



Eric Drummond and his Legacies

**The League of Nations and
the Beginnings of Global Governance**

DAVID MACFADYEN, MICHAEL D. V. DAVIES,
MARILYN NORAH CARR AND JOHN BURLEY

UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE



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Understanding Governance

ISBN 978-3-030-04731-3

ISBN 978-3-030-04732-0 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-04732-0>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018962255

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There is also that immense body of doctrine and procedure, which was brought into being amid high hopes after the First World War, as the League of Nations.

The League of Nations did not fail because of its principles or conceptions. It failed because these principles were deserted by those States who had brought it into being. It failed because the Governments of those days feared to face the facts and act while time remained. This disaster must not be repeated. There is, therefore, much knowledge and material with which to build ...

* * *

Winston S. Churchill
Zurich, 19 September 1946

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A commitment to assess Drummond's legacy was made in 2014 in Edinburgh at a meeting of former International Civil Servants. Two of those present (David Macfadyen and Michael Davies) began, with colleagues Roger Eggleston and Marilyn Carr in England and Jane Brooks in Switzerland, to research the subject. In May 2015, Roger and Jane were obliged to withdraw. We gratefully appreciate their contributions. John Burley then joined us from Geneva.

Foremost among those we thank is the Drummond family, particularly Viscount Strathallan, great-grandson of Sir Eric, who kindly granted access to the family papers.

Three academics provided advice, particularly at early stages, and the authors are grateful to Prof. Susan Pedersen of Columbia University for her help with comments and sources; to Prof. Christian Tams of the University of Glasgow; and to Prof. Davide Rodogno of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva.

We appreciate the support of the British Association of Former UN Civil Servants, its Chair Robert England, its former President Edward Mortimer and, especially, the practical help of Dorothy Halvorsen in translating from Norwegian.

We received invaluable help from Joan Davies, who meticulously read each chapter in draft. The Caledonian Club and the International Maritime Organization kindly provided meeting spaces in London.

We are particularly grateful for the help received from the following archivists and librarians:

Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert, Sigrun Habermann-Box and Jacques Oberson, League of Nations Archives, United Nations, Geneva,
Martine Basset, Library of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva,
David Brown and Kirsteen Mulhearn, National Records of Scotland,
Alison Metcalfe and Fiona Laing, National Library of Scotland,
Lara Haggerty and Jill Dye, Innerpefferay Library, Crieff, Scotland,
Richard McKenzie, Black Watch Museum, Perth, Scotland,
Hannah Lowry and Jamie Carstairs, University of Bristol Library, Special Collections,
Elizabeth Martin and colleagues, Nuffield College Library, Oxford,
Daniel Payne, London School of Economics Library,
Julia Schmidt, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge,
Scott S. Taylor, Manuscripts Archivist, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.,
Genevieve Coyle, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University.

Former UN system staff enthusiastically supported our work, notably Jamshid Anvar, Gérard Biraud, Patricio Civili, Ed Dommen, Antonio Donini, Erica Feller, Philippe Hein, Bill Jackson, Erik Jensen, Richard Jolly, Robert Johnston, Matthew Kahane, Ian Kinniburgh, Ünür Kirdar, John Mathiason, Bertrand Ramcharan, Paul Rayment, Margaret Snyder, Manuela Tortora, Ralph Zacklin and Michael Zammit Cutajar.

Many other individuals have helped and encouraged us along the way, especially Dr. Stefan Slater, Dr. John Forrester and Iain Milne of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Prof. Patricia Clavin, Bridget Dommen, Prof. Marguerite Dupree, Robert Enholm, Lady Maria Hambleden, Prof. Robert Kolb, Joelle Kuntz, Marc Limon, Dr. Andrew Mackenzie, Prof. Craig Murphy, Amparo Musteli-Pla, Dr. Jessica Reinisch, Torild Skard and Rosalba Varallo Recchia.

