



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Histoire de Belgique* by Henri Pirenne

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what lies before us is only a long home-stretch. May life and health be his for the completion of his great task!

GEORGE L. BURR.

Histoire de Belgique. Par HENRI PIRENNE, Professeur à l'Université de Gand. Volume VI. (Brussels: Lamertin. 1926. Pp. viii, 477.)

THIS is the sixth volume in a series that is to cover the history of Belgium from its earliest beginnings. The author, Professor Pirenne, is entirely too modest. In the preface to his book he apologizes for what he calls "une ébauche sommaire et provisoire". In reality, he has produced a lucid, scholarly, and entertaining narrative worthy of the same high commendation that his earlier works have received.

At the very outset the author assumes an attitude to the early revolutionary period that is too often neglected to-day. He reminds his readers that the Revolution was not purely French in origin, but that it was, in great part, cosmopolitan and universal, the result of the policies of the enlightened despots. With this larger aspect in mind, Professor Pirenne turns to the consideration of Belgium. As far as that country is concerned, the author treats of the Revolution as the continuance of the policy of the Ancien Régime. Ever since the battle of Bouvines, France had sought to hold Belgium for the sake of its frontiers or for the hegemony in Europe. This practice was continued at Jemappes. Leaving aside the narration of military campaigns and diplomatic events, the author confines his attention to a splendid analysis of the revolutionary movement as a schooling of the Belgians in the arts of governing according to the New Régime and in the forging of an already nascent national consciousness in spite of the local antagonisms of the country. In the earlier period Dumouriez is the great hero of a moderate liberalism and the protector of the people of Belgium against an increasingly ambitious and radical party at Paris. Neerwinden and the entrance of the Austrians into the provinces rid the Belgians of the latter danger. With the victory of the French in October, 1795, however, the amalgamation of Belgium and Liège to France was temporarily accomplished. Then it was that the French administrative system was established in these provinces and the country was compressed and unified as it never had been before. Belgium began her political and electoral apprenticeship, but religious, social, and industrial life remained in abeyance. Matters were brought almost to a climax by the Conscription Law of September, 1798, that aroused a peasant revolt and that spread discontent over Belgium. The *coup d'état* of Brumaire in 1799, however, brought, for the time being, better conditions, and a period of stabilization ensued. Under the Consulate and the Empire the Belgians received a real education in the new principles. Terrible sacrifices were paid, but with one exception the country enjoyed internal peace until 1814. The system of departments and an ordered and uniform government benefited the country, industry began again to flour-

ish, and prosperity to appear. The Empire concluded the political education of the country.

In 1814, with the disappearance of Napoleon, the test came. The kingdom of the Netherlands was formed as a barrier of Europe against France. Of this kingdom, the Belgians, because of the unity that they had experienced and the principles that they had learned, were an unhappy part. Led by their bourgeoisie and a liberally inclined clergy, that included even the princes of the Church, the desire of the people for independence and liberty was fostered under the very nose of King William. This movement profited even by certain advantages that he gave them. A wise economic policy permitted an increase of prosperity and population that fed the strength of the separatists. The movement for revolt became religious and intellectual as well as political. Its leaders sought to show the liberally inclined nations that the question of Belgian unity was a necessary corollary to the survival of their own liberal ideas. It was this belief that finally led England and Louis Philippe to labor for the preservation of the revolutionary movement in Belgium during the years 1830-1831. The three concluding chapters treat of the laying of the foundations of the kingdom of Belgium and its recognition by the European powers.

Space will not permit of a more detailed analysis of Professor Pirenne's work. Throughout the book there is evident all the exacting and careful scholarly criticism for which the author is noted. To the mind of the reviewer the most significant part is the larger section relating to the period of the Revolution and the Empire. This work is one that will be of very real value and interest to all students of revolutionary and nineteenth-century Europe.

JOHN M. S. ALLISON.

The Struggle for the Rhine. By HERMANN STEGEMANN. Translated by Georges Chatterton-Hill. (New York: A. A. Knopf. 1927. Pp. 432. 12 M.)

SOMETHING should be done to get the historians out of the trenches. They are invariably at the outposts, sniping each other in peace across national frontiers and lighting the fires of the next war under cover of objectivity. They take full possession of the trenches after war closes and the soldiers disarm. But not they. They are just going into action.

Dr. Stegemann does even better than this in his *Struggle for the Rhine*. He fights not only the last war, but all previous Central European wars and at the same time prepares his German and his French readers for the next. The grand total in 430 pages is the shedding of enough blood to redden the Rhine and its tributaries from Basel to the North Sea. The prospect he opens up for the future is such an unending struggle that European civilization might as well curse the Rhine and die.

Dr. Stegemann having written a four-volume *History of the War* (1914-1918) now feels logically compelled to draw the lessons from this