‘Unity is strength’: the International Arbitration and Peace Association

The absolutist Peace Society dominated the British peace movement throughout most of the nineteenth century. However, its absolutism was increasingly challenged from mid-century onwards, and it became apparent by the 1870s, as a result of republican nationalist campaigns in Europe, and in Britain the rise of working men’s peace groups and the growth of the women’s movement, that there was also some demand for a secular peace organisation. The International Arbitration and Peace Association (IAPA), founded in 1880, was the main secular peace organisation in Britain and the one which experienced the greatest conflict with the Peace Society. Significantly, it was also the most likely of the mixed peace societies to draw in women from the feminist movement. It accommodated a variety of feminist perspectives, as well as attracting women such as Priscilla Peckover who were active within the peace movement but maintained a distance from the women’s movement.

As an organisation, the IAPA drew together discourses of liberalism, socialism, Evangelicalism, feminism and internationalism, a blend that made it central to both the British and European peace movements. The IAPA acknowledged European definitions of ‘just wars’ and refused to be swept along in the tide of jingoistic imperialism that gripped Britain at the turn of the century. Although it was officially secular in its arguments for peace, it had many members who upheld religious and Evangelical ideas. The IAPA’s arguments for equality drew in women from various strands of the feminist movement, giving rise to a range of ways of working within the organisation. Women were active as individuals, as members of the IAPA’s secularist Women’s Committee, and as members of its Evangelical social purity auxiliary, the WPAA (formerly the women’s auxiliary to the Peace Society). In its internationalism, the IAPA was ideologically connected to movements in Britain and
Europe, as well as North America. It benefited greatly from being a new organisation. Lacking either a history of dominance within the peace movement or a background of nonconformity and defiance of the state, the IAPA was more adaptable than the Peace Society to the changes in Victorian society, and therefore it was better able to accommodate feminist thought. This chapter outlines the IAPA’s contribution to the late Victorian peace movement and the role of women in its work, while chapter 8 discusses the auxiliaries – the Women’s Committee and the WPAA – that were attached to it.

The birth of the IAPA was closely connected to some of the problems experienced by the Peace Society in the 1870s. It was founded in 1880 by the Peace Society’s former collector, Lewis Appleton, who had been expelled from the Peace Society for misappropriation of funds. Also involved was William Phillips, who became the Association’s Honorary Secretary. However, it was not until 1883, when Hodgson Pratt accepted the chairmanship of the IAPA, that it began to raise its profile and publicise its theories on peace and international arbitration.

Contrary to Peace Society suspicions, the Association did not reject Christian beliefs. During a debate with Henry Richard as to whether the IAPA was duplicating the work of the Peace Society, Pratt asked Richard what problem there could be with the IAPA if the net result was to bring more ‘into the field of Christian work’. However, Christianity in itself was not part of its rationale for opposing war. Rather, its principles were based upon: ‘a recognition of the mutual respect and justice between nations, and on broad principles of international polity, the general adoption of which will lead to the substitution of Arbitration for War’. It professed itself to be ‘unsectarian’ and, like the Peace Society, in principle unconnected to party politics. Its objectives were to create ‘an enlightened public opinion towards the abolition of war’, to advocate practical measures for peace and ‘to secure permanent relief from the crushing burden of National Armaments’. It aimed to promote: arbitration as a substitute for war; ‘the establishment of a code of International Law, and an International Tribunal’; international treaties for such objects; and finally, means ‘for bringing about a good understanding’ between warring nations.

The means by which the IAPA expected to spread its message lay in the establishment of similar organisations across Europe and the US, creating an international federation in which each association would be independent, but working with a common plan of action. It established a journal in 1884, entitled the Journal of the International Arbitration and
Peace Association (given the rather catchier title of Concord in 1887). Its work, the Journal argued in its first issue, ‘is one in which both men and women of all classes, of all parties, and of all religious denominations may do something; each in his, or her, own sphere’. From the outset, the IAPA consciously attempted to embrace women’s work for peace.

The appointment of Hodgson Pratt as chairman marked a turning point for the Association. Pratt had a history of radicalism, and at the 1871 Congress of the republican International League of Peace and Liberty he had actively opposed the Franco-Prussian war. Pratt attended the ILPL’s 1872 Congress as a delegate of William Randal Cremer’s Workmen’s Peace Association, and was put forward as a candidate for the ILPL’s central Committee in the same year, although he declined to accept this offer because he refused to ‘look upon the republic as necessary to peace’ and thus endorse wars of liberation. On accepting the chairmanship of the IAPA, Pratt made a number of innovative changes: he invited Henry Richard to become president of the IAPA (Richard refused), suggested an amalgamation of the Peace Society and the IAPA (negotiations were begun, but came to nothing), and provided a monthly mouthpiece for the Association by establishing the Journal. Pratt gradually gained the IAPA a following and membership that did not overlap with that of the Peace Society, though the relationship between the two organisations remained tense for several years. The conflict continued throughout the 1880s and was exacerbated during the 1890s by the founding of the IPB. The Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 highlighted the tensions again, as the IAPA took an openly anti-government stance while the Peace Society refused to undertake any efforts that could not guarantee success.

