

A tribute to Australian valour

Date : 4/25/25 1:27 PM

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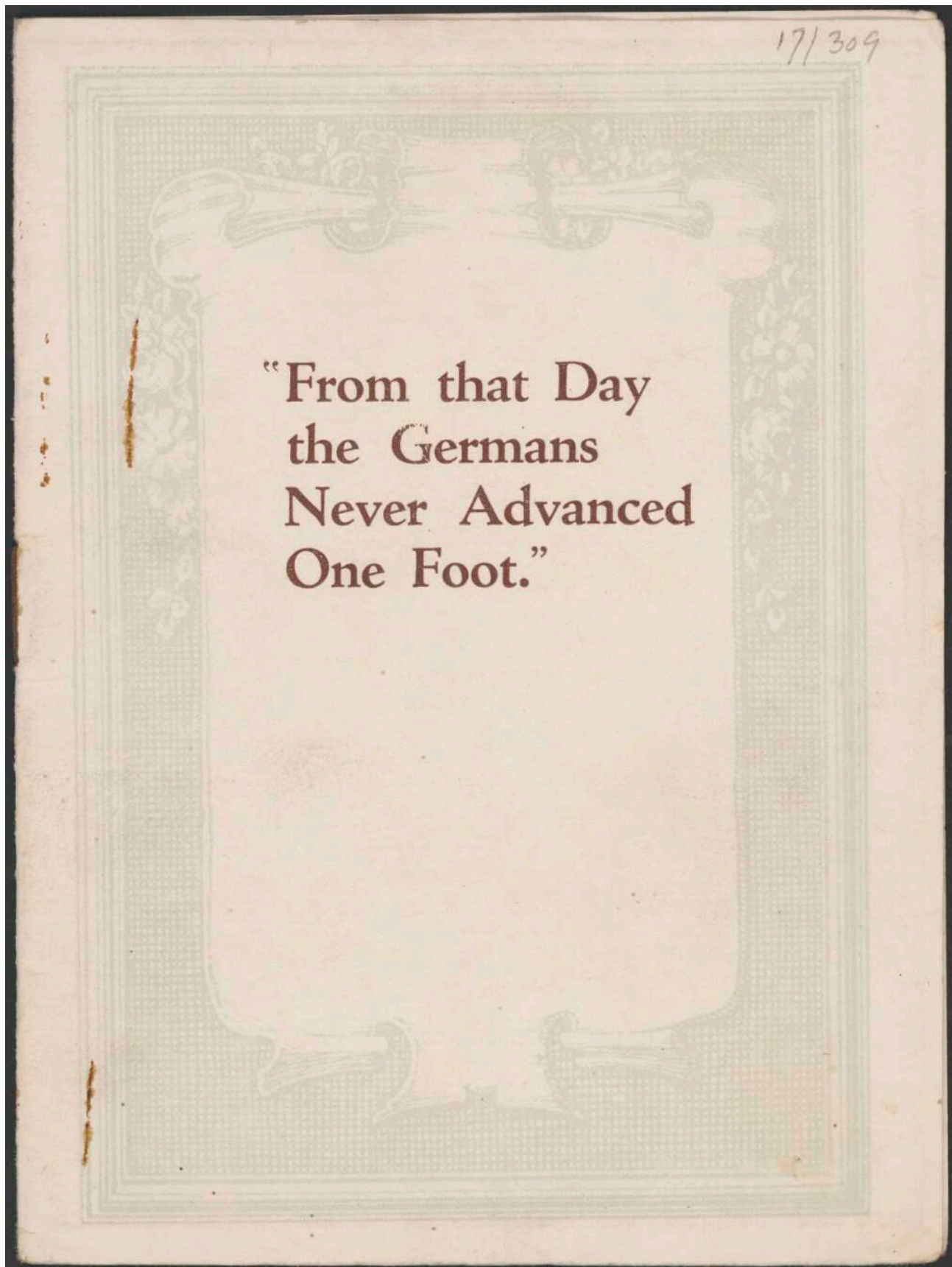
