

BOOK OF THE HOMELESS

(*LE LIVRE DES SANS-FOYER*)

EDITED BY EDITH WHARTON

Original Articles in Verse and Prose

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THE BOOK IS SOLD
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE AMERICAN HOSTELS FOR REFUGEES
(WITH THE FOYER FRANCO-BELGE)
AND OF THE CHILDREN OF FLANDERS RESCUE COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

IT is not only a pleasure but a duty to write the introduction which Mrs. Wharton requests for "The Book of the Homeless." At the outset of this war I said that hideous though the atrocities had been and dreadful though the suffering, yet we must not believe that these atrocities and this suffering paralleled the dreadful condition that had obtained in European warfare during, for example, the seventeenth century. It is lamentable to have to confess that I was probably in error. The fate that has befallen Belgium is as terrible as any that befell the countries of Middle Europe during the Thirty Years' War and the wars of the following half-century. There is no higher duty than to care for the refugees and above all the child refugees who have fled from Belgium. This book is being sold for the benefit of the American Hostels for Refugees and for the benefit of The Children of Flanders Relief Committee, founded in Paris by Mrs. Wharton in November, 1914, and enlarged by her in April, 1915, and chiefly maintained hitherto by American subscriptions. My daughter, who in November and December last was in Paris with her husband, Dr. Derby, in connection with the American Ambulance, has told me much about the harrowing tragedies of the poor souls who were driven from their country and on the verge of starvation, without food or shelter, without hope, and with the members of the family all separated from one another, none knowing where the others were to be found, and who had drifted into Paris and into other parts of France and across the Channel to England as a result of Belgium being trampled into bloody mire. In April last the Belgian Government asked Mrs. Wharton to take charge of some six hundred and fifty children and a number of helpless old men and women from the ruined towns and farms of Flanders. This is

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the effort which has now turned into The Children of Flanders Rescue Committee.

I appeal to the American people to picture to themselves the plight of these poor creatures and to endeavor in practical fashion to secure that they shall be saved from further avoidable suffering. Nothing that our people can do will remedy the frightful wrong that has been committed on these families. Nothing that can now be done by the civilized world, even if the neutral nations of the civilized world should at last wake up to the performance of the duty they have so shamefully failed to perform, can undo the dreadful wrong of which these unhappy children, these old men and women, have been the victims. All that can be done surely should be done to ease their suffering. The part that America has played in this great tragedy is not an exalted part; and there is all the more reason why Americans should hold up the hands of those of their number who, like Mrs. Wharton, are endeavoring to some extent to remedy the national shortcomings. We owe to Mrs. Wharton all the assistance we can give. We owe this assistance to the good name of America, and above all for the cause of humanity we owe it to the children, the women and the old men who have suffered such dreadful wrong for absolutely no fault of theirs.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT