

**TRADITIONS OF BRITISH
STATESMANSHIP; SOME
COMMENTS ON PASSING
EVENTS**

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Traditions of British statesmanship; some comments on passing events by Arthur D. Elliot

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ARTHUR D. ELLIOT

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TRADITIONS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP

SOME COMMENTS ON PASSING EVENTS

BY

THE HON. ARTHUR ^{Ripm. h.s.} D. ELLIOT

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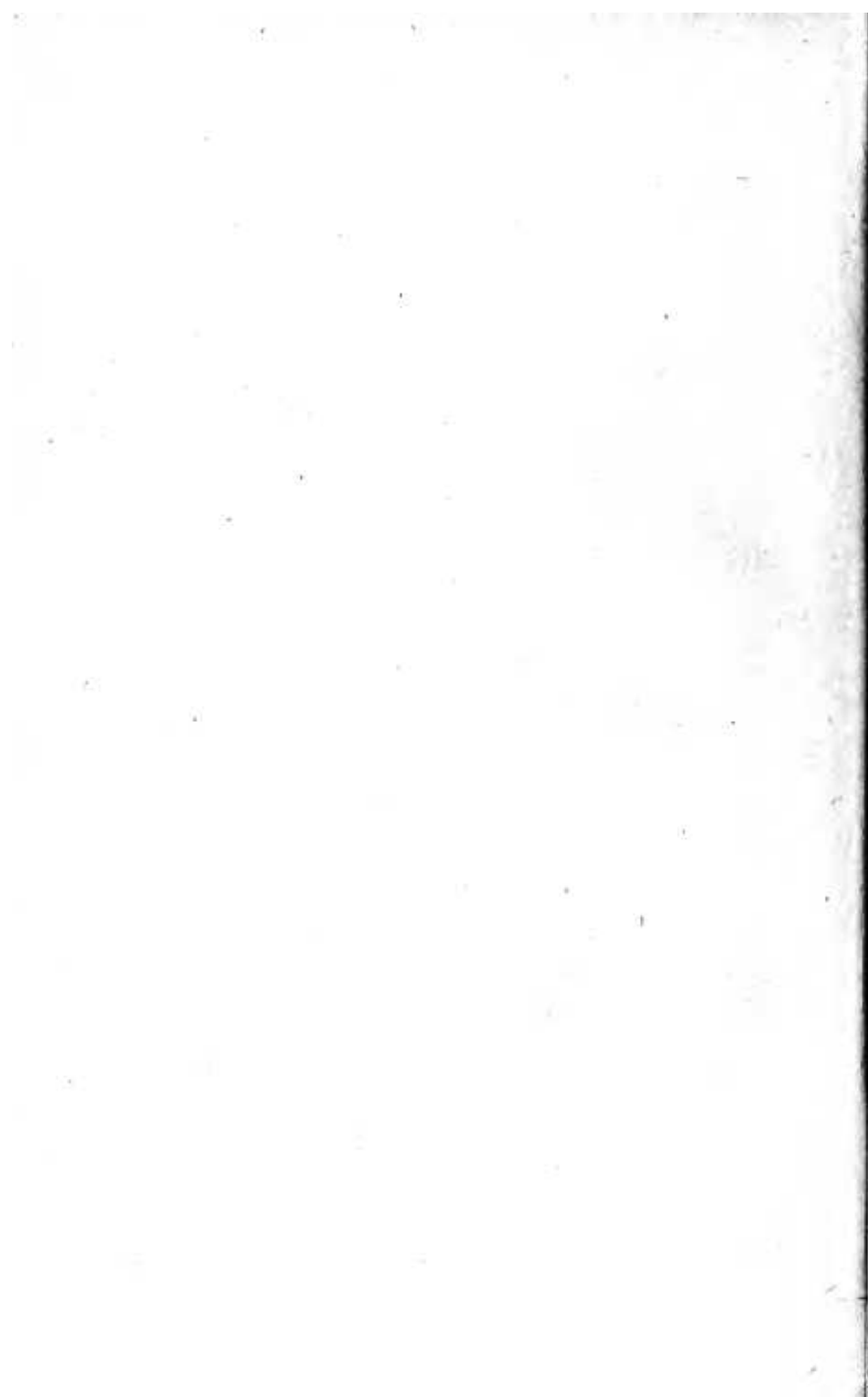
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INTRODUCTION

IN taking a survey of British Foreign Policy it is impossible not to be struck by the consistency of aim which on the whole for a very long period it has displayed, and to remark the absence of all spirit of intrigue from the minds of statesmen who have guided it at home, and the absence of dishonourable methods from the practice of their representatives whose duty it has been to further that policy abroad.

"Rarely do documents leap to light that shame the memory of British Ministers. . . . The more thoroughly British Foreign Policy is examined the better it comes out." This is at all events the opinion of two men, perhaps more competent than any others to form one, on the character of our Foreign Office in modern times. (Dr. Holland Rose¹ and the late Dr. S. R. Gardiner.)

If "secret diplomacy is to be abolished," whatever that may mean, our nation will not come off worst in the new Palace of Truth in which some of our advanced politicians intend to house in the future the Foreign Secretaries and Ambassadors of the world.

Whilst then our foreign policy has been consistent, honest, and above-board, has it been fairly open to the charge of blundering incompetence invariably brought against it by excited criticism in every great crisis? Cabinets, foreign secretaries, ambassadors, being all human, have no doubt occasionally erred; but when their action is compared or contrasted with the management of foreign affairs by other States, we find as little reason to blush for a low standard of British intelligence as for a low standard of British honour. In the last hundred years, has our foreign policy or has our diplomacy been a conspicuous failure compared with that of

¹ "Origins of the War," by J. Holland Rose.

France, or Germany, or Russia, or Austria? Most assuredly history will not so consider it.

Recent years of war must continually have brought before the minds of the present generation the trials of their ancestors in the old two-and-twenty years' struggle with France. Again and again, the successes and failures, the boasting and the despondency, the doubts, anxieties, criticisms, race-hatreds, have seemed but a repetition of the experiences of our great-grandfathers. At home even our old friends the "forestallers" and "regraters" have come to life again under the new name of "profiteers." The Continental successes of the enemy, the occasional failure or withdrawal of an ally, our own successes on the Ocean and beyond it, the frequent prediction of national financial ruin, all repeat the incidents of an old and prolonged story half forgotten by a generation whose recollection of that historic struggle centres on the glories of Trafalgar and Waterloo. Now, as then, runs through the nation as a whole the deep fixed resolve to win the war—to achieve for ourselves security, and for Europe freedom.

In one important—almost all-important—respect, however, we have been far better off than were our ancestors during many years of their uphill war. We are a far more united people. Pitt's difficulties at home were great; the disaffection, which then undoubtedly existed, was magnified in days of panic into a menace of revolution. To-day, the internal peace and quiet of the nation rest on a much wider and surer foundation. Since his time great constitutional reforms have done their work well. The war is the nation's own work, not due to the ambition or scheming of their rulers. This the people know and feel, and accordingly they bear with hardly a grumble burdens, and make sacrifices, greater than those which tempted many men in old days almost to "despair of the Republic."

Englishmen will look back with pride to the part played by their country on the stage of European history in July and August, 1914. The great work of general pacification now lies before us, and demands not less the employment of the highest statesmanship. The difficulty will be in the