



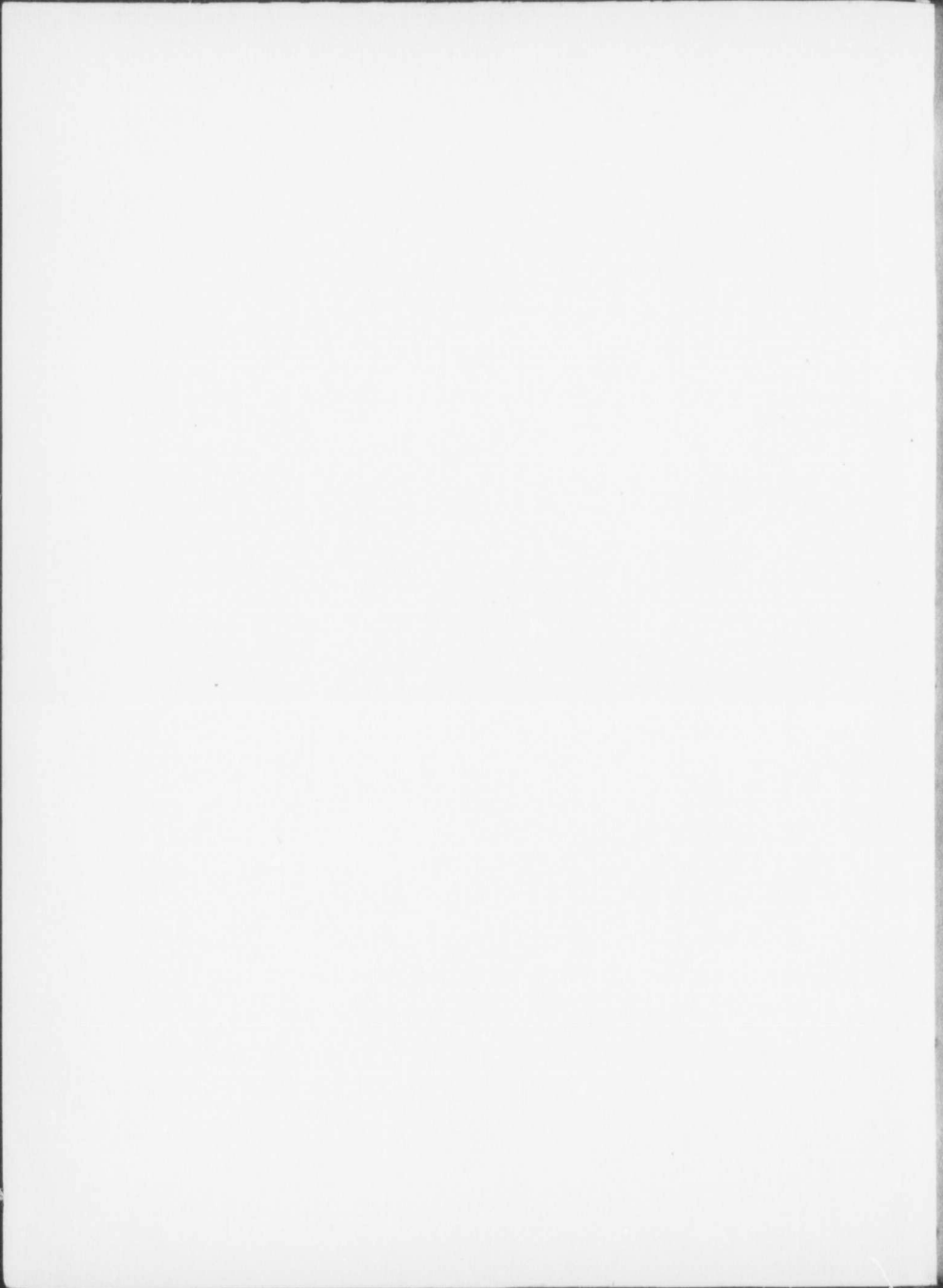
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THE WAR

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WILLIAM E. KERRISH

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The short articles which comprise this little book were first published in various Canadian newspapers. The writer now produces them in book form, in order that a few way-thoughts on the War and Religion might find collective expression.

WILLIAM E. KERRISH.

Hamilton, Canada,
Easter, 1916.

THE WAR AND RELIGION.

AMONG all the manifold activities of thought and action, which the present war has occasioned, few are more worthy of our notice, than those phenomena, we might almost term them, which have been witnessed in the religious thought of some of the peoples engaged therein.

