

## BOOK NOTES

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DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES, A. By Samuel F. Bemis, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1936. Pp. 809. \$5.00.

Mr. Bemis' work raises academic questions of his interpretation of past events and questions regarding the wisdom of his political doctrine for the future. In isolationism he sees the great working Konstant in the conduct of our past foreign affairs, and he would urge our use of the Konstant in seeking a formula for such future relations. Where the author shifts in function from bard to prophet he must submit himself to the heckling of the market place. It is inevitable that there will be heckling, for Mr. Bemis' judgments, being political and not historical in nature, allow for contrary conclusions as additional facts are collected or as deficiencies in reasoning are rectified. Equally eminent scholars view the same set of facts and arrive at categorically opposed political doctrines. Professor Bemis emerges with the political formula of isolationism; others emerge with the formula of collective security.

Now Mr. Bemis is a good man and hates violence and imperialism. He is writing at a critical time. Faced with the prospect of a European war, he addresses himself to the problem of preventing America from repeating its "strange interlude" of the last World War. The facts of American history give him his answer. From the creation of the nation until 1898 we made few serious mistakes in diplomacy because we pursued a continental policy. When we attempted to take our place as a world power, our mental faculties failed us. Since we are likely to get "skunked" if we try to play ball with the Europeans who all live on the wrong side of the tracks, we should confine our activities to our own back yard. Here, given the assumption of violence as a means of achieving the catharsis for political impasses, we have a good chance of enforcing our political claims.

In the present state of world affairs it is highly questionable whether we could live in a hermetically sealed international vacuum even if we wanted to. The United States has interests which extend beyond the effective range of its political and military sanctions. To protect these interests it must combine with other powers who are within the range of effective military sanctions. Despite the recent neutrality legislation it is doubtful that we would abandon these interests in time of a European war. The only way America can keep out of war (unless we are educated to, and willing to accept the price of peace) is to prevent a European war from arising.

Mr. Bemis pays precious little attention to the danger in which the democratic principle of government would be placed if Europe fell under fascist hegemony. The cry of save the world for democracy may have been a wolf! wolf! affair in 1917, but it would be unfortunate if the sins of the fathers blind the children to the real problems they must face today. It would be more consonant with the genius of the American people to protect their interests, not by isolationism, but by entering into regional pacts with other nations whose concerted action would preserve peace in the world until the just grievances of the unsatiated and unsatiated nations are peacefully worked out. This Mr. Bemis will not grant.