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PREFACE.

The Official Belgian Commission of Inquiry, which has been charged with the task of examining into the violation of the rules of International Law and of the Customs of War, is composed of Statesmen and Jurists of the highest standing. The Reports of the Commission have been published from time to time. Report XI will be found in the following pages.

These reports are given out by the Commission only after careful examination of the evidence. Consequently the findings of the Commission command the same respect as the findings of the highest Law Court.

Names of witnesses have, in certain cases, been withheld from publication. All the depositions are, however, in the possession of the Commission and the names of the witnesses will be given out at the proper time. The publication of these names at the present moment would, inevitably, cause the German troops to take revenge upon witnesses, or upon the relatives of witnesses, remaining within the German lines.

The authenticity of the depositions is guaranteed by the eminent Statesmen and Jurists who compose the Commission and who have signed the Reports.

No commentary can add anything to the tragic eloquence of these simple and well-authenticated depositions. Who can read the recital of these horrors without feeling his heart throb with righteous indignation, and without feeling an infinite sorrow at the thought that these abominations have been committed, after two thousand years of Christian civilization, by a nation which, only yesterday, claimed to be the foremost in modern Progress.

It should be remembered that Belgium had done nothing to bring on the war nor to involve her in it. She was a neutralized country. Every shot fired by a German soldier in Belgium is a violation of the solemn treaty whereby Germany pledged her faith to uphold the neutrality of Belgium.

At the end of this pamphlet (page 20) will be found extracts from the "Laws of War on Land," published by the German General Staff in 1902, and other documents, showing that the massacres, arson and pillage committed by the German army in Belgium are attributable, not to the innate brutality of the German soldier, but rather to an organized system of terrorism laid down and ordered by the superior German Military authorities.

The authenticity of the following text of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry is certified by the Belgian Legation, Washington, D. C.