Initially, the expulsion of Lewis Appleton in late 1884 from the secretaryship of the Association, followed by negotiations during 1885 on the possibility of a merger, meant that by the mid-1880s the relationship was co-operative, even if it was also unpredictable. In 1886, Hodgson Pratt was invited to address the annual meeting of the Peace Society, a significant gesture of goodwill, as the Journal was pleased to note: ‘Our Association has long been anxious for a closer union with our brethren in the great cause . . . More especially have we been anxious for brotherly relations with the Parent Society, which has for so many years had the benefit of Mr Henry Richard’s able and earnest services.’ The Journal acknowledged the continuing dominance of the Peace Society in the British peace movement as a whole, and the prominence and status of Henry Richard. It also implied that, as in any unequal relationship, it fell to the side with the upper hand to recognise the subordinate: it was
therefore the privilege of the Peace Society to invite Hodgson Pratt to speak to their meeting, rather than the IAPA to invite Henry Richard to theirs. The *Journal* went on to note that 'the circumstances under which the two societies were thus represented on a common platform were of no small importance'.

In contrast, the *Herald of Peace* gave no special notice to the event, but reported Pratt’s remarks that 'He felt it to be a very great honour indeed to find himself on that platform on the anniversary meeting of an association which had done so much.' By 1889, relations between the two organisations had improved even further, to the degree that the *Herald* paid Pratt the rare compliment of comparing him to both Joseph Sturge and the recently-departed Henry Richard: 'Perhaps no one, since the days of the late Joseph Sturge, has devoted more personal attention, labour and money, to the arduous work of peace propagandism on the Continent. He has well followed up and maintained, in this direction, the similar efforts of the late Mr Henry Richard, MP. Mr Pratt is almost a Peace Society in himself.'

Notwithstanding the different emphasis that the Peace Society and the IAPA attached to Christian pacifism, on paper the practical aims of the Peace Society and the IAPA were similar: the establishment of systems of arbitration and a court of nations, and the advocacy of mutual disarmament. Yet the two organisations worked in very different ways. During the 1880s, they were coloured by the politics of their respective chairmen, Henry Richard and Hodgson Pratt. Richard’s long experience of peace work served to emphasise the dominance of the Peace Society, while Pratt’s background in the co-operative movement established links for the IAPA that went beyond the peace movement into wider political circles. Membership records show that the majority of Peace Society and IAPA members did not join both societies. The primary factor affecting the relations between them was the attitudes of their leaders. The rivalry, such as it was, changed course after Richard’s death in 1888. His replacement in the Peace Society, William Evans Darby, was primarily concerned with maintaining the status that Richard had obtained for the Society. It became an increasingly insular organisation towards the end of the century, and in consequence, the generation of feminists that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s were far more likely to turn to the IAPA as an effective context for their peace work than to the Peace Society.

Just as many women preferred the IAPA, European activists found a sympathy and tolerance for their views from the IAPA that was not forthcoming from the Peace Society. This is particularly clear from an analysis of the International Peace Bureau, which was intended to
be a non-partisan, co-ordinating body for national peace movements. Under William Evans Darby, the Peace Society was reluctant to acknowledge or support the IPB because it included many influential members of the ILPL. Hodgson Pratt was aware that the Peace Society would be uncooperative, and during discussions on the formation of the IPB he warned Elie Ducommun, the ILPL member who became the IPB’s secretary, that ‘You must be prepared for opposition, great opposition.’ While Pratt did not share the ILPL’s views on, for example, wars of national liberation, he was nonetheless prepared to work closely with it to strengthen the international movement.

The functions of the IPB were, among other things, to collect, catalogue and provide information and publications on peace and arbitration, and to prepare subjects for the Peace Congresses and carry out their resolutions. As a transnational umbrella organisation, the IPB drew diverse groups together to exchange ideas and work collectively for peace. Delegates to the IPB’s first Peace Congress in 1892 included Richard and Emmeline Pankhurst and E. M. Southey (for the IAPA), Joseph Sturge (for the Workmen’s Peace Association), Mrs Henry Richard and Priscilla Peckover (both for the Peace Society and the Ladies’ Peace Auxiliary), Margaret Tanner and Anna and Mary Priestman (three of a long list of delegates sent by the Peace Society) and Ellen Robinson for the LBWPAS and the Society of Friends. The Congress attracted a number of prominent British pacifists, and drew workers from a wide range of peace organisations. It also explicitly targeted women.

During the 1890 and 1891 Congresses at which the idea for the Bureau was established, a number of resolutions were passed regarding women’s roles in peace work. The most comprehensive of these called for:

> every woman throughout the world to sustain, as wife, mother, sister, or citizen, the things that make for Peace; as otherwise she incurs grave responsibilities [sic] for the continuance of the systems of war and militarism, which not only desolate but corrupt the home life of the nations... [W]omen should unite themselves with societies for the promotion of international peace.

The same resolution was passed by many individual peace societies in the months after the Congress, including for example Priscilla Peckover’s WLPA. However, while it undoubtedly valued their support and contributions, the IPB could offer women little in terms of international peace work. Dominated as the Bureau was by men who could directly influence the political process in their own nations, there were few...
opportunities available for women who wanted to work within it. The Austrian aristocrat and novelist Bertha von Suttner was perhaps the exception to this rule, as her elite background gave her a wider sphere of influence than the middle-class women who made up the bulk of women involved in the peace movement. Suttner also had a popular anti-war novel to her name, which had established her as an authority on questions of peace and arbitration.¹²

Yet while the IPB offered few opportunities for women, it did provide a means of external support to the IAPA, which was relatively isolated in Britain due to its difficult relationship with the Peace Society. For example, during the second Anglo-Boer war, when the Peace Society resisted all calls to campaign for peace, the IAPA (along with the WLPA and the LBWPAS) developed a range of strategies, including public meetings, petitions and peace propaganda to protest against the war. The IPB assisted with these wherever it could. For example, its central Committee wrote to the British Prime Minister reminding him of the promises made by the British government at the Hague Conference only a few months earlier. A similar appeal was addressed to the twenty-five signatories to the Hague Convention, requesting that they intervene and assist in bringing about an end to the hostilities.¹³ These actions followed lengthy communications between Hodgson Pratt and Élie Ducommun, in which Pratt argued that ‘mere Resolutions and Addresses, signed by members of Peace Societies, [giving] continuing protestations against the Transvaal war will avail nothing’. Rather, a definite step was needed in which, ‘in each country, a large number of influential persons should seek a personal interview with the Head of Government or Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the view of urging an offer of Good Offices or Mediation; – whether that offer be made by the Government in question acting alone, – or in conjunction with other Governments’.¹⁴

This discussion came early in the war, after a protest meeting held by the IAPA, the Transvaal Committee and the Social Democratic Federation in September 1899 had erupted into violence.¹⁵ Members of the public attacked both speakers and pacifists attending the demonstration, and left a number of them injured. Sections of the London press had identified Hodgson Pratt and Ellen Robinson as unofficial representatives of the Afrikaners, though few papers went on to describe the riot that erupted in consequence.¹⁶ As a result of this intimidation by sections of the general public and the popular press, Pratt contacted the IPB and suggested joint methods of protest which he believed would be more successful. Thus the IPB was used as an international point of contact, to provide support in the face of weaknesses in the British
movement. This re-emphasises the idealistic construction of patriotism as an international, rather than uniquely national, identity. This was particularly important for Priscilla Peckover, Ellen Robinson and Hodgson Pratt, who were all working within a variety of contexts in Britain.

Alongside its attitude to Continental peace movements, the IAPA’s second striking difference from the Peace Society was its attitude to women, and its commitment to a mixed-sex organisation. The IAPA addressed itself to women in the very first issue of the Journal. Almost since its inauguration it had enjoyed an organised presence of women experienced in peace work, through the affiliation in 1881 of the WPAA.17 A four-page ‘Appeal to Women on Behalf of International Arbitration’ was produced by Hodgson Pratt and published by the Association for distribution among various women’s societies, and was also circulated by Lydia Becker, who enclosed it in an edition of the Women’s Suffrage Journal.18 The republican feminist Marie Deraismes, of Paris, prepared a French translation which the IAPA circulated on the continent, and her organisation, the Société pour l’Amélioration du Sort de la Femme et de la Revindication de ses Droits, sent a letter of support to the IAPA.19

That women were actively included in the IAPA’s work is clear from the proceedings of its annual meetings, its Executive Committee (which consisted of both women and men), its explicit inclusion of women within the Association’s general work, and the content of the Journal. As noted in chapter 4, until the early 1890s, the Peace Society advocated women’s peace work only in the context of the domestic or religious spheres, that is, among other women, children and the clergy. Women’s contributions were explicitly confined and constrained. The IAPA took a less divisive stance, arguing that ‘every word in the Journal should be one which men and women may express or receive without distinction’.20 The work of women was accepted as a vital part of the whole picture. The IAPA’s connections with Europe may also have affected its political perspective, as women were generally more influential within the Continental peace societies than they were within the British ones.