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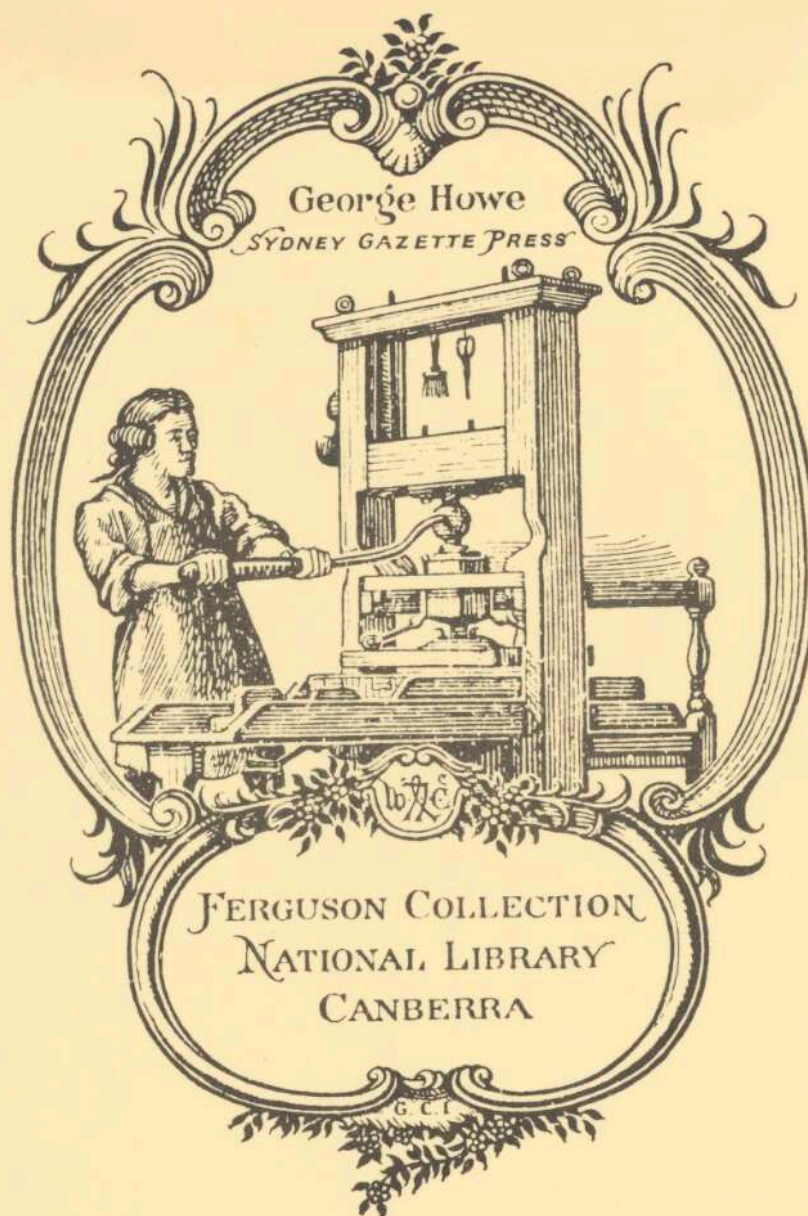
