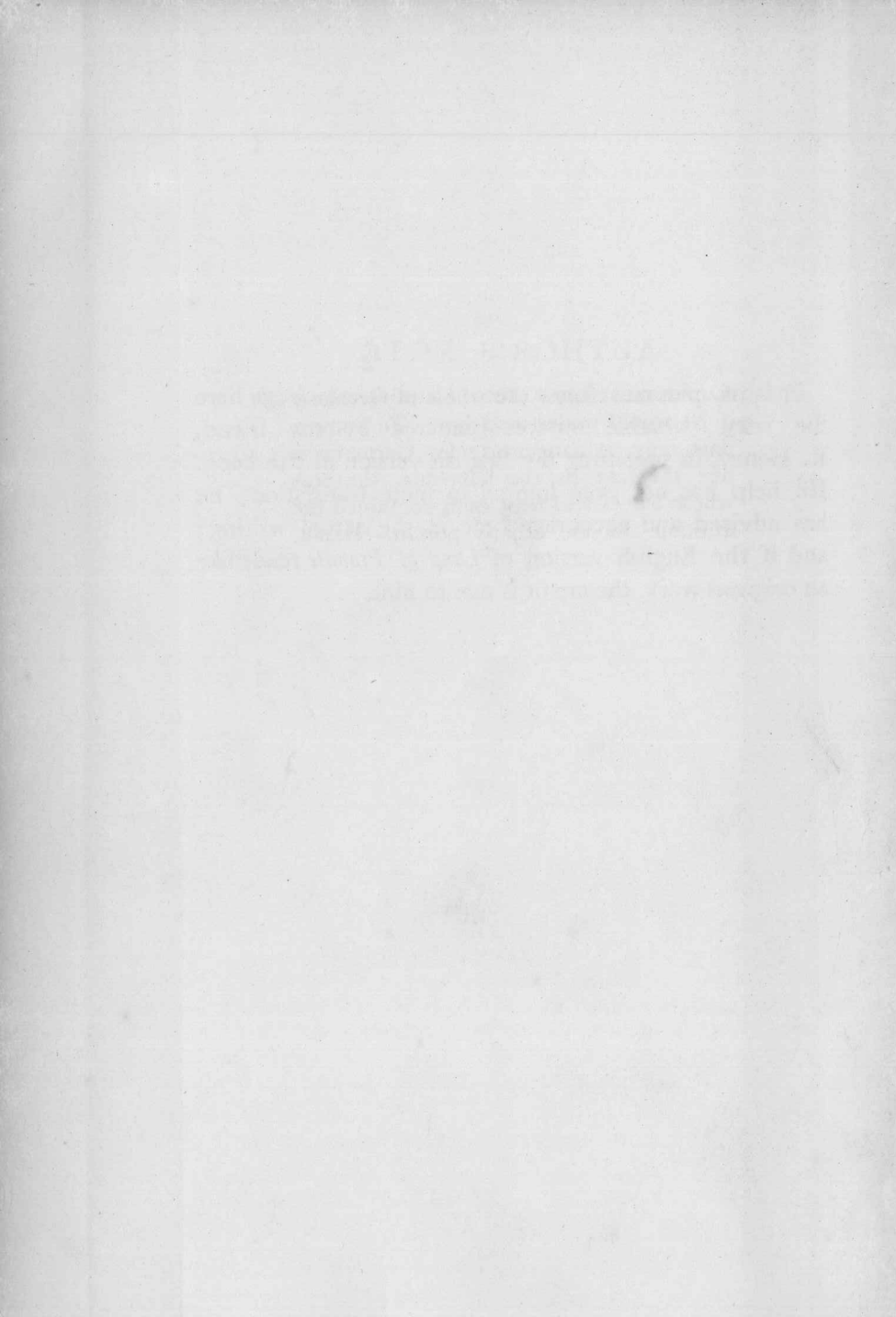


LAND OF PROMISE

LEO LANIA





LAND OF PROMISE .