Concord’s subscription lists for the period 1884 to 1899 show that approximately one quarter of the IAPA’s five hundred members were female.21 Some of these women members founded a separate female auxiliary to the IAPA, known as the Women’s Committee, and there were also of course the members of the more independent WPAA, which had formerly been affiliated to the Peace Society. But the IAPA also had many individual women members who were influential in political and social reform. These included Mrs Ellen Sickert, who was the daughter
of Richard Cobden and sister-in-law of Helena Swanwick, and Mary Costelloe, who was the mother of another active feminist, Ray Strachey, and daughter of the Quaker Hannah Whitall Smith (also a member of the IAPA, and formerly of the WPAAPS). Elizabeth Pease Nichol and Margaret Bright Lucas were two prominent feminist members (Bright Lucas was also president of the WPAA), as were Laura McLaren and Florence Fenwick Miller. Emmeline Pankhurst, then best known as the wife of the socialist Dr Richard Pankhurst, was an IAPA member, as were the Irish Unionist Isabella Tod and the American Julia Ward Howe. Constance Lloyd, better known as Mrs Oscar Wilde, was a regular speaker at IAPA women’s meetings between 1884 and 1893.22

Many of the IAPA’s women members had a high profile within society and were accustomed to the more equal partnerships that were popularised in the 1890s by the concept of the ‘New Woman’. Unlike pioneering feminists of the 1860s and 1870s, for whom an equal marriage partnership was regarded as enterprising and unusual, the feminists of the 1880s and 1890s enjoyed the concept of equality in marriage as a vital component of their lives. The IAPA accorded women an equal role, given that women were still politically disenfranchised under British law. For example, its 1884 annual meeting included a woman speaker not only addressing a mixed audience but also proposing a resolution. This is in contrast to the Peace Society, who did not invite a female speaker until 1890. Women were also accepted as having a political role. After a conference in 1885 on the possibility of the peaceful settlement of disputes over the Afghan frontier, the Journal noted that ‘many members’ of the WPAA were present, and that the resolution – recommending arbitration – was forwarded to the Prime Minister.23 This involvement of women in a predominantly male political act demonstrates that the IAPA was very different from the Peace Society in the role it accorded women.

Four women in particular became involved in the IAPA in ways that advanced both their peace work and their feminism. Isabella Tod, Florence Fenwick Miller, Laura Ormiston Chant and Florence Balgarnie were all middle-class suffragists with a background of active involvement in the feminist movement. Each had their own interests of course: Tod focused on campaigning for women’s education and against Home Rule, Miller on neo-Malthusianism and new approaches to sexual politics, Chant on a reactionary form of social purity, and Balgarnie on women’s suffrage and trade unionism. Their different approaches to social questions were carried over into the peace movement, as each presented different methods of working to the IAPA’s meetings. Tod, for example, was an internationalist and opposed imperial expansion, though she
also tolerated some forms of imperialism, for example in her opposition to Home Rule for Ireland. Fenwick Miller, as shown in chapter 2, was much more identified with conceptions of international citizenship and universalised sisterhood, while Balgarnie was implicitly critical of such ideas, locating responsibility for war in class, as well as gender terms. Chant provided the clearest example of the Evangelical feminist position, echoing the social purity interests of the WPAA. These four women can be viewed as further evidence of the diversity of feminist perspectives that was highlighted in chapter 2. Their involvement in the IAPA shows that the Association could attract feminists from a range of backgrounds and political ideologies, who were drawn to the peace movement because it supported their views on the suffrage, imperialism, social purity, education or motherhood. The IAPA’s position as a flexible and broadly based organisation also meant that it was able to accommodate this range of perspectives.

Miss Isabella Tod (1836–96) was one of the most prominent feminists to regularly attend the IAPA’s meetings. Tod had been a popular figure in the women’s movement for nearly two decades, becoming interested in women’s education and the campaign for married women’s property laws at the Social Science Congress in Belfast in 1867. These interests led her into the suffrage movement, and she became a member of the Executive boards of the Ladies’ National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, the National Vigilance Association and the Married Women’s Property Committee. Born in Scotland but raised in Belfast, Tod’s primary concern was the promotion of the interests of Irish women, and she was perhaps the most prominent Irish women’s suffragist of the late nineteenth century. Her controversial commitment to Unionism emerged in 1886, after her reputation was established, when she devoted all her energies to the campaign against Home Rule, alienating many of her colleagues and, despite her Liberalism, allying herself with the Unionists.24

