

Economics for the popular classes.

Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu and his translations of Hübner's *Der kleine Volkswirth* into French and Dutch

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Abstract

The Belgian economist Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu was a pivotal figure in the dissemination of Otto Hübner's *Der kleine Volkswirth* in Europe. His translation, adaptation and extension of Hübner's booklet into French was used for subsequent translations into Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Ottoman and Japanese. Hübner's booklet became an international bestseller after going through the hands of Le Hardy de Beaulieu.

Le Hardy de Beaulieu's translation intended to disseminate liberal economic ideas among the working population. This effort was part of a larger mission that liberal economists in Belgium and Europe had given themselves to popularize economic ideas. The battle over the hearts and minds was fought against nationalist-protectionist and neo-mercantilist policies and increasingly against socialist and communist ideas. The success of socialism and communism amongst the working people threatened the liberal interpretations of society as being the fair and harmonious result of the functioning of the market. By means of his *Petit manuel*, Le Hardy de Beaulieu wanted to explain to the working population how markets functioned, that property, trade and the division of labour were natural - even divine - institutions, and that freedom meant emancipation from slavery and feudalism but also entailed responsibilities.

We discuss the intellectual, social and political context in which Le Hardy de Beaulieu translated and adapted Hübner's booklet into French and Dutch. Furthermore, we go into the genesis of the Dutch edition and its influence on the subsequent third French edition. For our paper we use the publications of Le Hardy de Beaulieu and primary archival sources from Le Hardy de Beaulieu's Flemish publisher.

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1. Introduction

In 1863 the Ghent-based cultural association Willemsfonds (Willems Foundation) published a Dutch translation of Otto Hübner's *Der kleine Volkswirth* as N° 43 of its publication series.¹

In its annual report for 1862 it wrote:

Our attention was drawn to this book by Mr Ch. Le Hardy de Beaulieu, honorary professor of economics at the mine school of Mons, whose French enlarged imitation of this already after less than one year is going to a second edition. The great success which this book has had in Germany and subsequently also here, gives us hope that we will have more luck with this publication than with most of the Foundation's publications, of which barely four or five have covered their costs. These expectations and also the undisputed merit of the original work and of the chapters added by Mr Le Hardy, incited us to make an exception to the rule, which we enforced upon ourselves, to use the available means first exclusively for the completion of ongoing projects and for the execution of decisions which have been postponed.²

The book lived up to its expectations: it generated profits for the Willemsfonds, which published three further editions (1864, 1869, 1875). These Dutch versions were closely related, although not identical, to the various French translations/adaptations made by Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu which appeared in the same period. We will show that the first edition of the Dutch translation was of some importance for the subsequent third French edition.

In this paper we tell the story of the publication of the Belgian translations and adaptations of Hübner's booklet, and highlight the pivotal role of Le Hardy de Beaulieu in the international dissemination of Hübner's work. The availability of archival material entails a bias towards the Flemish editions: while we had access to the archives of the Willemsfonds, unfortunately we have not been able to locate the personal archives of Le Hardy de Beaulieu.³

2. Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu and the education and moralisation of the masses

Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu, or Charles de Beaulieu (he signed some of his publications with the abbreviation CdB), was born on 10 March 1816 in Uccle near Brussels as the youngest son of viscount Louis Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1782-1870), a general who had served

¹ A full list of the publications of the Willemsfonds can be found here: www.liberaalarchief.be/wf-def.pdf.

² Willemsfonds (from now on: WF), Yearly Report for 1862, pp. 10-11.

³ The archives of the WF are kept in the Liberaal Archief in Ghent (www.liberaalarchief.be). The minutes of the Board meetings are available from the very beginning (1851), the incoming correspondence from 1862 and copies and drafts of the outgoing correspondence from 1866.

successively in the French, Dutch and Belgian armies and retired from the service in 1838.⁴ Charles should not be confounded with his slightly older cousin Adolphe Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1814-1894), who was also an economist. Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu died on 30 December 1871 and was buried according to the rituals of the masonic lodge *La Libre Pensée* on an icy and rainy 2 January 1872 in Morlanwelz, a small village between Mons and Charleroi and the site of a coalmine.

We are quite well informed on the life of Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu by an obituary published immediately after his death by Eugène Van Bommel, the editor of the *Revue trimestrielle* and a close collaborator.⁵ He relates that Le Hardy de Beaulieu studied in Paris at the *École centrale des arts et manufactures*, which had just been established, and received his engineer's title in 1838. He then started to work in different positions in Spanish industry. After his return to Belgium, Le Hardy de Beaulieu maintained some interests in Spanish companies, in particular La Calera close to Madrid. He was co-proprietor of La Calera together with his brother Camille Le Hardy de Beaulieu and the Carlier family, the in-laws of Camille. The property was sold between 1860 and 1866.⁶

Upon his return to Belgium in 1846 Le Hardy de Beaulieu became professor in mineralogy, geology and metallurgy at the *École spéciale de commerce, d'industrie et des mines du Hainaut* in Mons. At the *Athénée de Mons*, the state secondary school in that city, he started to teach natural history. As an engineer, his first area of scientific interest was in these fields. He wrote on mineralogy and palaeontology in the region of Hainaut where many of Belgium's coalmines were situated.⁷

Le Hardy de Beaulieu's biographers believe that his interest in political economy originated in Spain, where he was confronted with a country in severe distress even though it possessed lots of natural resources.⁸ He participated in the activities of the short-lived *Association belge pour la liberté commerciale*, albeit to a lesser extent than his cousin, and he attended the *Congrès des économistes* held in Brussels in September 1847.⁹ His first publications on the organisation of labour and on free trade were published in 1848 and 1851

⁴ Liagre (1890-1): 714-715.

⁵ Van Bommel (1872); the obituary was not signed, but we have no reason to doubt Marchant's (1890-1) claim in his biography that the piece was written by Van Bommel. There is an anonymous biographical note preceding the fourth edition of the French translation ("Notice biographique sur Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu", 1881), which has been reproduced identically in the *Nouveau Dictionnaire d'Économie Politique* edited by Léon Say and Joseph Chailley in 1900 (Vol. II, 129).

⁶ State Archives of Mons, Archives Family Carlier, nrs. 100-112.

⁷ E.g. Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1854-5; 1861a).

⁸ Van Bommel (1872): 71; Marchant (1890-1): 709.

⁹ Erreygers (2007).

in the journal of the *Société des sciences, des arts et des lettres du Hainaut*, a society of which he became a member in 1847 and served as secretary general for fifteen years.¹⁰ When the course of political economy at the *Ecole spéciale de commerce, d'industrie et des mines* was added to his responsibilities somewhere around 1850, political economy became his favourite topic. His fame as a scientist rested mainly on his accomplishments in this field.

Together with Gustave de Molinari Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu became the most ardent voice of liberal economics in Belgium in the 1850s and 1860s. Their mission to spread economic ideas was part of a larger effort that liberal economists in Belgium and Europe had given themselves to popularize these ideas.¹¹ The battle over the hearts and minds was fought first of all against protectionist policies. The coalition of the free traders, amongst whom the liberal economists occupied a prominent position, gained a great victory with the liberalisation of the grain trade in the 1840s and 1850s. Gradually, the target of the liberal economists shifted to the fight against socialist and communist ideas. The success of socialism and communism amongst the working people threatened the liberal interpretations of society as being the fair and harmonious result of the functioning of the market. But Le Hardy de Beaulieu also believed that education and the popularisation of science were the best ways to improve the situation of the workers.¹² The idea of education and moralisation of the labourer was not new or limited to this group of liberal economists. It was quite typical for the liberal and Catholic elites around the middle of the nineteenth century. The start of popular libraries in Belgium around 1860 is the clearest indication of the hope of the bourgeois elites to moralise the labourer using books.¹³

Le Hardy de Beaulieu was extremely productive both in terms of publications and in terms of organising, teaching and popularising economics. This is remarkable given that Le Hardy de Beaulieu was affected by blindness in 1858. Apparently, he continued writing in pencil by means of a special device composed of wood, nails and strings.¹⁴ To make matters worse, his wife Octavie Carion passed away on 24 December 1863, aged 39, leaving Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu in charge of seven children of which the youngest was still in the cradle.¹⁵ His father, who had migrated to the USA in 1849, returned to Belgium in 1860 to help his son.¹⁶

¹⁰ Marchant (1890-1): 710; Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1848a; 1848b).

¹¹ Van Dijck (2008a, 2008b).

¹² "Notice biographique sur Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu" (1881), vii.

¹³ Liesen (1990), 85-86.

¹⁴ Message of Louis le Hardy de Beaulieu to the authors (28 August 2013).

¹⁵ *L'Économiste belge*, 2 January 1864, 10(1), 8.

¹⁶ Leconte (1945), 275-322.

Educating the masses was a calling for Le Hardy de Beaulieu. On top of his already mentioned teaching responsibilities, he started to teach a course in commerce at the *Athénée de Mons*. Around 1855 he founded the *Société des Conférences* in Mons and gave a series of public conferences on political economy in the Hainaut region.¹⁷ In 1867, when de Molinari abandoned the chair of political economy at the *Musée de l'industrie* in Brussels, Le Hardy de Beaulieu went to Brussels each Saturday to teach this course aimed at a broad audience. After he became blind he stopped teaching his courses on mineralogy, geology and metallurgy, but he continued his lectures on political economy at the *École spéciale* up to July 1870. Together with Houzeau de Lehaie, who succeeded him as professor of political economy at the *École des Mines* in 1870, he continued to organize popular lectures in the region of Mons.¹⁸

Le Hardy de Beaulieu proved to be an effective organizer. On 1 July 1855 he wrote a letter to de Molinari with the proposal to start regular meetings of economists in Brussels, with the intention to diffuse economic ideas in Belgium. The first session of the *Société belge d'économie politique* was organised on 23 September 1855 under the presidency of Giovanni Arrivabene. Le Hardy de Beaulieu was member of the board of the society from the beginning. In November 1855 le Hardy de Beaulieu formed a subcommittee of the *Société belge d'économie politique* in Mons. It is however not clear what became of this committee. Le Hardy de Beaulieu also participated in the organisation of the free trade campaign in the following years, leading up to a change of trade policy in Belgium.¹⁹ In December 1855 he was actively involved in the foundation of the *Association belge pour la réforme douanière*.²⁰ He also started a subcommittee of the *Ligue de l'enseignement* in Mons. From 1864 onwards this *Ligue* promoted compulsory education, a campaign energetically supported by the liberal economists of *L'Économiste belge*.²¹

In the field of economics Le Hardy de Beaulieu authored five monographs. His central publication was his 1861 *Traité élémentaire d'économie politique*. Le Hardy intended his *Traité* as a succinct overview of economic science for a public of students in higher education and interested non-specialists. The *Traité* was written in the intellectual tradition of Say, Bastiat, Dunoyer and de Molinari.²² In the same year he published a book about his long standing interest, the commercial relations between Belgium and Spain.²³ In this book Charles

¹⁷ Marchant (1890-1: 711).

¹⁸ Van Bommel (1872), 71-76, and Coosemans (1952), 458-459.

¹⁹ Erreygers (2001), 93-99.

²⁰ Marchant (1890-1), 711.

²¹ Gubin and Lefèvre (1985).

²² Erreygers and Van Dijck (2011), 217-218.

²³ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1861b).

Le Hardy de Beaulieu discussed the products that could be exchanged between Belgium and Spain, as well as the legislative barriers, transport problems and Belgian economic infrastructure.²⁴ Le Hardy de Beaulieu also published on labour and wages, and on property and rents.²⁵ In his *Causeries agricoles* he addressed the development of the agricultural sector, discussed its problems and suggested possible remedies.²⁶

In his obituary Van Bommel wrote that: “Il était surtout le type du véritable moraliste, dans la plus haute et la meilleure acception de ce mot.” Le Hardy de Beaulieu had indeed written extensively on morals and education. In “De la morale, considérée comme un élément indispensable du bien-être de la société” (1862) le Hardy de Beaulieu analysed the role of morality in the economic success of man.²⁷ He returned to his theme of the necessity to educate the working classes in his 1866 article on “Étude de morale et d’économie politique - L’éducation de la classe ouvrière”.²⁸ In *L’Éducation de la femme* (1867) Le Hardy de Beaulieu wrote about the benefits that would follow from the education of working-class women and of women of the world. His argument was that the moral level of society depended on the education of women. He saw education as a way to regenerate women physically and intellectually. This would be an efficient way to remedy social problems such as nurseries, prostitution, pauperism, alcoholism and the death penalty.²⁹ In his *Catéchisme de morale universelle* (1868) Le Hardy de Beaulieu looked for a universal foundation for morals. In this book it was clear that he was a freemason in the continental sense. In his catechism Le Hardy de Beaulieu pointed out that morals are mostly grounded in religion. But religion was a locally defined outing of culture and therefore was not useful as universal base for morality. Le Hardy de Beaulieu looked towards human conscience to find this universal base.³⁰

Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu also regularly contributed to journals such as the *Revue trimestrielle*, the *Journal des économistes*, *La Belgique judiciaire* and the *Revue de la science économique et de la statistique* (Paris). In these journals he wrote prolifically about wages, free trade, food crisis, agriculture and property rights. Moreover, Le Hardy de Beaulieu published in newspapers and magazines like the *Journal Franklin* (Liège), *La Meuse* (Luik), *Le Précurseur d’Anvers*, *L’Union libérale* (Verviers), *La Vérité* (Doornik), *l’Indépendance*

²⁴ Van Bommel (1863), 379-382.

²⁵ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1862a; 1868a).

²⁶ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1865).

²⁷ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1862b), 120-186.

²⁸ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1866), 5-80.

²⁹ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1867). The book had been previously published in instalments in the *Revue trimestrielle* in 1865.

³⁰ Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1868b), Van Bommel (1868).

belge, *la Gazette de Mons* and *L'Observateur belge*. He was one of the animators of *L'Économiste belge*, the central outlet of the liberal group in Belgium, edited by Gustave de Molinari.³¹

Le Hardy de Beaulieu was also the author or translator of a two popular booklets on morals, pedagogy and economics with a clear moralistic and patronizing bias. In *Le catéchisme de la mère* (1863), an educational book intended for use by mothers to educate their children, he explained basic ideas such as time, numbers, simple calculation, food, geography, money, kinds of textiles, the human body, measures, the Belgian institutions, situations to avoid, and a number of rules for social and economic conduct. This book was the translation of a popular American booklet, *The parent's assistant, or a mother's catechism*, which he adapted for a Belgian public and extended substantially.³² It is to the other popular booklet that we now turn our attention.

3. Le Hardy de Beaulieu's translations of Hübner into French and Dutch

Le Hardy de Beaulieu's translation and adaptation of Otto Hübner's *Der kleine Volkswirth* (1852) is quite comparable to *Le catéchisme de la mère*.³³ In 1861 Le Hardy de Beaulieu published his French translation as the *Petit manuel populaire d'économie politique*, which became an international success with translations into Dutch, Spanish (three versions), Portuguese, and Turkish.³⁴ Le Hardy de Beaulieu was convinced that his version of the book would contribute to the amelioration of the situation of the common labourer. The idea was that order, frugality and foresight could be used by any labourer to improve his condition. Education in general was certainly part of this idea of self-betterment. The book wanted to give labourers an insight into the functioning of the economy, so that they could understand why things were as they were. It also pointed to the responsibility of labourers to provide for their own future and for that of their children by means of frugality and education. This was a bourgeois ethos of hard work that was presented as an ideal to the labouring class. *Der kleine Volkswirth* and the *Petit manuel populaire d'économie politique* can be seen as early examples of this Victorian ethos of self-help which was popularised by Samuel Smiles's 1859 homonymic publication.³⁵ Hübner's original and the first (1861) and second (1862) edition of

³¹ Van Dijck (2008a), 377-402.

³² Le Hardy de Beaulieu (1863), Teller (1844).

³³ On Otto Hübner, see Guidi (2013).

³⁴ Erreygers and Van Dijck (2011), 234-235.

³⁵ Jarvis (1997).

the *Petit manuel populaire d'économie politique* also had the religious undertone in common with Smiles.

The initiative for the publication of a Dutch translation by a Flemish publisher was taken by Le Hardy de Beaulieu himself. Whereas his extensive network in French-speaking Belgium (and to a less extent in France) allowed him to publish and sell the French edition without formal institutional support, he now felt the need to obtain the cooperation of a Flemish organisation. For this he chose the Ghent-based Willemsfonds. Founded in 1851, and named after the Flemish writer Jan Frans Willems (1793-1846), the Willemsfonds was a cultural organisation aimed at the defence and propagation of the Dutch language and Flemish culture in the Belgian context.³⁶ It did so by publishing song books, story books, almanacs, etc., all in Dutch. Initially it consisted of both liberals and Catholics, but during the 1860s the liberals became the dominant force and most of the Catholics left the organisation. The more liberal orientation was instigated by the lawyer Julius Vuylsteke (1836-1903), who became secretary and treasurer of the organisation in March 1862. He managed to substantially enlarge the membership and to reorient the publication programme of the Willemsfonds.³⁷

In October 1862 Le Hardy de Beaulieu contacted Vuylsteke with the following request:

Je ne viens pas vous demander, Monsieur, comme administrateur du Willems fonds, un encouragement pécuniaire pour cette publication, que je crois assez utile à mes compatriotes flamands pour pouvoir s'en passer, mais seulement le patronage moral d'une association flamande connue par ses excellentes publications, et aussi la désignation d'un éditeur qui consente, soit à m'acheter, à prix fait, le droit de publier une édition du petit Manuel, soit à partager avec moi les bénéfices de cette édition.³⁸

He explained that the French edition had sold very well and that a second, revised and expanded, edition had just been published. He claimed his main motive was the desire to propagate useful notions rather than the hope of making money; he was therefore willing to offer good conditions to the Willemsfonds.

