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Emile Bourgeois

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HISTORY
OF
MODERN FRANCE

IN TWO VOLUMES

Volume I 1815–1852

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BY
EMILE BOURGEOIS

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GENERAL PREFACE

The aim of this series is to sketch the history of Modern Europe, with that of its chief colonies and conquests, from about the end of the fifteenth century down to the present time. In one or two cases the story commences at an earlier date: in the case of the colonies it generally begins later. The histories of the different countries are described, as a rule, separately; for it is believed that, except in epochs like that of the French Revolution and Napoleon I, the connection of events will thus be better understood and the continuity of historical development more clearly displayed.

The series is intended for the use of all persons anxious to understand the nature of existing political conditions. "The roots of the present lie deep in the past"; and the real significance of contemporary events cannot be grasped unless the historical causes which have led to them are known. The plan adopted makes it possible to treat the history of the last four centuries in considerable detail, and to embody the most important results of modern research. It is hoped therefore that the series will be useful not only to beginners but to students who have already acquired some general knowledge of European History. For those who wish to carry their studies further, the bibliography appended to each volume will act as a guide to original sources of information and works of a more special character.

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PREFACE

THE author of this work having asked me to write a few words by way of introduction, I readily consent, for I esteem it an honour to have been the means of bringing his book before the British public. It would ill beseem me, as general editor of the series to which it belongs, to praise a work in whose production I have necessarily had some share, however humble; and praise would be superfluous, for I am convinced that the book will amply recommend itself. But it may be interesting to its readers to learn something of the author, and of his high qualifications for the task which, at my invitation, he undertook.

M. Bourgeois began his historical studies as the pupil of Fustel de Coulanges, Ernest Lavisse, and Gabriel Monod. After devoting himself for some years to the teaching of medieval history at the University of Caen, he became a professor at the University of Lyons, where he studied and taught the history of modern France, and the general history of Europe since the seventeenth century. During his residence at Lyons (1885–93), he published three volumes on the diplomacy of the Regent and the Abbé Dubois, George the First and Elizabeth Farnese. This work was “crowned” by the Institute of France. He also

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edited, with critical notes, the correspondence of Alberoni, Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XIV*, and Spanheim's *Relation de la Cour de France*. In 1890 he undertook a still more ambitious task—the production of an *Historical Manual on the Foreign Policy of France from Richelieu to the Congress of Berlin*. This work, the ripe fruit of researches in the archives of his own and other countries, pursued during twenty years, has been completed in three volumes. A fourth volume, in which the author hopes to carry the story down to the present day, is in preparation. M. Bourgeois' chapters in the *Cambridge Modern History* (vols. x, xi and xii), on France during the Restoration, the Monarchy of July, the Revolution of 1848, the Second Empire and the Third Republic, are familiar to many readers. From Lyons he passed first to the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and thence to a professorship at the University of Paris, where, as Professor of Diplomatic and Political History, he has prepared many pupils to take a leading part in education and historical science. During the last twenty years he has also taught Modern History at the Ecole des Sciences Politiques—an institution in which most of the higher members of the public services in France, especially of the Corps Diplomatique, receive their training. These professorships he still holds.

In the work before us, M. Bourgeois has traced the lines of that remarkable political evolution through which France has been able to realise the principles and to establish the institutions of democracy—an evolution retarded at one

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time by the worshippers of the Ancien Régime, at another by the devotees of Napoleonism, and still more by the difficulty of reconciling individual liberty and social progress with the administrative centralisation dear to a people as much in love with order as with liberty. The author has endeavoured to treat the events and the personages of this difficult and complex period with impartiality. If his own predilections and political opinions occasionally make themselves felt, or may be gathered from his survey as a whole, no reasonable person will blame him for that. It is within the province of the historian not only to narrate but to judge. He must present the facts as they are, inventing nothing, concealing nothing, distorting nothing; but, having presented the facts, it is not only his right but his duty to pass judgment upon them. By deciding a case one way or the other—by acquitting or condemning—a judge does not forfeit his claim to impartiality. Justice and indignation are not incompatible.

The historian, in dealing with recent times, finds it at once especially important and unusually hard to write without political bias. That M. Bourgeois has succeeded in this task, I believe his critics will allow. And if there is a peculiar difficulty in writing recent history, arising not only from this cause but also from the fact that many important records and documents are not yet divulged, the attempt to trace its connexion and development enjoys this peculiar advantage, that it opens our eyes to the aims,

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the motives and the occurrences which have led directly to the events of our own day. Moreover, the evidence of contemporaries is, in all historical epochs, the primary source and the first condition of our knowledge. The learned who study ancient times have to put forth a great effort of sympathy and imagination in order to revive the past and to make the dead bones live. To place oneself in the position of a contemporary is the first requisite if one is to understand the motives and appreciate the actions of men long since buried in the dust of ages. The historian of the 19th century, writing early in the 20th, is called upon to make no such effort. He has seen with his own eyes many of the events which he describes; he has personally known the actors, or has seen and conversed with those who knew them; and what he may lose in perspective or in cool because unconcerned judgment, he more than gains in intimacy and vividness of portraiture.

G. W. PROTHERO.

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