THE LAND OF PROMISE
AND THE
LAND OF THE FUTURE



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Land of Promise

by
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Translated by
R. HENRY

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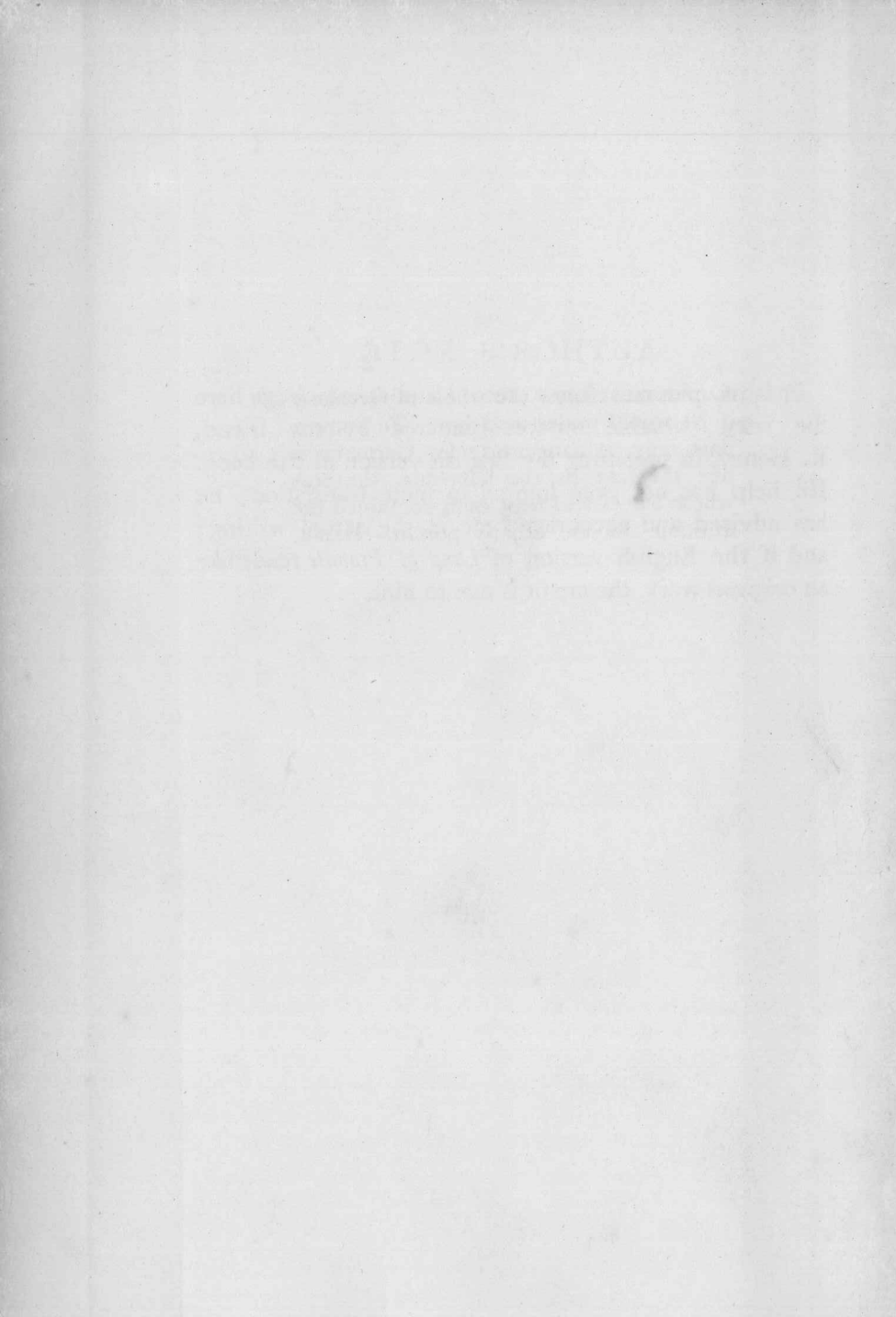
