

**BELGIAN
DEMOCRACY,
ITS EARLY HISTORY**

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Belgian democracy, its early history by Henri Pirenne

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BELGIAN DEMOCRACY

ITS EARLY HISTORY

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TO MY FRIEND
PROFESSOR PAUL VINOGRADOFF
OF OXFORD.

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

THIS little book first saw the light in 1910. Since that date, no work has appeared which has required me to reconsider the general ideas on which it is based. Nevertheless, this English translation includes a certain number of detailed corrections which have here and there improved the text.

The subject of this book deals with the Low Countries as a whole, using the term in its old acceptation to designate the stretch of country now comprising the French departments of the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais as well as the kingdoms of Belgium and Holland. The only democracies known to those districts before our own days were the urban democracies, and therefore no one will be surprised to find that towns are the sole topic of this little book. Moreover, the scope of the work is in practice almost entirely limited to the towns of the modern kingdom of Belgium. Nowhere in northern Europe did democratic institutions grow up with more energy and result than in the towns on the banks of the Scheldt and the Meuse. Quite apart from the historical interest which this remarkable development offers, the study of the history of democracy in the Belgium of the past is well worthy of the attention of those who wish to investigate the problems of contemporary democracy. In this relation I cannot but express my profound conviction that the vitality which the towns of Belgium have hitherto shewn in all stages of their history is a certain proof that they will assuredly renew their strength, even after the terrible disasters of which they have recently become the victims. May the English-