Not least in these appreciations is our gratitude to our spouses Patrica, Joan and Françoise for their backing over the past five years.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACTWC	Advisory Commission on Trafficking in Women and Children, League of Nations
AMTE	Allied Maritime Transport Executive
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
BL	British Library
CAME	Conference of Allied Ministers of Education
CTO	Communications and Transit Organisation, League of Nations
CWC	Child Welfare Committee, League of Nations
DSB	Drugs Supervisory Body, League of Nations
DSG	Deputy Secretary-General
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe (United Nations)
ECITO	European Central Inland Transport Organization
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFO	Economic and Financial Organisation, League of Nations
EFS	Economic and Financial Section, League of Nations
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FO	Foreign Office (UK)
FR-AIP	Institut Pasteur Archives, Paris
G77	The group of non-aligned countries (now no longer 77 in number)
GA	United Nations General Assembly
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (United Nations)
HC	House of Commons

HL	House of Lords
IAW	International Alliance of Women
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICIC	International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, League of Nations
ICJ	International Court of Justice (UN)
ICS	International Civil Service
ICW	International Council of Women
IGCR	Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees
IIA	International Institute of Agriculture
IIIC	International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO/AT	International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRO	International Refugee Organization
ITO	International Trade Organization
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
IWA	International Wheat Agreement
IWO	International Women's Organizations
LIA	London International Assembly
LON	League of Nations (The League)
LONA	League of Nations Archives
LONAT	League of Nations Administrative Tribunal
LONHO	League of Nations Health Organisation
LONU	League of Nations Union
LRCS	League of Red Cross Societies
NCA	Nuffield College (Oxford) Archives
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRS	National Records of Scotland
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIHP	<i>Office International d'Hygiène Publique</i>
PCIJ	Permanent Court of International Justice (The Court)
PCOB	Permanent Central Opium Board, League of Nations
PIU	Public International Union
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations
RIIA	Royal Institute for International Affairs
SC	United Nations Security Council
SDN	Société des Nations

Stb	Stobhall Papers of the Drummond Family
TNA	The National Archives (UK)
TPC	Technical Preparatory Committee (WHO)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNCTE	United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's (Emergency) Fund
UNRRA	United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
US/USA	United States of America
USG	Under Secretary-General
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
YUA	Yale University Archives

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KEY POLITICAL FIGURES IN DRUMMOND'S CAREER

- Asquith**, Herbert, British Liberal politician, Prime Minister 1908–1916.
- Balfour**, Arthur, British Conservative politician, Prime Minister 1902–1905, Foreign Secretary 1916–1919 responsible for the Balfour Declaration.
- Briand**, Aristide, French Socialist politician, eleven times Premier (including 1921–1922 and 1925–1926), Foreign Minister 1925–1932 awarded Nobel Peace Prize 1926, jointly with Stresemann (q.v.).
- Bruce**, Stanley, Australian businessman and politician, Prime Minister 1923–1929, one of the founders of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Cecil**, Robert, British conservative politician, awarded Nobel Peace Prize 1937, see Chapter 2.
- Ciano**, Galeazzo, Italian Fascist politician, son-in-law of Mussolini, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1936–1943. Tried, imprisoned and finally executed in 1944 for abandoning Mussolini.
- Clemenceau**, Georges, French politician and journalist, Premier 1906–1909 and 1917–1920, President of the Peace Conference.
- Curzon**, George, British politician, Foreign Secretary 1919–1924.
- Eden**, Anthony, British Conservative politician, Foreign Secretary 1935–1938, 1940–1945 and 1951–1955, Prime Minister 1955–1957.
- Grey**, Edward, British Liberal politician, longest-serving Foreign Secretary 1905–1916 notable for his comment that ‘the lights are going out all over Europe’ on the eve of the First World War.