Le Hardy de Beaulieu must have been thinking about a Flemish edition for some time, because he informed Vuylsteke that he was already in possession of a Dutch translation of the second edition of the French translation. If the association was interested in his proposal, he

³⁶ Bots (1993a).

³⁷ Bots (1993b).

³⁸ WF, Incoming letter 1.1.33 (13 October 1862).

was willing to send it for inspection. He also announced that in comparison to the second French edition, the Dutch translation had one additional chapter, on famines.

Le Hardy de Beaulieu's proposal was discussed at the next meeting of the board. The members decided to agree in principle with the idea of publishing the book as a publication of the Willemsfonds, with the profits shared equally among the two parties. But first they wanted to have a close look at the Dutch translation.³⁹ Le Hardy de Beaulieu almost immediately accepted these conditions and said he would agree with any changes in spelling and style the Willemsfonds might want to make. He hoped these changes would improve the language of the translation and bring it closer to the Dutch as spoken and written in Holland (then as now, there are differences between the Dutch of The Netherlands and that of the Flemish part of Belgium). He also indicated that the translation had been prepared by himself and De Donder.⁴⁰

A special meeting of the board was called to discuss the translation. Vuylsteke thought the translation was so bad that it could not be used, and the other board members endorsed him.⁴¹ Le Hardy de Beaulieu was surprised by the 'extreme severity' of the decision. He explained that he had given to the translator both the original German version and the 'excellent manual' by the Dutch economist de Bruyn Kops.⁴² Moreover, he admitted that his knowledge of the Dutch and Flemish culture and language was not good enough, although he was born Flemish and had lived in Holland until 1831. Since he himself knew no other person who could translate the work, he inquired whether anyone of the Willemsfonds staff would be available to do so. In that case he would send them copies of the German original, of de Bruyn Kops's Dutch textbook and of the French version of the new chapter on famines.⁴³ Since a few days later he was asked to send the text of the new chapter, he inferred that the Willemsfonds apparently followed his suggestion and was taking steps to prepare a new translation. He announced that he would like to add another chapter to the book, or more precisely to transform the section on the worker of the chapter "Le fabricant, l'artisan et l'ouvrier" into a special chapter. As a result the book would have 18 chapters.⁴⁴ The board

³⁹ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 2 November 1862.

⁴⁰ WF, Incoming letter 1.1.38 (3 November 1862). We have been unable to determine who this person might have been.

⁴¹ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Special Meeting of 9 November 1862.

⁴² The liberal economist Jacob Leonard de Bruyn Kops (1822-1887) published the textbook *Beginselen van Staathuishoudkunde* in 1850. He is known as the founder of the Dutch journal *De Economist*.

⁴³ WF, Incoming letter 1.1.44 (19 November 1862).

⁴⁴ WF, Incoming letter 1.1.46 (29 November 1862).

formalized the agreement in December 1862. Pieter Geiregat⁴⁵ was appointed as translator, and in addition the board decided that in contrast to what he been agreed before Le Hardy de Beaulieu would be entitled to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the profits only. The printing contract was given to Mr Tanghe from Bruges who offered a better price for the 1000 copies than the printers from Ghent.⁴⁶

In July 1863 the book had been printed and was ready to be published. The board confirmed the $\frac{1}{3} - \frac{2}{3}$ rule for the division of the profits, and determined that 10% overhead costs would be added to the costs of translating and printing the book.⁴⁷ In August it decided that the book would be sold at the price of 0,80 Belgian francs.⁴⁸ It informed Le Hardy de Beaulieu of the publication of the Flemish edition, and told him that his part of the profits would be 95 Belgian francs. Le Hardy de Beaulieu understood he was invited to donate $\frac{2}{3}$ of this amount to the Willemsfonds, something which he found hard to swallow. Since he was blind, enjoyed only a modest pension and had to raise seven young daughters, he could very well use any additional revenues. What would be left to him now, would not even be sufficient “pour couvrir l’indemnité que j’ai dû payer au premier auteur”.⁴⁹ He must have touched a nerve, because the board decided to reverse its previous decision and to allocate $\frac{2}{3}$ of the profits to Le Hardy de Beaulieu.⁵⁰ He replied that this was more than he ever asked for. He now realised his complaint was based on a misunderstanding: he thought he would receive only $\frac{1}{3}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the profits. He said he would settle for $\frac{1}{2}$ of the profits.⁵¹ The board accepted this proposal.⁵²

4. Subsequent editions

Once the book was published, the correspondence between Le Hardy de Beaulieu and the Willemsfonds focused on the ways in which the sales of *De kleine ekonomist* could be promoted, and on another book project of Le Hardy de Beaulieu (see below). He began floating the idea of a second Flemish edition in March 1864, after Vuylsteke had informed him of the sales figures. He pointed out he had the impression that some expressions used in

⁴⁵ Pieter Geiregat (1828-1902) was a writer and journalist. In 1862 he wrote the minutes of the board meetings of the Willemsfonds.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 9 December 1862.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 5 July 1863.

⁴⁸ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 2 August 1863. Previously, Le Hardy de Beaulieu had informed the Willemsfonds that the price of the first French edition was 0,75 Belgian francs, and that of the second 1 Belgian franc (WF, Incoming letter 1.1.38).

⁴⁹ WF, Incoming letter 1.2.151 (19 August 1863).

⁵⁰ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 24 August 1863

⁵¹ WF, Incoming letter 1.2.174 (19 October 1863).

