

THE WAY OF HONOUR

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The way of honour by H. Carton De Wiart

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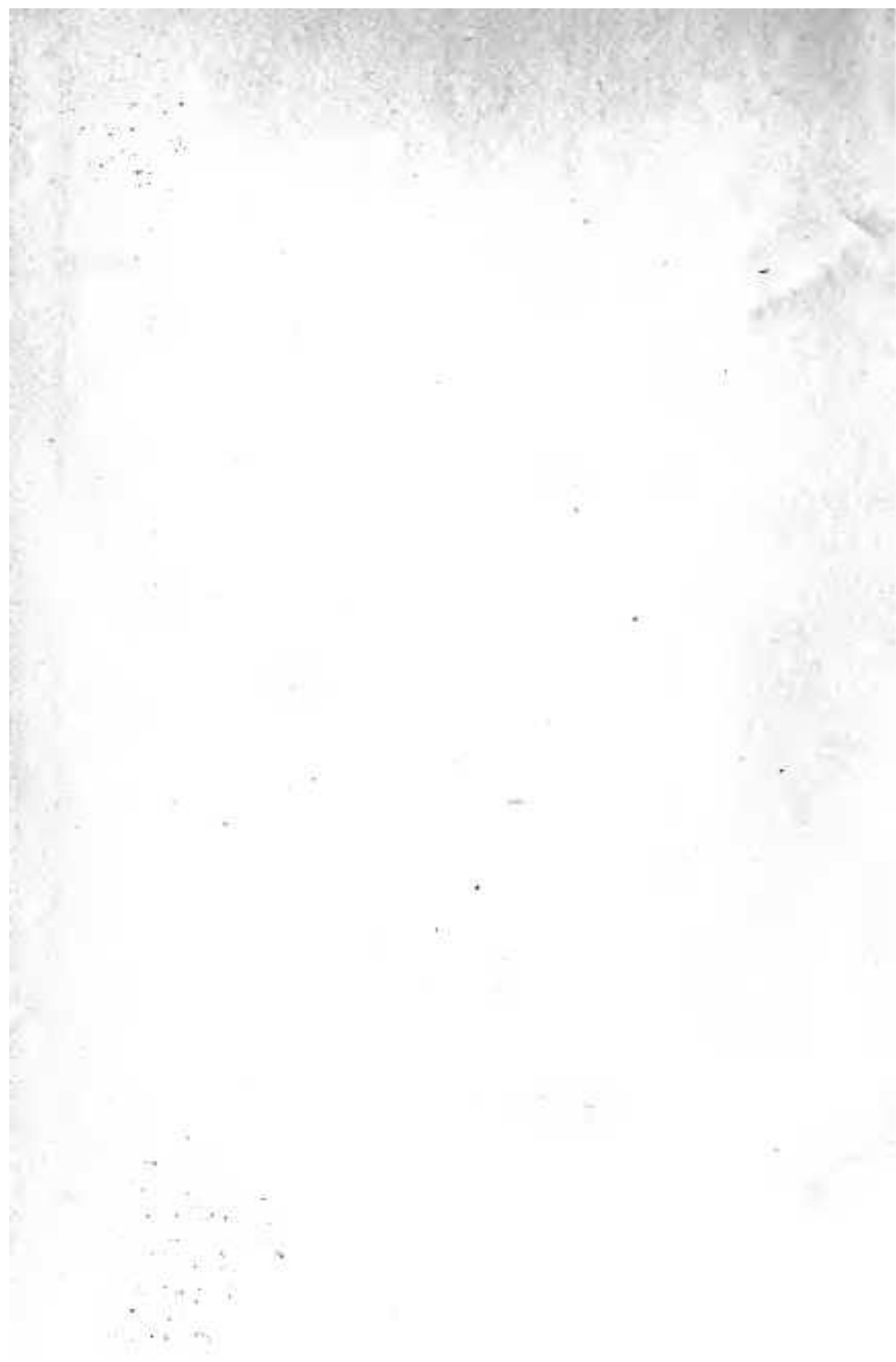
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H. CARTON DE WIART

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*Netherlands
DeW*

BY

H. CARTON DE WIAERT

BELGIAN MINISTER OF JUSTICE



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PREFACE

THERE is nothing simpler than the position of Belgium in the present war. Faced, on the 2nd of August 1914 with the choice between what her own immediate interests seemed to dictate and what honour demanded, she did not hesitate. Since then all that she has lost and suffered, all that she still suffers every day, she has lost and suffered through loyalty to her duty.

Nothing simpler. But nothing, on the other hand, more splendid. The cause of this country lost, upon that day, its purely national character. To use M. Paul Deschanel's words, Belgium has become "the pledge of International Righteousness." How are we to conceive that peace should ever again be mutually agreed upon by the nations of the earth, that is to say, that treaties and agreements should ever henceforth be made between them, unless, first of all, faith in the given word, which has been betrayed and shaken by the flagrant violation of Belgium's rights, shall have been restored to the world by the punishment of that violation?

To take an even higher standpoint, is it not certain that the very conception of morality would be for

ever damaged and falsified among men in civilized society, whether through indifference or through cowardice, were to allow itself to suffer a perjury and a crime so obvious to go scathless?

We have only to think of such consequences to perceive what importance attaches, in so far as Belgium's situation in the war is concerned, to the simple things of morality and law. The Belgian Government has grasped this fact and has never ceased to keep these elementary considerations clearly in the light, and this with a candour and resolution which all the sophisms and trickeries of "Kultur" have been unable to defeat.

This appeal to Law it was peculiarly the task of that statesman who presides over King Albert's Ministry of Justice to make, to guide and to endow with the utmost possible clearness and force. To no less degree, thanks to the authority which his previous explorations of the domain of moral and political thought had given to him, was M. Carton de Wiart qualified to discover in the history of his country the deeply rooted causes of that resistance which she is to-day making, and to formulate those reasons which make it necessary for Europe, at some future date, to insist, as the essential condition of her own peace and stability, upon the restoration of Belgium to her former strength and independence.

The writings and speeches which we have brought together in this volume possess, in this connection, great historical value. Not, indeed, the least interest-

ing among those many matters which will occupy the industry and thought of the historians of the Great War will be the energy, informed alike by wisdom and dignity, with which, in the face of the heaviest sacrifices, both public and private, King Albert and his assistants have succeeded in preserving the national sovereignty of Belgium, in directing the efforts of the Army, making good its losses, and providing for all its needs, and in such a way that every day it has become more formidable, and this under the unceasing fire of the enemy. Nor have they failed to guide vigilantly the diplomatic and colonial policy of the country, while preserving at the same time, among the seven and a half millions of Belgians — some condemned to temporary enslavement by the invader, others scattered throughout the world—a spirit of unity, endurance and faith which has yielded neither to the length nor the harshness of the test, neither to the craft nor the brutality of Germany. These manœuvres they have known how to defeat; they have successfully confronted the campaign of lies and slanders which everywhere the agents of Kultur have carried on; they have provided at once for the nourishment of the population both in the occupied territory and in the war zone, and have not forgotten the presence, in foreign countries, of hundreds of thousands of refugees, many of whom have been stripped of all that they possessed. Nor have they failed to study the question of the restoration of the country,