- Hambro**, Carl, Norwegian journalist and Conservative politician, President of the Parliament 1926–1934 and 1935–1945, President of the League Assembly 1939 and at its final session in 1946.
- Kerr**, Philip, Private Secretary to Lloyd George (q.v.) journalist, British Ambassador to Washington 1939–1940 where he negotiated the war-time Lend-Lease agreement.
- Koo**, Wellington, Chinese statesman, representative at the Peace Conference, variously Ambassador to the UK, France and the USA, judge on the International Court of Justice 1957–1967.
- Laval**, Pierre, French politician, Prime Minister 1931–1932 and 1934–1936. Member and later Premier of the Vichy Government, tried and executed in 1945.
- Lloyd-George**, David, British Liberal politician, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1908–1915, Prime Minister 1916–1922.
- MacDonald**, Ramsay, British Labour politician, first Labour Prime Minister, leading minority governments in 1924 and 1929–1931.
- Mussolini**, Benito (*Il Duce*), Italian Fascist Prime Minister 1922–1943, Dictator by 1925, Overthrown and arrested 1943, rescued by the Germans, captured and shot by the Italian Resistance 1945.
- Simon**, John, British Liberal politician, Foreign Secretary 1931–1935, Lord Chancellor in Churchill's wartime coalition government 1940–1945.
- Stresemann**, Gustav, German Liberal politician, Chancellor of the Weimar Republic 1923, Minister for Foreign Affairs 1923–1929, awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 1926 jointly with Briand (q.v.).
- Wilson**, Woodrow, American lawyer and Democratic politician, 28th US President 1913–1921, awarded Nobel Peace Prize 1919.

PROLOGUE—TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD

The artist Paul Nash gave the ironic title ‘We Are Making a New World’ to his depiction of the gigantic destruction of life that he witnessed during the First World War.¹ It is difficult to imagine that there would be any regeneration from the devastation that his work illustrates. Seeds were sown, however, by US President Woodrow Wilson in 1918 in his famous Fourteen Points’ speech, the final point of which called for a general association of nations to be formed ‘under specific covenants’. The speech had a remarkable reception. It was translated and distributed to soldiers and citizens and contributed significantly to the decision by Germany to agree to an Armistice.²

Eric Drummond, at that time Private Secretary to British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, accompanied the Foreign Secretary on a three-month visit to Washington to meet Wilson after the United States had entered the War. Before the Armistice, Drummond put before Balfour a powerfully argued memorandum concerning the anticipated Inter-Allied Peace Conference. The proposals were characteristic of his later diplomacy, namely that honest experts should bring forward plans and statistics and, after the Government had decided its policy, it should discuss the differences with Washington.³ There was practical transnational experience to draw on. Inter-allied supply committees existed in 20 areas of coordination.⁴ These initiatives stemmed largely from the Allied Maritime Transport Council’s Executive arm (AMTE) on which the USA, UK, France and Italy were represented. This was led by British civil servant Arthur Salter and included his French counterpart, Jean Monnet.

When the Peace Conference met in Paris in January 1919, French Premier Georges Clemenceau was elected to preside. On 28 April 1919, in the crowded Banqueting Hall of the Quai d'Orsay, he brought a League of Nations into existence with strange swiftness:

'Does anyone else want to speak?' he demanded. 'The resolution is moved. Is there any opposition? The resolution is carried'. The delegates turned to one another in bewilderment. There was a minute's blank silence ... and it dawned on the perplexed assembly that the League of Nations Covenant [its Constitution] had been approved, that its Secretary-General had been appointed, that a Council ... had been created, that Geneva had been chosen for the League's permanent home, and that a committee had been charged with preparing an agenda for the first meeting of [the governing bodies] the League Council and Assembly...⁵

The Conference had appointed Eric Drummond, the youngest and the longest-serving, of those who have been Secretary-General of either the League or the United Nations. Part I of this book gives an account of Drummond's life and character, and concludes that he stands in the front rank of those who have held the post.