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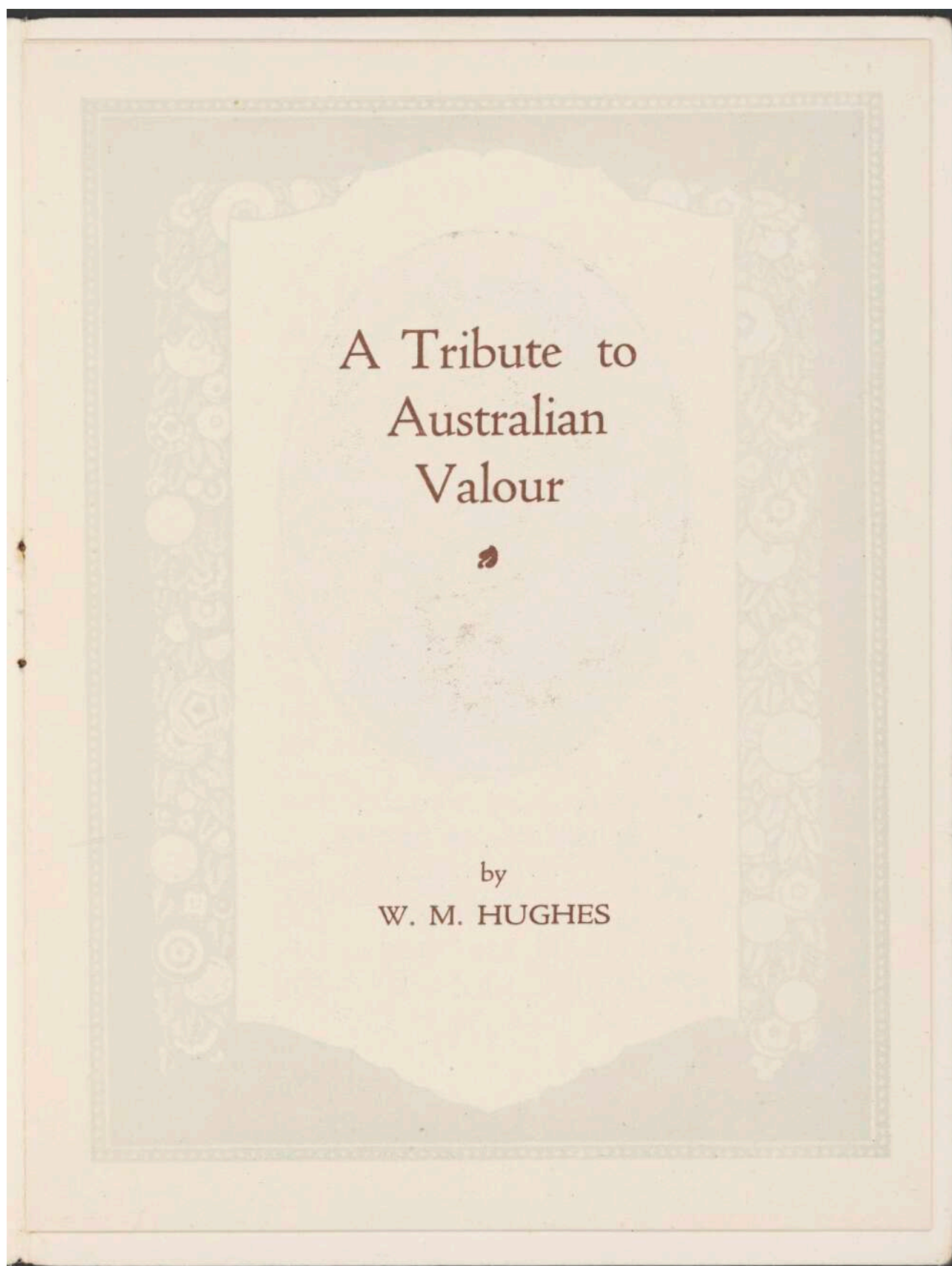
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