⁵² Minutes of the Board of the WF, Special Meeting of 6 November 1863.

the translation were typically Flemish, which might hamper the book's dissemination in the Netherlands. If it came to a second edition, he hoped these expressions would be eliminated so that the book could also be adopted in Dutch schools.⁵³ The first edition was effectively sold out at the beginning of April 1864, less than a year after it was first published. The board decided to issue a second edition, but to wait with the actual printing until a new demand manifested itself.⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter, the city of Bruges ordered 150 copies of the book.⁵⁵ As a result, the board approved the preparation of the second edition, albeit with a different printer (Van Doosselaere from Ghent). One board member suggested increasing the print run to 1200 copies, but it was decided to keep it at 1000 copies.⁵⁶

The second edition was ready in July 1864. At that time the accounts of the first edition were finalised. The sales proceeds amounted to 627,80 Belgian francs (416,20 in 1863 and 211,60 in 1864). Printing and translating the book had cost 345 Belgian francs; including the 10% overhead the total costs amounted to 379,50 Belgian francs. The profit was therefore equal to 248,50 Belgian francs, of which half was destined for Le Hardy de Beaulieu. As far as the second edition was concerned, the costs consisted of 292,50 Belgian francs for the printer, and 35 Belgian francs for the person who had supervised the translation and corrected the proofs. This happened to be Vuylsteke himself, but he said he did not want the money and would donate it to the Willemsfonds. Adding the overhead, the total costs for the second edition amounted to 360,25 Belgian francs, slightly less than those for the first edition.⁵⁷ Le Hardy de Beaulieu expressed his satisfaction about these results, which contrasted with the slow sales of the second French edition.⁵⁸

The second Flemish edition sold reasonably well. Once a year Vuylsteke notified Le Hardy de Beaulieu of the cumulative sales figures. By the end of 1864 514 copies had been distributed, by March 1866 730 copies, and by May 1867 930 copies.⁵⁹ As soon as the sales revenues exceeded the costs, Le Hardy de Beaulieu received his share of the profit. In 1866 Vuylsteke sent him 41,37 Belgian francs and in 1867 47 Belgian francs. With stocks running low, Vuylsteke raised the possibility of a third edition. If it came to that, the Willemsfonds preferred to pay a fee to acquire the rights to publish *De kleine ekonomist* once and for all

⁵³ WF, Incoming letter 1.2.239 (15 March 1864).

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 2 April 1864.

⁵⁵ WF, Incoming letter 1.2.265 (18 April 1864).

⁵⁶ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 8 May 1864.

⁵⁷ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 10 July 1864.

⁵⁸ WF, Incoming letter 1.2.334 (21 October 1864).

⁵⁹ WF, Outgoing letters 1.1.44 (2 March 1866) and 1.1.134 (3 May 1867).

rather than to continue with the laborious system of equal profit-sharing.⁶⁰ Le Hardy de Beaulieu was willing to sell the rights to publish the Dutch translation for the sum of 100 Belgian francs provided he could introduce a few changes required by “the constant progress of economic science”.⁶¹ Since the second French edition was also almost sold out, what he had in mind was a major revision of the book. Overburdened by work – partly caused by a request from the Willemsfonds – he was still working on the revision in March 1868.⁶² By that time the board had not yet decided whether it would publish a third edition.⁶³ Vuylsteke informed Le Hardy de Beaulieu that the sales of the second edition had come to a standstill.⁶⁴ When Le Hardy de Beaulieu replied in May, he regretted that the Willemsfonds would no longer be able to propagate elementary economic knowledge in Belgium at a time when “a powerful workers’ association is massively spreading the most subversive communist ideas”.⁶⁵ In the meantime he had completed the revision of the French edition, making it more suitable for use in secondary and industrial schools. He feared, however, that the publisher would wait another year before putting the third French edition on the market.⁶⁶

Vuylsteke’s reaction shows he was very sensitive to Le Hardy de Beaulieu’s arguments:

Les raisons que vous faites valoir pour l’opportunité d’une nouvelle édition du Kleine Ekonomist, dans laquelle vous vous attacheriez plus encore que dans les précédentes à réfuter les déplorables tendances d’une partie de la classe ouvrière, me paraissent décisives.⁶⁷

He indicated he would do his best to incite the board to make a decision on the third Flemish edition without further delay, and if necessary he would suggest that the remaining copies of the second edition be given away for free. Not much later the board began discussing the possibility of a third edition, which would materialize if it turned out there was a demand for the book. In case of a third edition, Le Hardy de Beaulieu would be requested to refrain from making any deletions or changes to the text of the German original which would render the

⁶⁰ WF, Outgoing letter 1.1.134 (3 May 1867).

⁶¹ WF, Incoming letter 2.2.804 (7 May 1867).

⁶² WF, Incoming letter 2.3.964 (9 March 1868).

⁶³ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 20 March 1868.

⁶⁴ WF, Outgoing letter 1.1.227 (31 March 1868).

⁶⁵ This is a reference to the activities of the International Workingmen’s Association, or First International. Later that year, in September 1868, it organised its third congress in Brussels. Le Hardy de Beaulieu attended one session of this congress and followed the debates; more than ever, he reported to Vuylsteke, he was convinced of the need to spread knowledge of the basic notions of economics among the members of the working population (WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1062 (18 September 1868)).

⁶⁶ WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1000 (23 May 1868).