The initiative of establishing the League's functions lay with Drummond as Secretary-General. He was to show himself to be a principled, trustworthy and conscientious leader. This book, authored by four former international civil servants, provides a fresh perspective on the League by putting the Secretary-General and the Secretariat centre-stage.

The influence of Drummond in shaping the League's Secretariat (the first International Civil Service—ICS) is the subject of Part II. He began his work in May 1919 in a back room of his London home, 23 Manchester Square, where he sought to form an embryonic Secretariat with men and women who were 'League-minded'.⁶ The actions he took were decisive in shaping the impartial character of the ICS. The life course of any organization is shaped by its early origins and, for eight months, the League existed only as the Secretariat. For a further ten months, from January to November 1920, the period between the Council's first meeting and the First Assembly in Geneva, the League's permanent activity was maintained by the Secretariat in London. It was during these early months that Drummond created the ethos of the ICS, and established, with his senior colleagues, the League's functions and structures.

The first recruits to the League were in the main young, and several, like Salter and Monnet, had worked together in the war. It was the imagination of the emergent Secretariat that allowed the League to respond to the political, economic and social problems of the post-war era through enduring structures of international cooperation. Drummond's tenure was associated with the 'Spirit of Geneva' and with the establishment of that Swiss city as a centre point of global diplomacy. There, the League helped to stabilize nations and to protect vulnerable populations in the post-war years. It demonstrated that the way towards building a better world was through nations acting together. The enlightened British politician, Lord Robert Cecil, described it as a 'great experiment'. The concept of the League as an experiment allowed the ICS to show creativity and to lay the foundations of a century of multilateral cooperation.

Drummond's first deputy, Monnet, and the American Under Secretary-General (USG) Raymond Fosdick, left in 1923 and 1920, respectively. After their exit, and especially following the departure in 1927 of Italian USG Bernardo Attolico, the ethos of internationalism at the topmost level of the Secretariat began to weaken. It was Drummond and his League-minded Japanese USGs who maintained the ideal of the impartial official. French, Italian and German nationals who served at this level largely failed in this respect, showing partiality towards their own countries. Drummond's disappointment in the USGs was evident when he queried later whether the posts should continue. It was among the Directors Drummond appointed that the League's brightest stars appeared.

'League-mindedness' is a term that appeared in the literature of the 1920s.⁷ Drummond found this in those who directed the Secretariat's various Sections. Salter, along with fellow Briton Alexander Loveday, built a strong and powerful Economic and Finance Section that responded promptly to the economic problems that followed the war. The Polish physician Ludwik Rajchman directed the far-reaching Health Section, which undertook pioneering work in protecting the health of populations. Robert Haas, the French head of the Communications and Transit Section, helped establish practices to secure freedom of transit for international trade. The Norwegian Erik Colban instituted a system whereby grievances of minority populations in newly created European states could be considered by the League. The Frenchman Paul Mantoux who headed the Political Section was a walking compendium on every aspect of the Covenant. His friend, Swiss lawyer William Rappard, directed the Mandates Section and devised processes that helped the

League to hold accountable the imperial powers that were mandated to govern former German and Ottoman territories in the interests of indigenous people in Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific. Rachel Crowdy, the only woman appointed at senior level, achieved wonders with her tiny Social Questions Section which dealt predominantly with international action relating to women and children, policies that were later adopted by many Member States.

The victorious powers—France, Britain, Italy and Japan—were reluctant to act collectively through the League on the political functions for which the international body was created, particularly the pursuit of disarmament. An additional problem for the League was its lack of universality—the United States refused to join, Germany's admission was delayed until 1926, and the membership of Russia/USSR was achieved only in 1934. It was the Secretariat's determination that induced the League to address, through multilateral action, the post-war problems of economic recession, displaced populations, epidemic disease and welfare of women and children.