Lovredan, the French athiest litterateur, has the following to say about himself, and about those who have heard his voice in the past:

“I deceived myself, and you who read my books, of what do you sing? France, France, return to the faith of your most glorious days; to abandon God is to be lost. I do not know if I shall be alive to-morrow, but I must say to my friends, ‘Lovredan dares not die as an atheist.’ A thought oppresses me, ‘God exists, and you are far from Him.’ Rejoice, my soul, since the hour has come when on my knees I can say, ‘I believe, I believe in God, I believe, I believe.’”

Such an expression on the part of one of France's men of letters gives us some indication of what is going on within the great French soul; and we may be sure

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that many thousands besides poor Lovredan feel that they also dare not die as atheists.

Yes, it is certain that through the crucial hours of the immense calamity which is spreading itself over the world, the voice of the "Eternal Wisdom" is reaching the souls of men who, perhaps, would not otherwise have heard it—and finding a response; and it may be that in the agony of the present the characters are being formed who are destined to mount the stage of a new world, whose peace is unassailable, being "formed in His own Divine image."

A VANDAL'S HAND.

WHEN we consider to what extent German shells have pierced the art treasures of old-world cities, and then recall the statements of modern German theologians regarding Jesus Christ and His religion, we cannot fail to think that it is precisely from these sources—religious and scholastic sources—that Germany has received her moral code, the code by whose standards she has been guided in her present assault upon the continuity of the civilized order, as we understand it.

Christianity is the supreme custodian of the manifestation of human genius in all forms of art, so that when Germany raised her "vandal's hand" against the historic treasures of noble Belgium, Germany challenged Christianity itself; for it has been among the special labors of organized Christianity to protect, and preserve for all generations the expressions of great and priceless ideals, in books, in music, in venerable edifices, and other works of gifted hands.

Modern German scholars attempted to solve the great problem (for such it was to them), of man's relationship to the unseen world, as pure science, and they

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were certain that success would crown their efforts; but although they started at zero and worked up, they have not yet solved problem number one—"given self, find God"—because, instead of finding God, they have led their people farther and yet farther from Him. God is not to be found by a microscope, or even a telescope, and that's a thing which modern Germany has to learn.

The foregoing does not infer that the present struggle for empire in Europe is a religious war, because such is not the case. For Germany it is a war of aggression, without doubt; for the allies, a war of defence—of the defence of those principles which are priceless to humanity, having been bought by the blood of forefathers now gone to their eternal reward.

MORAL LIBERTY.

WE hear a great deal to-day about liberty, freedom and so forth. While I am not attempting to undervalue the sublime benefits to be drawn from a life of balanced liberty, I am seeking to point out that unless personal liberty has the correct moral and ethical foundations it does not ultimately prove to be the great blessing which it is considered to be.

Germany possessed a greater liberty than noble Belgium, because the moral code adopted by the leaders of the German nation gave them the freedom to march their troops through the gardens if Belgium if military expediency demanded it. Belgium possessed no such liberty. She would have been restrained in such action by the height of her moral ideals and by the strength and dignity of her national soul.

Thus Germany, with greater liberty, became the brigand of Europe and Belgium, the child of law, the martyr nation. Germany saved her life to lose it—Belgium lost her life to save it for eternity.

Therefore when we call for more liberty or cry aloud in defence of the liberties we now possess let us be quite sure that we have moral ideals high enough to

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make us worthy of what we ask and to ensure that we shall put to the highest use that priceless gem of liberty for which we call.

In this connection it would be well for us to keep in mind the words of the wise man, who said:

“ He who wears the yoke of law,
Alone becomes the child of liberty.”

PEACE.

PEACE, in the hearts and minds of men, seems in this age to have become a rarer thing, than it was in ages past; and when we look about us, to try and catch some faint glimpse of that peace—the peace of the heart which though it labors, yet has perfect rest, we find that it is rarer and more rare. This absence of calm equanimity of mind and heart is indeed the certain symptom of a deeper and more serious trouble than is first thought; and what is it? It is the greatest and the worst of all national spiritual diseases, and it is called apostasy from God; the majesty and the beauty of the soul of a people depends upon the nearness of that people to God; and in the measure in which that people believe in Him, not as a being distant from them; and to such a people He speaks very clearly, not to the rich man through his wealth, not to the wise man through his wisdom, no, not even to the clever man through his genius; but the High Divinity comes down to the common humanity. That's the secret of true peace, putting aside all the obstacles of this phantom

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world so that the astral light of the real, the spirit world, may light our souls, and lighting them we may see.

Does the world want peace, does she want rest, let her learn the lesson of ages, a lesson ever new—rest? “The human heart is restless till it rests in Him, who said “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.”

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THE SYMBOL OF THE CROSS.