Tod maintained that her Unionism was not based on ‘religious bigotry’. Rather, ‘what we dread is the complete dislocation of all society, especially in regard to commercial affairs and to organised freedom of action . . . [I]t is needful to point out that the conditions of a free democracy do not exist in Ireland.’ At best, she said, widespread education and training in local government would be needed before Home Rule could be attempted, and Ulster should claim ‘a separate jurisdiction’ in order to maintain its political freedom and its ability ‘to do some good for the rest of Ireland’. During her campaign Tod befriended Millicent Garrett Fawcett, another Liberal who converted to the Liberal Unionists,
and publicly disassociated herself from Josephine Butler after the latter declared herself in favour of Home Rule.25

There was, however, a distinct difference between the politics of Tod and Fawcett where the question of the use of force was concerned. Fawcett sympathised with imperialist arguments and supported the use of physical force in Ireland as a means of maintaining order. Tod’s position regarding the empire was slightly more complex. Surprisingly perhaps, she had more than a passing interest in the work of the IAPA. She was present at nearly all of its annual meetings during the 1880s, relinquishing her role as one of its most popular women speakers only as ill health forced her to cut back on her political activities during the 1890s. Many of her speeches for the IAPA propounded comprehensive arguments for peace work, similar to the reasoning Ellen Robinson developed. She drew on notions of women’s duties, of national and racial difference, human rights as against physical force, the economic implications of war, which directly hampered social progress, and the importance of equal rights not only for women but also for the ‘others’ upon whom Britain might be tempted to wage war.26

In her first recorded IAPA speech, she stated that: ‘This Society invites . . . women . . . to take their full share – and that a large and definite share – in enlightening the public mind, and awakening public conscience, not only to the dangers which follow war, but also to those underlying principles of selfishness and tyranny.’ This ‘underlying . . . selfishness’ referred to Tod’s belief that politicians were, generally speaking, concerned with party political questions rather than public issues. She was a democrat at heart, and believed that the best means by which to limit war was to re-educate the public so that they would not vote for war or for inflexible, combative politicians. She employed feminist arguments of sexual difference in her contention that the infringement of human rights was inherent in the use of physical force: ‘We have to fight for and protect the interests of the weak, by teaching the strong that they have no rights by virtue of their strength.’ This, she said, was ‘a work in which women can assist. I cannot but feel that we have the right to appeal . . . in this matter.’27

Her arguments, as these quotes show, were focused on a conception of women’s rights and duties that was typical of the women’s movement at this time. Her speeches and publications on women’s suffrage drew on ideas of justice, on women’s rights as citizens of the state, and particularly on the separate spheres ideology of women’s moral and spiritual superiority. Yet Tod also employed anti-imperialist rhetoric in conjunction with her feminist and Unionist principles. At the IAPA’s
fourth annual meeting in 1885, she criticised the war system in all its forms, stating that whether it was a great war or ‘one of those wretched little wars, as they were called’, in which Britain ‘had been often engaged, threatening and overbearing races which we were pleased to think inferior to ourselves’, women nonetheless, on any prospect of war, stopped their social and philanthropic reforms until peace was restored. Hence war impoverished all social work, and had ramifications far beyond the financial cost of the military conflict. It was not only damaging in the sense that it hampered social progress, but its effects were felt doubly because increased taxes were levied and resources wasted ‘on needless warlike enterprises’. Thus there was economic damage done to a nation by engaging in war, and moral damage as a result of their indifference to the deaths of the enemy. In line with her views on the importance of an educated and democratic electorate, Tod concluded that ‘by far the highest and broadest aim of [the IAPA] . . . is not the external one, but the inculcating of regard for the equal rights of others, and the exercise of unceasing personal self-control over all personal, class, and party impulses’. This was a position that was in complete harmony with her opinions on the suffrage.

A striking contrast to Tod’s position can be found in the arguments of another speaker for the IAPA, Florence Fenwick Miller. Originally qualified in medicine, Miller was one of the earliest women journalists, the biographer of Harriet Martineau and editor of the feminist journal the Woman’s Signal. She was also no stranger to controversy. In 1877 she supported Annie Besant’s popular distribution of a pamphlet on contraception, and as a member of the London School Board her support was publicised and much criticised. She was the only feminist to publicly express her anger at the Ripper murders in London in 1888, naming them as not isolated events but part of the constant and increasing cruelties against women which were, to make matters worse, treated leniently by the (male) judiciary. Despite her outspokenness, her debating skills meant that she was in constant demand as a public speaker. Possessing ‘aggressive body language and verbal style’, Fenwick Miller and her lectures were very much ‘part of the spectacle of London life in the eighties, provocative signs of modernity and vibrant radicalism’. By the 1890s, Fenwick Miller was one of the most prominent feminists of her generation to develop internationalist ideas of pacifist feminism. Like many of the women involved in the IAPA, she was critical of jingoistic imperialism and aggressive militarism. Like many Victorian feminists, she blended ideas of progress and rationalism with a feminist sexual difference perspective, to argue that women’s status in
society improved as civilisation progressed. Yet importantly, she applied these ideas directly to an international rather than a national stage. In arguing that the ‘women of the whole world’ were beginning to form a united sisterhood and overcoming the ‘barbarism’ of military societies, she connected feminism with pacifism on a global scale, implying a course of progress and evolution throughout history where earlier feminists such as Caroline Ashurst Biggs and Lydia Becker had relied on more static constructions of ‘nature’.31 While this approach highlighted the universalism of her feminism, it was nonetheless a dramatic leap to take from a Victorian feminist perspective.