In this centennial of the founding of the League and the ICS, it is important to understand how the first institution of global governance was conceived and operated, and to appreciate the talents of its architect. The final Part of the book shows the large-scale absorption of League programmes, practices and staff into the United Nations (UN) and its Specialized Agencies. 'Although it could never be publically admitted during or after the war—the League had become politically toxic by the late 1930s—the truth is that the UN was in many ways a continuation of the earlier body'.⁸

There is little in what the League did that did not transfer in one form or another to the UN and its agencies—not just the ICS but virtually all the League's economic and technical work, its humanitarian programmes, and much else. This was however the time of a 'fresh start', and there was an ungracious silence over what had gone before.⁹ In 1946, one of Drummond's appointees who transited to the UN wrote to him saying, 'I am proud to say that your spirit was present the whole time during these last three months when first the Preparatory Commission and then the General Assembly of the UN worked to put a new international organisation in the position to perform its task'.¹⁰

The League maintained a potent influence in the international economic and social fields until its dissolution, but was weak politically almost from the beginning. It was the ICS that took the first steps on the road to building a better world. Its members were creative in devising

mechanisms for multinational cooperation and innovative in enlisting the cooperation of outside experts and voluntary organizations. Most of all, they were impartial. The book focusses on the men and women who were at the heart of this historic experiment in global governance.

On the day in 1946 that the League ceased to exist, the British Government minister and former League official Philip Noel-Baker delivered a eulogy, saying:

I am as proud of our British Civil Service as any man could be, but I can say with truth that in none of our departments did I find a higher standard of technical efficiency, a higher level of personal and official probity, a greater industry and devotion to their cause, than I found in the Secretariat as I knew it then.¹¹

Drummond died in 1951. A former League colleague predicted that he would come into his full recognition as having conceived and then constructed one of the new, permanent elements of world life.¹² The creation of an International Civil Service was an enduring achievement of the internationalism that emerged in 1919. The grave of this modest man makes no mention of the office that he held, but describes him as ‘A Great International Civil Servant’. The book provides a new assessment of his legacy.

ENDNOTES

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3. TNA, FO800_385, Drummond Memorandum, 11 October 1918; Drummond to Balfour, 27 November 1918.
4. Salter, J. A. (1919), *Allied Maritime Transport Council*, p. 11.
5. Harris, W. H. (1920), *The Peace in the Making*, p. 154.
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PART I

A Great International Civil Servant



The Life and Character of Eric Drummond 1876–1951

Drummond revealed little of himself to the politicians, diplomats and colleagues who were at the centre of his life and he baffled the press corps. His public image was that of a simple man, doing his duty, smoking his pipe and relaxing over fishing or a game of golf.¹ He could not be enticed to write about his ‘great experiment’ in promoting cooperation, peace and justice between nations, and failed to get past the first page of an autobiography or beyond a tantalising list of eleven proposed episodes of a book that would have spanned the years between the First World War and the Munich crisis of 1938. However, a fresh insight on his life and character is presented in this chapter, derived from new biographical sources.

His career was powerfully influenced by his origins and early life. He was raised in an era in which there was an ever-present consciousness of family honour and personal reputation, and in a household with a centuries-old clanship tradition, characterized by fierce loyalty to kin and causes. The qualities he showed in office may have had their roots, to some extent, in these values. A French reporter suggested so in a finely observed description of Drummond, concluding that he was a gallant man who put into practice the Scottish motto of his clan, *Gang Warily*—‘advance with caution’.² Family mottos were important to Drummond: while courting his future wife, he quoted another, *Prius mori quam fidem fallere*, which he interpreted as ‘I would rather die than break my word’.³

He was a Scottish aristocrat, second son of Viscount Strathallan, but was not born into great wealth, rather he grew up within a relatively modest military family. His page of autobiography does not extend beyond childhood and begins by recording his birth at the White House, Fulford, near York, on 17 August 1876. His father James David Drummond was serving there as a British Army officer with the rank of Captain in a prestigious regiment, the 6th Dragoons.

