

# 1. Portrait of a Man (1862-1934)

## His work for peace

### **The Treaty of Versailles – a grave failure, but pursuit of his action**

The year 1919 began under extravagant hopes for Henri Lambert. While President Wilson's "14 Points" were on the agenda of discussions, he could legitimately expect to see the beginning of the realisation of his objectives. But the "14 Points" collapsed with the bitter taste of failure.

In this regard Henri Lambert wrote an article in December 1919 entitled *"The international bankruptcy of the leaders and the defeat of the winners."* ... *"How is it that President Wilson has abandoned his "third condition", which stipulated the gradual abolition of customs barriers in favour of economic equality for all peoples? The explanation probably lies in an understandable error: the President was focused above all on the formation of the League of Nations, which would lead to the introduction of international economic equity, in the form of gradual free trade (which he knew to be the necessary foundation for peace). However, as the author of these lines continued to argue throughout the war, and as demonstrated by events, to establish a League of Nations it is essential to first introduce free trade, at least in principle – even applying it in stages, over ten or twenty years for example. To associate peoples, we must first remove their fundamental antagonisms – and not do the opposite. The failure, so regrettable, of Wilsonian policy derived from the lack of this logic."*



Despite this sad observation, Henri Lambert's unrepentant optimism in man pushed him perhaps to expect a challenge to the treaty, a revision he hoped for with all his heart. This showed his strength of character, his ardour in attack, the persistence and perseverance of his striving. It is perhaps in this context that one should see the publication in 1920 of his two volumes *Pax Economica* and *The New Social Contract*, which reprise over a quarter century of his diverse publications (though not all, and often slightly modified from the original text).



If these two books or collections allowed him to bring together articles published here and there and in various countries, they also gave him the opportunity to take stock, following his five year distant absence from his business, a time for reflection, meditation, and writing. Given that the articles had appeared in various journals and newspapers, often liberal leaning, and had met with some resonance, these two works – synthetic, larger, more imposing, and published by a major Paris publisher – ought by right to have been taken up in magazines or newspapers of all persuasions. The public reached was larger and more geographically diverse. But if politicians, in fact, did not hear his voice, others, renowned intellectuals, immediately echoed his views. Thus the famous Danish writer Georg Brandes (1842-1927), a specialist in European and in particular French literature, wrote in 1916, three years after

the publication of the booklet *Pax Economica* in April 1913 by the League of Free Trade, that Henri Lambert's thesis of was "the only healthy solution" to the conflict. Henri Lambert was not the kind of man to give up after failure. He continued his fight for peace after the war, always with his weapon of free trade pacificism.