⁶⁷ WF, Outgoing letter 1.1.246 (30 May 1868).

book useless for primary schools or the less literate. He would, however, be free to complete it by inserting additional material.⁶⁸ When the Willemsfonds received an order of 100 copies, the preparations for a third Flemish edition were set in motion. Le Hardy de Beaulieu reacted enthusiastically to the news.⁶⁹ If the Willemsfonds wanted to reprint the book without any changes, he would be willing to sell the rights for 100 Belgian francs; if it wished to use the new French version he had written, the fee would be 150 Belgian francs.⁷⁰ The board accepted to work with the new version, but if Le Hardy de Beaulieu's additions exceeded one sheet, it would deduct 25 Belgian francs for the translation costs.⁷¹

In August 1868 Vuylsteke reminded Le Hardy de Beaulieu to deliver a copy of the new version, since the Willemsfonds aimed at publishing the book in February 1869. He also sent him his final share of the profits of the second edition (4,20 Belgian francs) and let him know that the Willemsfonds would pay 125 Belgian francs for the rights to publish the Dutch translation.⁷² Le Hardy de Beaulieu promised to send the text of the third French edition by the end of September 1868, and accepted the fee proposed by the Willemsfonds.⁷³ In September and October he sent copies of the page proofs of the third French edition to Vuylsteke, and inquired about the price at which the Flemish edition would be sold.⁷⁴ The board decided that the book would be sold at 1 Belgian franc (which also happened to be the price of the French edition), and Vuylsteke added that he expected it to be ready somewhere in January 1869.⁷⁵

Curiously, during the final stages of preparation of the third Flemish edition Le Hardy de Beaulieu found a mistake in the third French edition. In November 1868 he contacted Vuylsteke to point out that in the chapter on exchange of the third French edition, the answer to the last question had been changed, but not the question itself. Question 17 should read: “Quels sont les obstacles naturels et artificiels qui s’opposent à ce que l’échange produise tout le bien que l’on peut en attendre?” instead of “Contre quelle ordonnance divine pêche-t-on là où l’échange avec les habitants de pays éloignés n’a pas lieu?” He asked Vuylsteke to use the correct version of the question in the Dutch translation.⁷⁶ The anomaly was eliminated in the

⁶⁸ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 5 June 1868.

⁶⁹ WF, Outgoing letter 1.1.250 (21 June 1868).

⁷⁰ WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1023 (25 June 1868).

⁷¹ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 3 July 1868.

⁷² WF, Outgoing letter 1.1.258 (21 August 1868).

⁷³ WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1049 (22 August 1868).

⁷⁴ WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1062 (18 September 1868) and Outgoing letter 1.1.280 (20 October 1868).

⁷⁵ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 2 October 1868; WF, Outgoing letter 1.1.271 (6 October 1868).

⁷⁶ WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1096 (4 November 1868) and Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 6 November 1868.

Flemish edition, but, somewhat surprisingly, remained uncorrected in the third and fourth French editions. Since this concerned one of Le Hardy de Beaulieu's previous additions to Hübner's text, the Willemsfonds raised no objection against the requested change. However, it firmly rejected any extra changes which Le Hardy de Beaulieu had made to Hübner's text between the second and the third French editions. In a letter to Jozef Van Hoorde⁷⁷ Vuylsteke recapitulated what the board had decided about this.⁷⁸ Printing started in January 1869, by a new printer, E. De Busscher & Fils from Ghent.⁷⁹ The book was published in March.⁸⁰ Even before the book came out, Le Hardy de Beaulieu managed to obtain an order of 200 copies of both the new French and Dutch translations from the Interior Minister.⁸¹ Le Hardy de Beaulieu reported that the French edition sold very well, in spite of a few setbacks.⁸²

The delay in getting the manuscript of the third Flemish ready for publication were partly caused by another book project which Le Hardy de Beaulieu had submitted to the Willemsfonds. Already in December 1863 he had made the suggestion that the Willemsfonds should publish a Dutch edition of his *Le catéchisme de la mère*.⁸³ After some deliberation the proposition was turned down.⁸⁴ In May 1867 he announced that he was planning to write "un petit traité de morale dans lequel il ne soit ni question, ni de Dieu, ni d'une vie future", and he inquired whether the Willemsfonds would be interested in publishing such a book.⁸⁵ It took Le Hardy de Beaulieu quite a lot of time to prepare the manuscript of his *Catéchisme de morale universelle*, the working title of the book, but once again the Willemsfonds declined the offer, after a thorough review of the manuscript.⁸⁶ Le Hardy de Beaulieu expressed his thanks for the detailed remarks and observations he had received from the Willemsfonds.⁸⁷ The book was published in French in the same year.

Only in 1875 the Willemsfonds decided to publish a fourth Flemish edition of the *Petit manuel populaire*. The printer of the second edition, Van Doosselaere, was asked to make a

⁷⁷ Jozef Van Hoorde (1843-1916) was a writer and journalist, and member of the Board of the Willemsfonds.

⁷⁸ WF, Outgoing letter 1.2.16 (19 January 1869).

⁷⁹ WF, Outgoing letter 1.2.17 (19 January 1869) and Incoming letter 3.1.1136 (20 January 1869).

⁸⁰ WF, Outgoing letter 1.2.38 (11 March 1869).

⁸¹ WF, Incoming letter 3.1.1150 (15 February 1869). The Minister was the economist Eudore Pirmez (1830-1890).

⁸² WF, Incoming letter 3.1.1191 (12 April 1869).

⁸³ WF, Incoming letter 1.2.197 (13 December 1863).

⁸⁴ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 7 March 1864.

⁸⁵ WF, Incoming letter 2.2.804 (7 May 1867).

⁸⁶ WF, Outgoing letter 1.2.258 (21 August 1868).

⁸⁷ WF, Incoming letter 2.3.1049 (22 August 1868).

new typeset and print 1200 copies.⁸⁸ The reason for the change of printer was that Vuylsteke was not really satisfied with the quality of the third edition.⁸⁹

A closer look at the macrostructure of the Dutch and French translations reveals the importance of the Dutch translation for the subsequent third French edition. The first Dutch edition was based on the second French edition and the original German book. In the preface of the first and second Dutch edition by the publisher, the Willemsfonds explained the genesis of the first Dutch edition, as a translation of the second French edition. It pointed out that the additions by Le Hardy de Beaulieu were printed between asterisks. All the Dutch editions contained a translation of the foreword by Hübner (aimed at the German teachers). The Dutch translator, however, did not use the French translation of Hübner's foreword, which was different from the German version on a number of points, but translated directly from the German original. The four Dutch editions also contained a Dutch translation of the introduction by Le Hardy de Beaulieu taken from the French edition.