His character and values were largely shaped in the imposing fifteenth century Methven Castle, and at Machany, the neighbouring Drummond family estate. His happiness as a child is evident from his recollection that

two months were regularly spent in Perthshire at Methven Castle, my mother's old home ... Our annual migration took place about the middle of July and we looked forward to it immensely ... Every part of the journey had a special excitement ... Methven Castle was a most fascinating home for children. My grandfather and grandmother entertained large parties during the time we were there ... My birthday was always passed there and was celebrated as a giant excursion, if the weather was fine. A picnic at the loch, the catching of numerous fish out of a boat ... I do not think that a child's birthday could have been more happy.⁴

He was educated entirely in England, first at home where the Drummond children had a German governess, Emilie Winkopp.⁵ He went on to a small boarding school kept by two maiden ladies. The reserve that he displayed as Secretary-General has been attributed to his early instruction at home and to his being raised within a small social circle.⁶ He then attended St. John's Royal Latin School in Buckingham, during which he avidly read books of every kind, secured several prizes and became well-grounded in French.⁷ In 1891, he entered Eton College where in 1895, his final year, he won the Prince Consort's French prize. Proficiency in French was clearly a factor in his selection as Secretary-General and there was early evidence of Drummond's leadership; at Eton he was head of 'Oppidans', one of the two most senior students. He was also selected for Eton's prestigious debating society, but, alas, never demonstrated oral presentation skills in his subsequent career.⁸

His family on both sides were strong Tories: the Smythe dog was taught to bay and bark for Disraeli and to growl for Gladstone. In an early display of independence of mind, young Master Drummond declared himself an ardent Liberal, which was received with horror and amusement by all the family.⁹ In his later years, he sat in the House of

Lords as a representative peer of Scotland (having succeeded to the Earldom of Perth in 1937) and served there as Deputy Leader of the Liberal party from 1946.¹⁰

Sadly, his father did not survive to witness Eric's achievements—during the great storm of 1893 he went out to see the damage to his woods, fell ill, 'went to bed and never rose again'.¹¹ A powerful influence on his life, especially after the early tragic death of his father, was that of his mother Margaret Smythe, Lady Strathallan (see Annex 1, Drummond's family tree). In the hectic summer of 1919 when he was busy establishing the Secretariat, he sent Lady Strathallan a note saying 'I am proud of my mother'; she died shortly after his move to Geneva, at the very moment he was holding the inaugural meeting of the League of Nations.¹²

His father's influence was felt, however. When Eric left school in 1895, the scholarly 19-year old followed his father's career; on 30 October, he was gazetted as Second Lieutenant in the 3rd Battalion of the Black Watch, a Highland regiment that was based near the family home in Perthshire and in which his elder step-brother Viscount Strathallan and younger brother Maurice also served.¹³ He resigned his commission in December 1896.¹⁴ Drummond seems to have sustained an injury or illness affecting his leg; on New Year's Eve 1895, he records that he 'went to see doctor because of [his] heel' and, in 1914, wrote saying 'just think I might have been there [East of the Meuse] except for my leg'. A newspaper report remarks that he played tennis, 'notwithstanding slight lameness'.¹⁵

During the years in which he held the post of Secretary-General, a position that the first UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, described 'as the most impossible job in the world', his main relaxation was fishing; the recreation of the contemplative man and an art that provides the angler with 'a rest to his mind, a cheerer of his spirits, a diverter of sadness, a calmer of unquiet thought, a moderator of passions, a procurer of contentedness; ... [and] habits of peace and patience'.¹⁶ Drummond wondered if his love of fly-fishing was an inherited quality or whether it was aroused by a wonderful day on a Highland river. For more than half-a-century he maintained a 'Sportsman's Record' detailing where he fished, what he caught and who accompanied him.¹⁷ League of Nations' staff regularly presented him with a matchbox containing the first of the season's Mayflies, hatched in Lake Geneva, as a matter worthy of immediate attention.¹⁸