has been so warlike but he has professed it his ultimate object. Even Napoleon was fond of expounding at St. Helena his life-long plan for perpetual peace. Men have only differed over the means of securing it. To the conqueror the obvious means have always seemed to be the conquest of his enemies and the supremacy of his will; and sometimes peace has been secured in this way. Alexander the Great nearly established it for a brief moment before his death, and Rome succeeded by means of her Empire in maintaining peace, except for border and occasional civil wars, throughout the civilized world for centuries. That peace haunted the Middle Ages, and the Papacy—‘the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting enthroned on the ruins thereof’—sought to maintain it by its spiritual authority. But the decline of the Catholic ideal of unity in the civilized world, and the rise of the independent national State which brought the Middle Ages to a close, banished perhaps for ever