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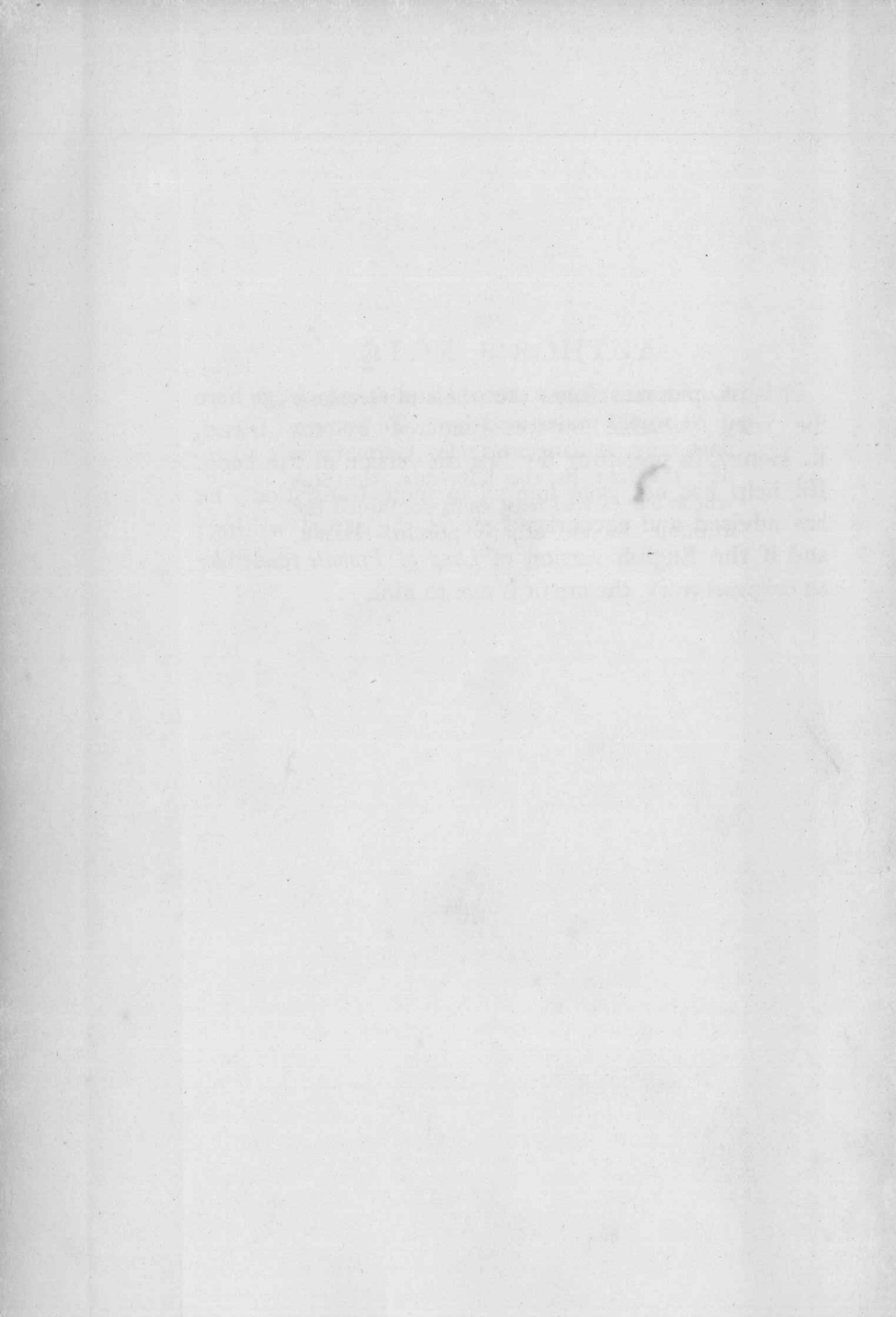
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A man must know the whole of Germany if he would understand her. To know a part only, is dangerous; for Germany is like the tree in the fairy-tale, the tree whose leaves and fruit each contained the antidote to the other's poison.—HEINE.