Le Hardy de Beaulieu continually rearranged Hübner's chapters and supplemented them with new ones. In the first French edition he added a chapter on machines. The second French edition added new chapters on the banker and on poverty. Hübner's chapter on the "Fabrikant und handwerker" was supplemented with a section on the labourer. The first Dutch edition was important because it introduced the final number of eighteen chapters of the translation. There was a new chapter on famines and Le Hardy de Beaulieu complemented his material on the labourer so that it became a chapter on its own. All subsequent French and Dutch editions by Le Hardy de Beaulieu essentially remained true to this subdivision of the material. The sequence of the chapters remained unchanged throughout the four Dutch editions. In the French translation, however, Le Hardy de Beaulieu continually changed the order of the chapters.

5. The diffusion of the book

Le Hardy de Beaulieu's translation of Hübner's booklet was received very well by his fellow economists. That the translation would be welcomed by Le Hardy de Beaulieu's colleagues and collaborators is probably not very surprising. Eugène Van Bommel wrote: "Rien de meilleur que ce Manuel pour populariser une science trop peu connue et de jour en jour plus indispensable."⁹⁰ The editor of *L'Économiste belge*, Gustave de Molinari, commented that the

⁸⁸ WF, Outgoing letter 2.2.349 (21 January 1875).

⁸⁹ WF, Outgoing letter 2.2.390 (14 February 1875).

⁹⁰ Van Bommel (1863), 379-382.

Petit manuel was a very clear exposition. De Molinari did not know of another short and accessible book that was so suitable to vulgarise the elementary notions of economic science.⁹¹ The *Petit manuel* was praised as an intellectually accessible and affordable book. While the economic content was evaluated as sound, the book was cheap and therefore useful for propaganda and for primary education.⁹²

The first Flemish edition of the *Petit Manuel* was also well received by *L'Économiste belge* and the *Revue trimestrielle*.⁹³ In particular the *Revue trimestrielle* saw the *Petit manuel* as an important instrument in the installation of more economic freedom. For that reform to take place, people should be convinced that individual property is not illegitimate, that capital does not mean tyranny, that machines do not harm labour, and that the state should not be counted upon to ameliorate the situation of the labourers. The *Revue trimestrielle* saw the *Petit manuel* as an ideal way to diffuse economic knowledge among the labourers and the poor, so that ignorance and prejudgements would not hinder the improvement of their own plight.⁹⁴

The translation by Le Hardy de Beaulieu was also noticed outside the immediate circle of the Belgian liberal group. In the meeting of 6 October 1862 of the *Société d'économie politique* in Paris, the *Petit manuel* was described as an accessible exposition of the truths of economic science in a simple and often original fashion.⁹⁵ In November 1862 *L'Économiste belge* published a note by the French economist Frédéric Passy, which was probably first published in *L'Avenir commercial*. Passy wrote that he appreciated the accessibility of the *Petit manuel*, which was intelligible to all and therefore fit for use in elementary schools. He hoped the French translation would be promoted in France by the public authorities and intelligent businessmen. He recommended the book to all good men: "Qu'ils le lisent, et qu'ils le fassent lire".⁹⁶ Even more critical outsiders from a French Catholic background were almost charmed by the *Petit manuel*. In 1882 J. Baratier wrote that the translation successfully refuted socialist theories in an accessible way, with sound economics that describes reality with great precision. However, Baratier disliked the fact that Hübner/Le Hardy de Beaulieu

⁹¹ *L'Économiste belge*, 24 August 1861, Vol. 7(34), 178-179 [due to a printing mistake, these numbers are inexact; the correct numbers should be 278-279].

⁹² *L'Économiste belge*, 30 August 1862, Vol. 8(18), 215.

⁹³ *L'Économiste belge*, 29 August 1863, Vol. 9(18), 212

⁹⁴ "De kleyne ekonomist. Grondbegreppen der staet huis houdkunde, vertaald uit het hoogduitsch van Otto Hübner en vermeerderd met de byvoegingen der fransche vertaling van Ch. Le Hardy de Beaulieu, eere-professor aen de school voor nyverheid en mynen van Henegouwen. – Uitgave van het Willems fond te Gent, nr. 43", *Revue Trimestrielle*, X, 4 (1863), vol. 40, 373-374.

⁹⁵ Meeting of the 'Société d'économie politique' of 6 October 1862, published in: *Journal des économistes*, October 1862, 2nd series, Vol. 36(32), 141.

⁹⁶ *L'Économiste belge*, 8 November 1862, Vol. 8(23), 271-272.

did not sufficiently point out that religion was, as Baratier saw it, the foundation of morality and virtues. Fortunately, the authors acknowledged that the social order originated from God, so that in the end Baratier appreciated the book.⁹⁷

The reviews of the *Petit manuel* were consistently favourable and pointed to the usefulness of the book in combating socialist ideas and the enlightenment of labourers. But did the *Petit manuel* achieve what was expected from it by Hübner/Le Hardy de Beaulieu and the reviewers? A first indicator of success is the number of translations. A second indicator is the number of French and Flemish editions and the copies sold. The first French edition of the *Petit manuel* from 1861 was sold out in a few months' time.⁹⁸ The second French edition was published in 1862. The first Flemish edition appeared in 1863 and was sold out in April 1864.⁹⁹ The second Flemish edition appeared in 1864. The next French and Dutch editions appeared in 1868 and 1869 respectively, indicating a lowering of the interest in the book.