Fenwick Miller was therefore an obvious choice for the IAPA’s annual meetings, and her controversial approach compensated for her low level of involvement in the IAPA’s work. Fenwick Miller disagreed with Isabella Tod’s decrying of the ‘war spirit’ discussed above, arguing that combating war required the same martial spirit of the ‘noble warrior’. She emphasised the unpopularity of peace principles, saying that, particularly in the sphere of politics, ‘if a man or a woman wanted the reputation of being a practical politician . . . they had better leave this question alone’. In order to have such an impracticable question as peace recognised in politics, it must be fought for by those who believed in it: ‘let us look to our principles being carried out, and if not, fight for those principles, although [you belong] . . . to a Peace Society [sic]’.32

This combative approach was reflected in Fenwick Miller’s other arguments on women and peace. For example, she used the popular approach that women suffered more in wars than did men, because while ‘[i]t was true that men had to bear arms in the field of battle . . . who would not rather go into the fight and share its dangers and glories and successes, than stay at home anxiously waiting lest they should hear of the death of those nearest and dearest’.33 In the differences between the arguments of Fenwick Miller and Tod, there are parallels with the debates that raged within the suffrage movement, both during the 1880s and 1890s, and during the early twentieth century as a result of the methods of suffragists and, later, suffragettes. Fenwick Miller’s combative approach and Tod’s emphasis on the need for self-control echo suffragist debates on tactics within this period, over issues such as the refusal to pay taxes and the inclusion of married women in the franchise. There were perpetual disagreements over whether methods that exploited power relations were necessary in order to effect change, or whether a reformulation of the use of power on all levels was required. The contrasting feminist philosophies of direct action and the use of force, as against restraint and passive resistance, were a continual source of friction.”34
The third example of a prominent feminist who regularly spoke at IAPA meetings is Mrs Laura Ormiston Chant. As discussed in chapter 4, Chant was one of the first women to be appointed a vice-president of the Peace Society, in March 1889. But before this date she spoke on a number of occasions at IAPA events, including the annual meetings of 1886 and 1887. Linda Walker credits Chant with helping to ‘formulate the moral basis of Liberal feminism’, and as noted earlier, her primary area of interest was in social purity campaigns, although she was also an active suffragist. Like Isabella Tod, she took a strong line on personal morality, although she went further than Tod in her campaign to improve and purify public life. Her interests in this respect were similar to those of the Moral Reform Union (MRU). Like the MRU, in 1888 Chant protested against Sir Charles Dilke’s candidacy for a position on London County Council because Dilke had been named as correspondent in a divorce case in 1885. Chant was also an engaging and controversial lecturer: in 1888 Henrietta Müller termed her ‘the most popular of our lady speakers’.37

During the late 1880s, Chant conducted a relentless campaign to make the streets of London safer for women. However, in her terms this meant ridding them of prostitutes so that ‘respectable’ women could use public spaces unmolested. Unlike many of her contemporaries, including Josephine Butler, Chant endorsed the middle-class philanthropist’s view of the working class as ‘“child-like” and in need of direction’, though she was also highly critical of the (sexual) leisure pursuits of the male aristocracy. Seen by critics as a dangerous example of the ‘New Woman’, it is nonetheless clear that although she tried to rid the streets and public entertainment sites of prostitutes, her ultimate aim was in fact to transform these sites so that women could move freely in them without fearing attack or loss of respectability. As Lucy Bland notes, the public arena in the 1880s was ‘reserved for men and those women who “immorally” serviced them’, so in trying to change the nature of the public sphere, Chant was in her own terms attempting to free women from repression. She curtailed prostitutes’ liberty by attempting to eliminate their public presence, but argued that this was necessary because under the existing state of affairs, firstly, her own liberty (and that of respectable women like her) was being curtailed as a result of prostitutes’ freedom, and secondly, prostitutes’ liberty was infringed because she argued, ‘vice in itself is a colossal injustice’. Of course, the prostitutes, and many other philanthropists who were seeking to ‘help’ them, such as Josephine Butler, did not see the problem in quite these terms.

