


ERNEST NYS, 1851-1920

In the death of M. Ernest Nys on September 5, 1920, the science of international law lost one of its most fruitful contributors, internationalism a leading advocate, the University of Brussels perhaps its most distinguished professor, and Belgium one of her most eminent jurists and publicists.

Professor Nys was born at Coutrai, Belgium, in 1851, and received his higher education at the Universities of Ghent, Heidelberg, Leipzig, and Berlin. Later he was granted honorary degrees by the Universities of Oxford, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. He began life as a member of the bench at Antwerp—his judicial career culminating in his appointment as member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, and President of the Chamber in the Court of Appeals at Brussels.

It was, however, in pursuance of his duties as Professor of International Law at the University of Brussels, and as one of the editors of the *Revue de Droit International et de Législation Comparée*, that he was most active as a contributor to the science of international law. For many years preceding the Great War, the files of the *Revue* bear witness to his prolific researches in the history of international law, more particularly during the Middle Ages. In 1894 many of these studies were published in book form under the title *Les Origines du Droit International*. This interesting collection was followed by two others (in 1896 and 1901 respectively) bearing the title *Etudes de Droit International et de Droit Public*. These volumes constitute a treasure containing a mine of historical research for any library that possesses them.

It would be impossible for us to give anything like a complete résumé or even bibliography of the many and various writings of Professor Nys. They include, for example, a valuable introduction to the text and translation of Francisci de Victoria's *De Indis et de jure belli relectiones*, published by the Carnegie Institution at Washington, in 1917. Suffice it to say that the work of Professor Nys as an authority on international law culminated in a sense in the publication (in three volumes, 1904-06) of a treatise entitled *Le Droit International, Les Principes, Les Theories, Les Faits*. This work was characterized by great learning, originality and vigor, and is a distinct contribution to the history and theoretical development of our science.

M. Nys was a distinguished member of a number of learned societies, including the Institute of International Law, of which he was a very active member, and the American Society of International Law, of which he was one of the few honorary members.

The writer of this memorial notice never had the good fortune of personal contact with Professor Nys; but if a deep and sympathetic appreciation of a man's writings confers a title of friendship, then one may perhaps be permitted to express a strong sense of personal sorrow over the passing of this wise, cultivated and liberal spirit. Certainly the cause of internationalism has suffered a great loss.

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