Did the *Petit manuel* reach its intended audience of labourers? Whether many labourers actually read the *Petit manuel* is difficult to appreciate. We do have a number of indications that the book was predominantly distributed by members of the liberal bourgeoisie rather than being bought by labourers themselves. Emile Despret, a member of the *Société belge d'économie politique*, launched an initiative to collect funds for the purchase and distribution of elementary books of political economy, which would be given to a number of libraries. Despret thought Le Hardy de Beaulieu's translation of Hübner's booklet would be very suitable for the purpose of moralising the labourers and making them understand that "l'activité, la sobriété, la probité; que la vertu, en un mot, est non seulement une chose agréable à Dieu, mais qu'elle procure même en cette vie des avantages positifs."¹⁰⁰ The preface of the third French edition indicated that the book was used by the Belgian Province of Hainaut and by the administration in charge of public education as a prize book in elementary schools. On 23 February 1864 the Minister of Internal Affairs Alphonse Vandenpeereboom sent a copy of both the French and Flemish translation to the directors of all the state school for secondary education praising the book and its Flemish translation. The books were intended for the school libraries. He wrote that "Le conseil de perfectionnement de l'instruction moyenne a porté le jugement le plus favorable sur la publication de M. Le

⁹⁷ Baratier (1882).

⁹⁸ Mentioned by Van Bommel (1863), 379-382.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 2 April 1864.

¹⁰⁰ In a letter dated 15 October 1862 and published under the title 'Des bibliothèques populaires' by *L'Économiste belge*, 8 November 1862, Vol. 8(23), 268-269.

Hardy de Beaulieu ; il a exprimé le vœu que la lecture en soit recommandée aux élèves des établissements de l'État, vœu auquel je m'associe complètement.”¹⁰¹

Sales to Belgian publicly funded organizations were apparently very important, a fact of which Le Hardy de Beaulieu was well aware. As long as the Liberal Party dominated politics, he continued to pull strings in the hope of increasing the sales of both the French and the Dutch translations. For instance, in February 1869 he managed to convince Eudore Pirmez¹⁰², the Minister of Internal Affairs, to buy 200 copies of the third editions of both translations.¹⁰³ After 1870, however, this became increasingly difficult.

In the preface to the third French edition of the *Petit manuel* it was also mentioned that the book was distributed by industrialists close to the Chamber of Commerce of Verviers. A number of liberal entrepreneurs in Verviers were closely affiliated to the *Société belge d'économie politique*. When the Dutch translation was published *L'Économiste belge* hoped that Flemish industrialists would copy their Walloon counterparts in distributing the booklet in their workshops and factories.¹⁰⁴ That does not seem to have happened; we do know that the Ghent-based cotton factory Parmentier, Van Hoegaerden & Cie bought 50 copies of the book, presumably for use in schools affiliated to the factory.¹⁰⁵ As already remarked, Frédéric Passy hoped the French authorities and industrialists would take similar steps.

From the correspondence of Le Hardy de Beaulieu we are informed about the sales of two editions. The first French edition was printed on 1000 copies. We know more about the sales of the first Flemish edition of *De kleine Ekonomist* from the incoming correspondence and the minutes of the board of the Willemsfonds. The overwhelming majority of the 1000 copies were bought by the members of the Willemsfonds itself or by public authorities:

338 copies to the members of the WF – 25% reduction	202,80 frs.
100 copies to the city of Oostende (19/10/1863)	80,00 frs.
100 copies to the city schools of Gent (25/11/1863)	80,00 frs.
50 copies to Parmentier & Cie (09/12/1863) – 25% reduction	30,00 frs.
100 copies to the Ministry of the Interior (24/02/1864)	80,00 frs.

¹⁰¹ Letter by the Minister of Internal Affairs of 23 February 1864 entitled: “Envoi aux directeurs des écoles moyennes d’un exemplaire du Petit Manuel populaire d’économie politique, par M. Ch. Le Hardy de Beaulieu.” Published in: *Recueil des pièces imprimées par ordre de la Chambre des Représentants. Session de 1866-1867*. Tome III, numéro 184-187. Brussel, 1867, p. 111.

¹⁰² On Pirmez, see Erreygers and Mosselmans (2005), 55.

¹⁰³ WF, Incoming letter 3.1.1150 (15 February 1869), which includes a copy of the Pirmez’s letter.

¹⁰⁴ *L'Économiste belge*, 29 August 1863, Vol. 9(18), p. 212

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the Board of the WF, Meeting of 9 December 1863.

150 copies to the city of Gent, paid by the Ministry of the Interior (24/03/1864)	120,00 frs.
16 copies to Le Hardy de Beaulieu – free	0,00 frs.
854 copies in total	592,80 frs.

The last Flemish and French editions were from 1875 and 1881. No new editions in French and Flemish appeared after these years. The most likely explanation was that the market for elementary books on economics was being filled with other titles. We can point to the elementary books by Rosy (1875), Leroy (1880), Renard (1882), Bernimolin (1882), Parisel (1884) and Baudoux (1887).¹⁰⁶

6. Conclusion

Der Kleine Volkswirth had been intended by Hübner for the education of the popular classes in the German-speaking regions of Europe. Only after the translation and adaptation by the Belgian economist Charles Le Hardy de Beaulieu did it become a success outside of the territory of what later became Germany. Le Hardy de Beaulieu's use of the French language probably played a role in the dissemination of the *Petit manuel* outside of the German speaking principalities. It might also be that the quick pace of economic development of Belgium and the intellectual weight of the country's liberal economists made the *Petit manuel* attractive for the south of Europe, Latin America, the Ottoman Empire and Japan.

The correspondence between Le Hardy de Beaulieu and the Willemsfonds helps to assess the intentions of translating and publishing a French and a Dutch edition of *Der Kleine Volkswirth*, as does the background of the activities of the Belgian liberal group of economists. Le Hardy de Beaulieu intended his translation for a large audience of the popular classes. This group, he hoped, would start to understand that economic reality was necessarily as it was because of the laws of economics. If he reached this goal is doubtful as the success of socialist ideas of class struggle and the emergence of trade unions show.

Le Hardy de Beaulieu continually added new material to the book by Hübner throughout the different editions of his translation. The Dutch edition played a role in this development as substantial new parts were added in the Dutch edition before they were published in the third French edition.

¹⁰⁶ See Erreygers and Van Dijck (2011).

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