Chant’s arguments on behalf of the peace movement reflected her moral purity feminism. She particularly favoured maternalist arguments
for peace, telling the IAPA’s 1886 annual meeting that she ‘could not imagine a mother looking on placidly at the number of men who were trained in the world for no other purpose than to be run through by bayonets’. Like Isabella Tod, Chant argued that education could be used as a means to prevent war, and that boys needed ‘a different education . . . beginning it in the nursery’, so that they ‘should not be taught to find pleasure in those toys which men suffer for afterwards’. By this means, she argued, ‘women could do a great deal . . . to help forward the great cause’. Indeed, it was on women’s ‘own inner moral sense that the world would rely’ to reach higher levels of civilisation.\(^{39}\) These arguments exemplify the Evangelical moral purity stance on peace, with its distinctive focus on the luxuries of resourceful middle-class motherhood and unceasing moral improvement.

A clear contrast to Chant can be found in another advocate of education who spoke for the IAPA, Miss Florence Balgarnie (1856–1928). Balgarnie had more in common in terms of politics and ideology with Florence Fenwick Miller than she did with Laura Ormiston Chant or Isabella Tod. She was based in Scarborough, but of Irish descent, and was the daughter of a Congregationalist minister. She had been educated in London and Germany, was a member of the School Board in Scarborough for two years in the early 1880s, worked as full-time secretary to the Central National Society for Women’s Suffrage, was co-founder of the Women’s Trade Union Association, and in 1894 became secretary of the Anti-Lynching Committee. Balgarnie was also a member of the Men and Women’s Club, a radical, elitist club of twenty members that ran for four years in the late 1880s to discuss ‘the mutual position and relation of men and women’.\(^{40}\) Like the Ashursts, she had great respect for Mazzini, and also for the writings of Ruskin.

In defining women’s emancipation in a paper read to the Men and Women’s Club in 1888, Balgarnie argued that the first step must be economic independence for women, followed by the control of (men’s) passion by the use of reason. She rarely felt happy as part of this Club, however, and revealed to Henrietta Müller in an interview the following year that ‘Fine ladies make me nervous . . . I do not prefer speaking at drawing-room meetings. I am more at home when addressing working people, especially working men.’ The drawing-room atmosphere of most women’s peace meetings clearly did not appeal to her. She preferred an environment in which real debate took place: ‘When the audience is either sympathetic, or directly antagonistic, one’s ideas flow forth easily, and the listeners seem to inspire one.’\(^{41}\)
In keeping with this preference for lively listeners, rather than the restrained reading or speaking that characterised drawing-room meetings, Balgarnie’s arguments on peace education focused on the sort of opportunities that would have been available to working-class children, instead of (like Chant) drawing on the experience of the middle classes: the working-class home had no nursery or toy soldiers. Balgarnie highlighted the issue of discipline and argued that it was in the (mis)use of punishment that aggressive behaviour was learnt. In educating working-class children, ‘the master or mistress, . . . being a bigger animal, could exert more physical power . . . instead of appealing to a child’s common sense’. She emphasised the class differences in education during this period, showing that among the working as well as the middle classes, belligerent behaviour was learnt and had direct effects in adulthood.

Balgarnie also drew on Ruskin in her arguments against war. Borrowing from his lecture on war in The Crown of Wild Olive, she argued that women were partly culpable for war because of their lack of interest in peace questions. Following Ruskin, Balgarnie used the same assumption of what might be called the false consciousness of middle-class women that was used by many speakers and writers who argued that women and peace were inherently linked. War was, she said, nothing but ‘a sorrow and an affliction to woman’, yet women appeared to have no sympathy for the cause of peace. Instead, they were ‘dazzled’ by the red coats of the military. In a paraphrase of Ruskin, she raised a laugh from the audience by saying that ‘If only the women of England could be made to feel half as much for the horrors of a great battle, as they cared for the smashing of their best tea-things at home, we should very soon see war cease.’ From Ruskin, these arguments appear misogynist in their emphasis, coming as they do at the end of a long lecture on men’s role in war, at which it is concluded that war is ‘wholly’ the fault of women, who ‘are too selfish and too thoughtless to take pains for any creature out of your own immediate circles’. Yet for Balgarnie, who was more comfortable debating among working people than giving a formal speech to a large, middle-class meeting, such an argument had a very different impact, and it is likely that as an experienced public speaker she was aware of this. A critique of the idleness and political ignorance of middle-class women could be used to much greater effect by a woman than by a man. Balgarnie’s exploitation of this is confirmed by the fact that she does not actually reference Ruskin in her speech, instead presenting her ideas as an outgrowth of her experience.

In addition to the ‘modernity and vibrant radicalism’ that these four women represented, they brought a range of finely honed speaking
and debating skills to the IAPA meetings.\textsuperscript{46} Isabella Tod’s and Laura Ormiston Chant’s middle-class philanthropic backgrounds contrasted with the working-class women’s concerns which Florence Fenwick Miller and Florence Balgarnie attempted to represent. Isabella Tod’s critiques of expansionist imperialism and her opposition to the use of violence and physical force contrasted with Fenwick Miller’s combative and controversial approach to the question of how to achieve peace and arbitration. All four women introduced feminist arguments of sexual difference through, for example, Chant’s analyses of maternalism and education, and Balgarnie’s conflicting critique of idle middle-class womanhood and domesticity. Their involvement with the IAPA demonstrates that, within some contexts, the various strands of the women’s movement could be brought into dialogue with one another. The abstract question of peace, and women’s relationship to it, was addressed in many different ways. Chant drew on quasi-essentialist ideas of woman’s innate moral nature, while Tod represented moral behaviour as a universal human aspiration. The agnosticism of Miller and secularism of Balgarnie provided a strong contrast with Chant, an Evangelical preacher. In addition, Tod’s Unionism set her apart from the Home Rulers who dominated the IAPA. Yet all four women found common ground within the Association, accommodating as it did Evangelicals and secularists, neo-Malthusianists and social purity campaigners.

Despite the divergent interests within the peace and feminist movements of the late Victorian period, it was possible to formulate co-operative and collaborative approaches through which many diverse interest groups could unite to express common aims. By the turn of the century, the IAPA was working with absolute pacifists, Continental nationalists, socialists and feminists, all of whom had different conceptions of what peace meant and how it might be achieved. To further illustrate the range of ways in which women worked for social progress through the IAPA, the following chapter examines the work of its two single-sex auxiliaries, the Women’s Peace and Arbitration Auxiliary, which seceded from the Peace Society and affiliated to the IAPA in 1881–82, and the Women’s Committee, which was established in 1887.

Notes

1 *Concord* (18 June 1890), p. 77.
4 Ibid., p. 4.
7 Herald (1 June 1886), p. 76; (1 January 1889), p. 167.
9 Élie Ducommun, ‘Report on the work of the International Peace Bureau from 1 January 1891 to 31 January 1891’, Document 1, Box 38, IPB.
10 W. Gilliver to Élie Ducommun, 11 August 1892; P. H. Peckover to Élie Ducommun, 19 July 1892; Isaac Sharp to Élie Ducommun, 5 August 1892; W. E. Darby to Élie Ducommun, 23 July 1892; J. F. Green to Élie Ducommun, 28 July 1892 and 12 August 1892; M. L. Cooke to Élie Ducommun, 8 August 1892; list of delegates, 21 July 1892; Document 3, Box 64, IPB.
11 International Peace Bureau, Resolutions of the Eight Universal Peace Congresses 1889–1897, n.d., 29, Document 9, Box 58, IPB.
13 Élie Ducommun and others, 15 May 1900 and 25 May 1900, Document 4, Box 201, IPB.
14 Hodgson Pratt to Élie Ducommun, 1 January 1900, Document 5, Box 200, IPB.
15 Pamphlet for a Trafalgar Square Demonstration, 24 September 1899, ‘Protest of the men and women of London against war with the Transvaal Republic’, Document 1, Box 200, IPB. The Transvaal Committee was an offshoot of the Transvaal Independence Association, founded in 1881. Dominated by radicals, its work fed into that of the South Africa Conciliation Committee. Interestingly, its chairman was J. Passmore Edwards of the Peace Society, and its treasurer, Dr G. B. Clark, was a member of the IAPA. Stephen Koss (ed.) The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement (London: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 3.
17 Peace Society Minute Book, 22 November 1881, 19 June 1882, PSA.
20 Concord (17 March 1891), p. 47.
21 Total IAPA membership was about four hundred people, with an additional circulation of the Journal to subscribing non-members of about one hundred. Concord (1884–1899); see also J. Frederick Green to Élie Ducommun, 21 September 1898, Document 7, Box 19, IPB.
28 Ibid. (31 July 1885), p. 137.
29 Concord (17 March 1891), p. 45.
30 Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, pp. 66–7, 235; Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 193.
33 WSJ (1 September 1888), p. 165; see also (1 July 1882), p. 105.
34 See chapter 9 for a fuller discussion of this. WSJ (1 January 1889), pp. 4, 8–14.
35 Walker, 'Party political women', p. 177.
36 Ibid., pp. 176–7; Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, p. 126; Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 105.
38 Bland, Banishing the Beast, pp. 106, 118, 121.
41 WPP (16 March 1889) in Bland, Banishing the Beast, p. 44; Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, p. 68.
43 Ibid.
46 Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight, p. 67.