

character on either side the Channel, fostered by George Wyndham, riveted by the War, and set forth in the future pages of this Review, may help to expand the ideal Brotherhood of Man, which is the essential foundation for any International League.

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CONSIDÉRATIONS POLITIQUES SUR LA DÉFENSE DE LA MEUSE, ÉMILE BANNING. Paris. Van Oest. 2 frs. 40.

While full credit is being given to those brave men of the garrison of Liège who in August 1914 held up the German onslaught for a few decisive days, it would not be right to forget the builders of the fortifications, the far-seeing Leopold II and his military engineer, General Brialmont, or the King's political adviser, Émile Banning, whose ability much exceeded that of his compatriots who stood in the limelight. A retiring and watchful observer of the course of events, a studious reader of history and politics, he was the author of what is probably the most valuable document for the understanding of Belgian affairs in the nineteenth century, the confidential report written in 1882, revised in 1886, and entitled, '*Considérations politiques sur la défense de la Meuse.*'

This has long been more or less accessible in various forms; it has now been edited for publication and prefaced with a somewhat lengthy introduction by an unnamed writer who supplies a few particulars of Banning's life and work, but who carefully eschews discussion of the vital problems touched upon in the report itself.

Banning has proved one of the most truthful prophets of the Great War; if the military measures proposed by him had been taken in time, his country might perhaps have kept out of the catastrophe. While his knowledge of German thought was unequalled, his own outlook and method were coloured by the influence of the earlier Bismarckian *Realpolitik*. He accepted as a matter of course the selfishness of every single State and the uselessness of any appeal to honesty and principle. His own view of Belgium was the orthodox and desperate one of a buffer State destined to take the blows aimed at the neighbouring Powers. Therefore it had to arm to the teeth in the interests of Europe as well as in its own; but if once forced into the fray, it could afterwards neither recover its neutrality nor avoid permanent alliances. He thus believed that the ties formed during the struggle were bound to survive it, and that his small homeland must lean for good on the larger Powers to which it had become attached. This prophecy naturally left out of account such unexpected developments as the appearance of the American armies on European battlefields or President Wilson's proposal for a League of Nations. It was founded on the assumption that the British Empire would maintain no large army, and that Germany would remain a menace to her neighbours. The task now before Belgian statesmanship is to discover how much truth Banning's creed will retain after the peace.

Several of the late utterances of Belgian politicians sound like echoes

of Banning's comment on the maiming of their country's territory performed by the Powers in 1839. 'Il n'est aucun esprit politique en Europe qui ne reconnaisse aujourd'hui que la Belgique indépendante a été mal délimitée. Le tracé des XXIV articles est une œuvre pleine d'arrière-pensées, trahissant ici l'ignorance ou la défiance, ailleurs l'hostilité ou des espérances ambitieuses. Le pays est ouvert aux trois extrémités du triangle qu'il forme; il n'a de limites politiques ni militaires nulle part.' This pronouncement, which has been so cruelly confirmed by the fall of Antwerp and by the other incidents of the campaign of 1914, clearly puts the case for Belgium's territorial claims at the Peace Conference.

While students of politics will be mainly concerned with those speculations as to the near future, historians will find Banning's report a storehouse of essential and reliable information on the past. No other author has collected and co-ordinated data so various in origin or so illuminating in character. German, French, and English diplomatic papers, Parliamentary debates, articles, books, and pamphlets have been searched for facts throwing light on Belgian interests, and we may well repeat the anonymous editor's wish that Banning's other writings may also be reprinted.

While the name of England often recurs in the *Considérations* as the enemy of Napoleonic France, its future part is dismissed with the summary remark that it has no army. When the work of the coming Conference is completed for better or for worse, and when Belgium is again threatened with a German invasion, the lessons taught by the report under review can be conned again, and their bearing on future dangers estimated. Meanwhile, no conscientious observer of international politics should neglect to weigh and to digest its facts and ideas; it is the tersest and most informing document in existence on Belgian affairs.

PAUL HAMÉLIUS.

MONSIEUR LE CURÉ D'OZERON, FRANCIS JAMMES. *Mercur de France.* 3 frs. 50 c.

It may sound paradoxical, in an age when 'Education' is the watchword of the day, to say that we suffer from too much cleverness. Nevertheless, we are, in fact, 'too clever by half.' On every side—in our newspapers, our reviews, our novels—we are dazzled by the amazing brilliance of our writers. Never, surely, was talent so common and, alas! never was genius so rare. Now it is possible—nay, all too easy—to acquire cleverness, or at least to mislead the unwary with a colourable imitation of it. But genius is of a different order. It cannot be counterfeited. When, with his dying breath, Hamlet, as the darkness of death descends upon him, says, 'The rest is silence,' that is something that mere talent could never have invented; that is genius. Again, when we open our Wordsworth and read:

'A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas,
Among the farthest Hebrides.'