



Gustave Moynier at the time of the founding of the Red Cross

François Bugnion

Gustave Moynier

1826 – 1910

International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies

Henry Dunant Society

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Gustave Moynier, 1826-1910	7
A privileged childhood	8
School years, the Collège de Genève and university	10
First hesitant steps in professional life	14
The Geneva Public Welfare Society and philanthropy	19
The aftermath of a battle	23
The foundation of the Red Cross	25
From the foundation of the Red Cross to the first Geneva Convention	36
President of the International Committee of the Red Cross	42
The revision of the Geneva Convention	58
The Alabama arbitration and the foundation of the Institute of International Law	61
Consul General of the Congo Free State	65

The family man and patriarch	71
Conclusion	74
Chronology	77
Bibliography	88
Illustrations credits	95

Gustave Moynier

1826 – 1910

A picture taken by the famous photographer Frédéric Boissonnas at the closing ceremony of the Diplomatic Conference of 1906, which revised the 1864 Geneva Convention, shows us Gustave Moynier as a sharp-eyed gentleman with snow-white hair and an array of medals on his chest. Four years later, on his death, the International Committee of the Red Cross, of which Moynier was President from 1864 until his death, received messages of sympathy and condolences from every country in Europe, Asia and America.

However, just a few years after his death, Moynier had already been forgotten. At a lecture given on 12 March 1917 in the lecture hall at the University of Geneva, Bernard Bouvier exhorted his fellow-citizens to “*rank him among those who have most greatly honoured their country*”. The appeal was in vain. If every citizen of Geneva and many people around the world know more or less who were Calvin, Rousseau and Henry Dunant, hardly anyone has heard of Gustave Moynier.

How to explain that contrast between a life distinguished by success, renown and acclaim and that rapid slide into

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What achievements are due to Gustave Moynier! By proposing a strategy for the implementation of the ideas of genius expressed by Henry Dunant on the final pages of his book *A Memory of Solferino*, he made a decisive contribution to the foundation of the Red Cross. The Geneva Convention of 22 August 1864, which was the starting point for contemporary international humanitarian law, came largely from his pen. As President of the International Committee of the Red Cross from 1864 to 1910, Moynier gave the organization the doctrinal framework and the basic guidelines for its work until today. He was also one of the founders of the Institute of International Law and a forerunner of an international system of criminal justice.

And yet, after his death, his name was soon forgotten.

Written in a simple, straightforward style, this short biography sets out to recall the main stages in the life and work of Gustave Moynier. It also endeavours to shed light on the importance of the legacy that he has bequeathed us, without which humanity would not be what it is.

François Bugnion, Bachelor of Arts and Doctor of Political Science, joined the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1970. He worked both at headquarters and in the field. From January 2000 to June 2006, he was Director for International Law and Cooperation at the ICRC. He is the author of more than fifty publications on international humanitarian law and on the history of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Since May 2010, he is a member of the ICRC.

English translation by Ms Glynis Thompson.

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