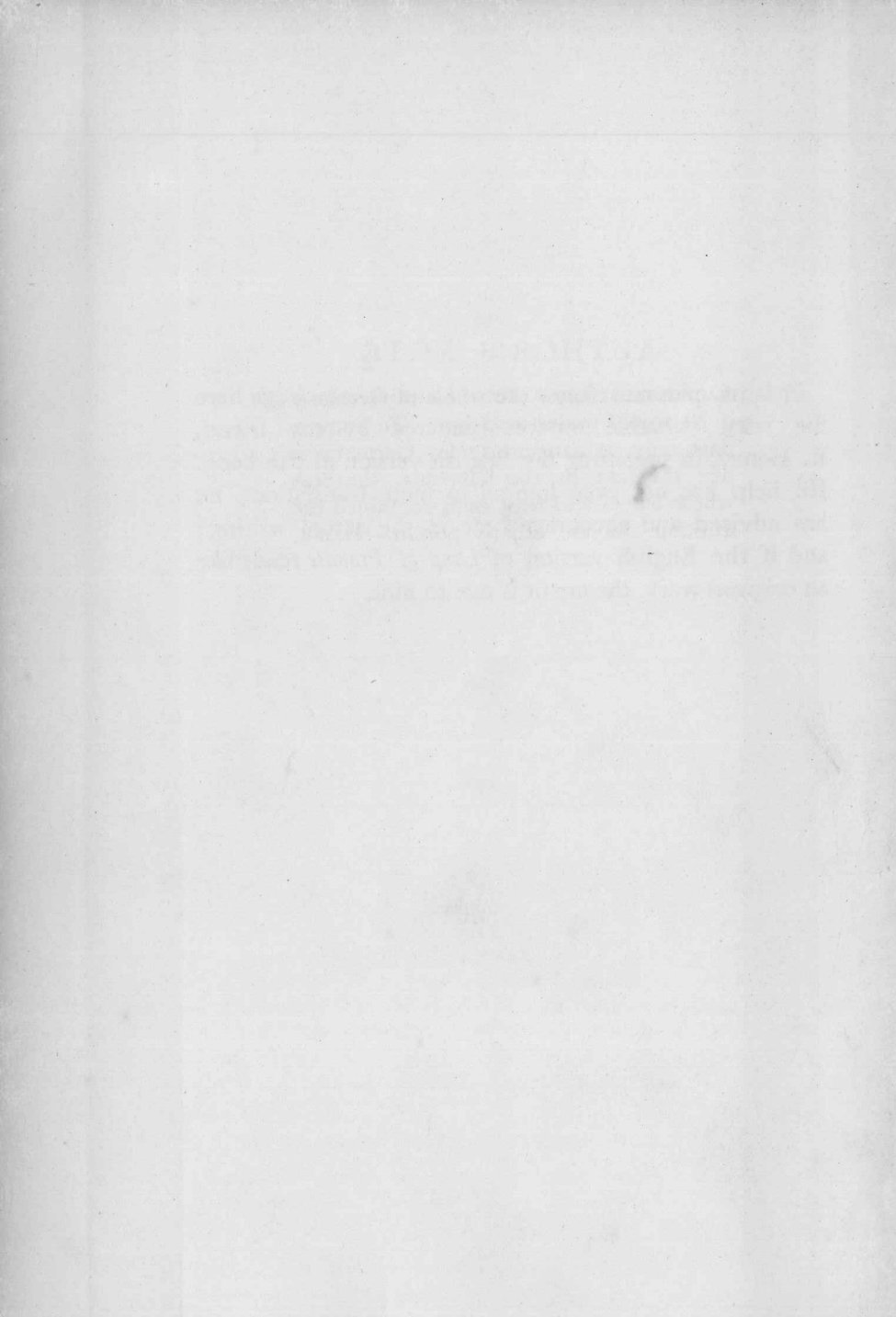


AUTHOR'S NOTE

It is my pleasant duty to record and acknowledge here the very valuable services rendered by my friend, R. Henry, in preparing the English version of this book. His help has not been limited to mere translation; he has advised and encouraged me in the actual writing; and if the English version of *Land of Promise* reads like an original work, the credit is due to him.



LAND OF PROMISE



Chapter One

THE forest was still asleep, its breathing steady and very gentle. The ancient beeches stood motionless, not a leaf was stirring. Thin wisps of mist hung between the bare and weather-beaten trunks of the pines and fir trees.

In the quiet greyish light in which every outline was blurred, the forest seemed boundless and mysterious, a secluded and unexplored world. A narrow path led farther and farther into its depths.

The two horses kept pace, a short distance apart, barely audible on the thick carpet of moss. Suddenly they snorted. Rosenberg's bay shied at a root; the rider grasped the reins more firmly, patted the horse; the bay calmed down.

Complete stillness. Nothing but the creaking of the saddles and the low clatter of the water-bottles and dixies.

Marvellous, thought Rosenberg. I've lived to the age of twenty and have never had any idea of all this. A forest. When did I ever see a forest! Those well-kept, tame woods at home perhaps, planted in straight rows; with look-out towers, lovers and hikers. Greasy paper lying about, and the city lurking behind every turning. This is a real forest! Perhaps bears still shelter here, perhaps it is years since a human being has set foot in this wilderness. And to think that I might have spent my whole life

in Berlin, seen nothing but streets and houses and offices, all that so-called civilisation . . . why, I'd never even seen the sun rise.

"Marvellous, eh, Heinicke?"

The gunner, who was riding close to Rosenberg, hastened to agree.

"Very nice, Sergeant."

And they continued their ride in silence.

If only I could have got to the front sooner! Two years lost at the base . . . terrible. Ah, well, the war isn't over yet.