IN Sartor Resartus we read "that it is in symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives and moves and has his being; and those ages, moreover, are accounted the noblest which can best recognize symbolical worth and prize it the highest." While symbols have no intrinsic worth, they may acquire great extrinsic worth, and the symbol which has acquired the greatest is the symbol of the Cross, for among all the symbols by which the thoughts and ideals of men have sought expression, none is more potent than this historic symbol, which as "a sign of power" far surpasses all the symbols of the ancient and modern worlds, from the theosophic symbols of the Orient to the Masonic symbols of the Occident. The Cross is surcharged with the influences of its mighty associations, and is yet the great cosmopolitan symbol of the world, knowing neither social nor racial barriers; and unhappy is the nation which seeks to exalt its own national flag above the flag of the Cross, its own ensign above the ensign of God.

Modern Germany thought that her bronze eagle was a finer thing than the Cross, and so she put self-

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interest before the interests of humanity, expediency before honor, the things of time before life's final and abiding issues; and crossing the boundary of moral right, to lose herself in seas of frightfulness and infamy. Germany has taught her people the sinister lesson of the deification of self; or more properly the deification of the state, and her people have yet to learn how gigantic is the error into which she has led them, for her end is not yet, and who can foretell it? the last end of a strong and clever people who built all life's hopes upon the exaltation of a merely national ensign.

With the Easter season approaching, the season in which the Cross was first lifted up, let us, as a nation which in the present great war has stood by the ideals of the Cross, never forget that we shall be true to our glorious national flag, the union flag of imperial Britain, if we always remember that its central formation is none other than the symbol of the Cross.

THE SPIRIT OF BELGIUM.

AS the months of war roll by and another Easter approaches, we would do well to give some thought to the moral triumph of devastated Belgium. As it has been pointed out, this high-souled country could have reaped a most fruitful harvest, from a commercial standpoint, by permitting the German legions to have the right of way through her lands; she could have also saved herself the horrors of a ruinous invasion, and incidentally saved for all peoples the art treasures which have fallen before the war machines of "cultured" Prussia.

The longer the war continues, the more deeply should we be able to appreciate the great debt which we—in concert with all free peoples—owe to heroic Belgium, and also become more and more conscious of the magnificence of the choice she made. This choice should ever be before us, as a blazing example to light our eyes that we may see "the path"—the path that leads to the foot of a throne. Here is a small nation, in a material age, upholding the ancient ideals of Christian chivalry and national honor with the flesh of her flesh.

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The example of Belgium should be a strong incentive to all of us who read her story, to be brave enough to choose as she chose—duty to ease—honor to gold—the treasures of the spirit rather than the phantasms of the earth, very real though they may seem to us.

The spirit of Belgium was the spirit of sacrifice—the Easter spirit, and her name will live even as the name of the Martyr of Easter lives, to be for all ages on the lips of men. Her flag is exalted, even in her agony; and as a nation Belgium is greater to-day, even in her subjection, than in the days of her freedom—more radiant, more upheld for the wonder and admiration of men—“a great, glowing queen of tragic circumstance.”

The spirit of Belgium is the spirit which can save the race from many of the troubles which now burden it—the spirit which was poured out on that first Easter, finding its expression in the supreme sacrifice which the God-man offered upon Calvary, that there might be preserved for humanity the unspeakable treasure of the vision of God.

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A soldier remarked the other day that the war was a punishment on the peoples for their wrongdoing, and that only God could bring it to an end. He may be right for all I know, anyway the fact that we are the champions of the law of nations in this war, does not make us the vicegerents of God; for while the

type of civilization which we fight to uphold, may be vastly superior than that which Prussian war lords sought to impose upon us, yet we cannot say that it is perfect, or without some traces of those terrible social disorders, which, uncombated, can drag the strongest works of human policy into that vortex of national decline, from which there is no return.

We might do well to repeat the story of the Belgian church which had been severely bombarded, and almost reduced to a heap of ruins. On one of the pieces of wall left standing, there hung a crucifix. The hands of the figure had become un-nailed, and the arms were held forward almost appealingly, while the part representing the head of the Man of Sorrows was completely shot away; in this space was found written these words—“War will not cease until you have put back **THAT FACE** from the place where you have torn it.”

We cannot rid ourselves of Jesus Christ and His religion and still save the national soul; we cannot turn from His altar, to the golden altar of mammon, without paying dearly for our treason against His Divine Majesty; so let us pray that all peoples will look to the cross and to Him who hung upon it, in the interests of them all, that they may not have to say as did St. Augustine—

“Too late have I known thee, O ancient truth,
Too late have I loved Thee, O Thou supreme
beauty.”