2

The path led to a clearing. Suddenly they were in the open, as if they had emerged from a dark cave into the light of day. A marvel. A few birches stood there shivering. The sky was very clear and high, a thin veil of cloud moving across it. To the right behind the trees was a flame of light. That must be the sun. Close by a bird started to sing. Suddenly the forest awoke. The dew on the grass glittered. The day promised to be hot.

The two horsemen stopped side by side. Before them the flat countryside stretched, meadows and pasture, like a green ocean. A church tower stood out. In the distance the brown roofs of a small village, then cornfields as far as the horizon.

Rosenberg rose in his stirrups and took a deep breath. This expanse intoxicated him. His young face beamed.

To the left, beyond the forest, the Artillery began its morning's work. The intermittent bursts of rifle fire sounded as if far away someone were playing skittles. The

peace of the landscape only seemed deeper and more complete.

Rosenberg drew his map from its case and took his bearings by compass.

"To the left along the edge of the wood, that'll take us straight to Brigade Headquarters. Here near Hill 183. And now let's be off before the planes come over."

Rosenberg touched his horse with the spur. The bay, who had been impatiently champing at the bit, bounded forward. At a hand gallop the two riders rode up the gently rising slope.

Rosenberg felt the blood singing in his veins. Perhaps there is going to be a real battle, on the very day when I am sent as observer to the front lines! If the war lasts another two years, I may even rise to be Lieutenant. Lieutenant! Life is just beginning. How happy I am!

The thunder of the guns grew stronger.

3

They rode down another slope and came to the main road which ran through a narrow valley in the shelter of the wooded hills.

Immediately the war was on them. A dead horse lay in the ditch, close by yawned a deep hole in the roadway. An ambulance car came towards them, then a motor cycle. They overtook a field battery. In a hollow beyond the next curve was the ambulance station—tents, carts, motors, the red cross flag fluttered merrily.

A battered farm cart blocked the road, two more dead horses. They had to ride round them carefully. Rosenberg looked with interest at the great pool of greenish

opalescent blood, the torn carcass of an animal with the entrails protruding. Near by lay large fragments of a shell. How curious it all was!

"Direct hit!" said Heinicke. "And quite a fresh one."

Shall I ask him? thought Rosenberg. He'll notice at once that I haven't been at the front yet. He'll laugh at me. And yet, as they trotted along side by side, he began to sound his companion carefully—Did Heinicke believe that this heavy artillery fire . . . it wasn't anything special, was it . . . or was it?

"Child's play!" said Heinicke, and made a contemptuous gesture. "Shooting holes in the landscape, that's all these Russians are good for. No sense in it. Altogether this whole Eastern Front's nothing but a joke. . . . No one who hasn't been at Verdun has any idea what war is."

Heinicke had had five months on the Western Front.

"This is nothing but sick leave. Were you out at Verdun too, Sergeant?"

"No," said Rosenberg, and felt ashamed.

"Ypres? The Somme?"

"Only on the Eastern Front. . . . We must be at Brigade Headquarters soon." Rosenberg broke off the conversation. I really can't tell him that I have done nothing but stick in the Fortress at Liège the whole time. Still he admitted: "I have been at the Base for a few months now. A special course with mechanised howitzers."

"A good show," assented Heinicke.

"Not so bad. But I am glad that I have got out of it again. That service at the Base—horrible."

"Yes, rifle drill and gun drill and fatigue, the old slave-drivers put you through it properly. Well, anything is

better than the trenches. Two years we've been at it. If anybody had told us that in '14 . . . Do you think it'll last much longer?"

"Wait till we've finished with the Russians first. . . ."

"In a few weeks everything will be over on this front. September, October, then winter. The third winter . . . and at home they're dying of hunger."

The bitterness in Heinicke's voice hit Rosenberg like a personal affront. He felt less sure of himself, and grew annoyed. What are the man's real thoughts? Perhaps he'll turn out to be a Socialist in disguise.

"We must simply carry on," said Rosenberg. How cool and superior this sounded!

"Carry on—I am married," said Heinicke. The resentment had passed, his voice merely sounded hopeless.

Rosenberg felt small and unimportant. He knew no answer and was embarrassed.

4

The Artillery Brigade Headquarters swarmed with Austrian Staff officers. The Germans were moving off; during the past night the Saxon and Hessian Reserve Regiments had been withdrawn from the position, Vienna Reserves and Hungarian Honved had relieved them. The whole sector was now under the Austrian Corps Headquarters.

The little blockhouse which lay in the middle of the forest, well protected against observation from the air, was the scene of feverish activity. Telephone patrols were working at high pressure. The Germans had disconnected