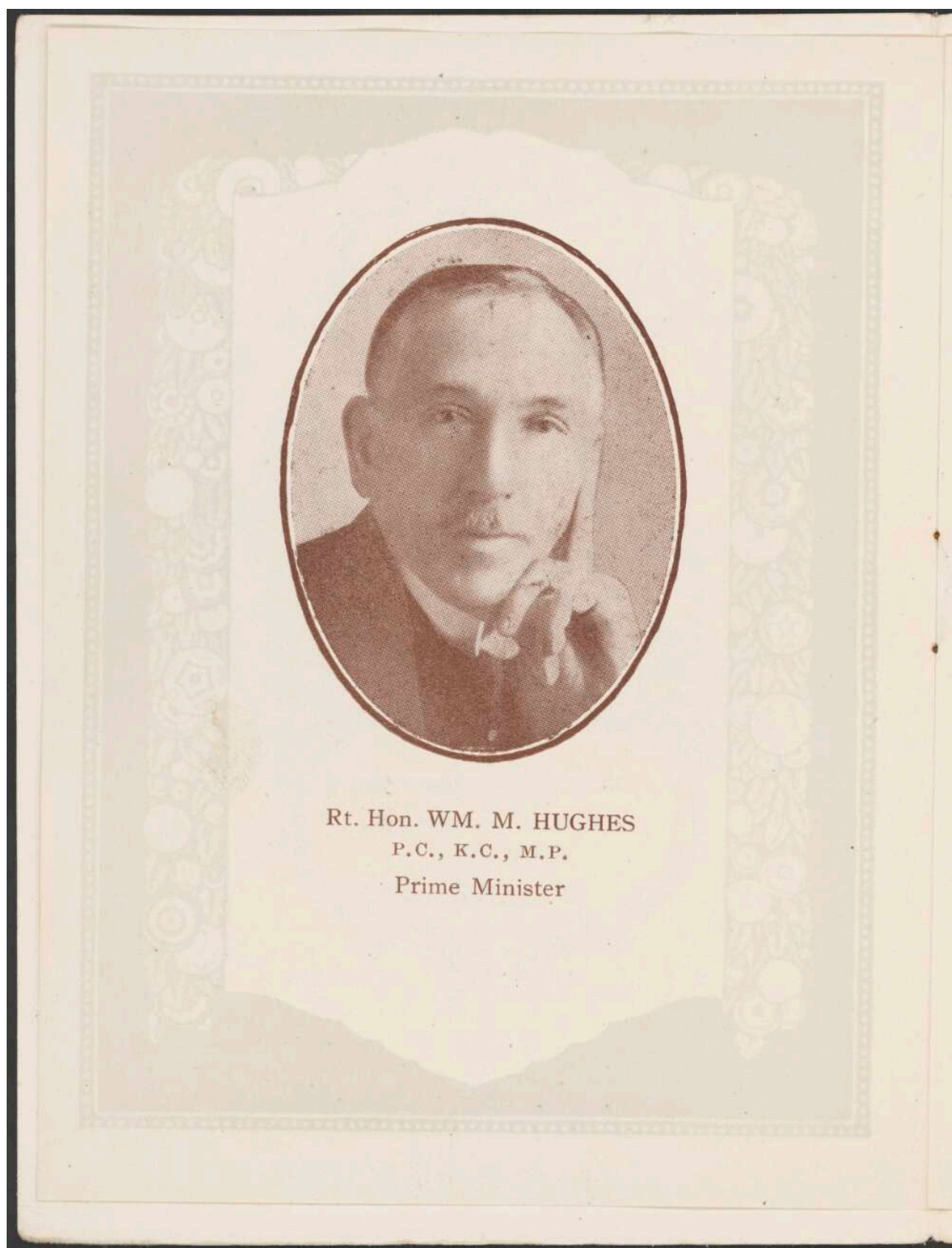
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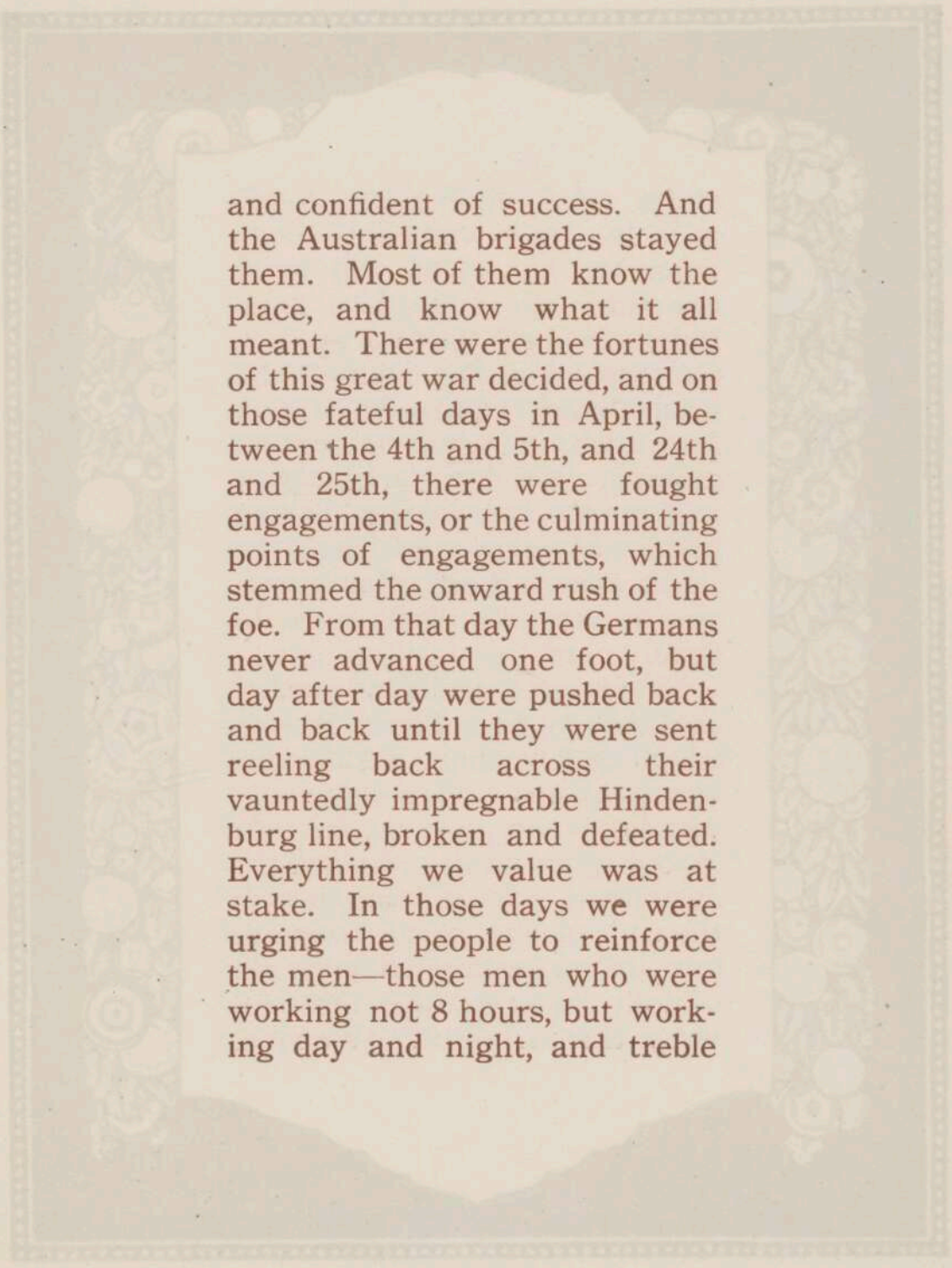




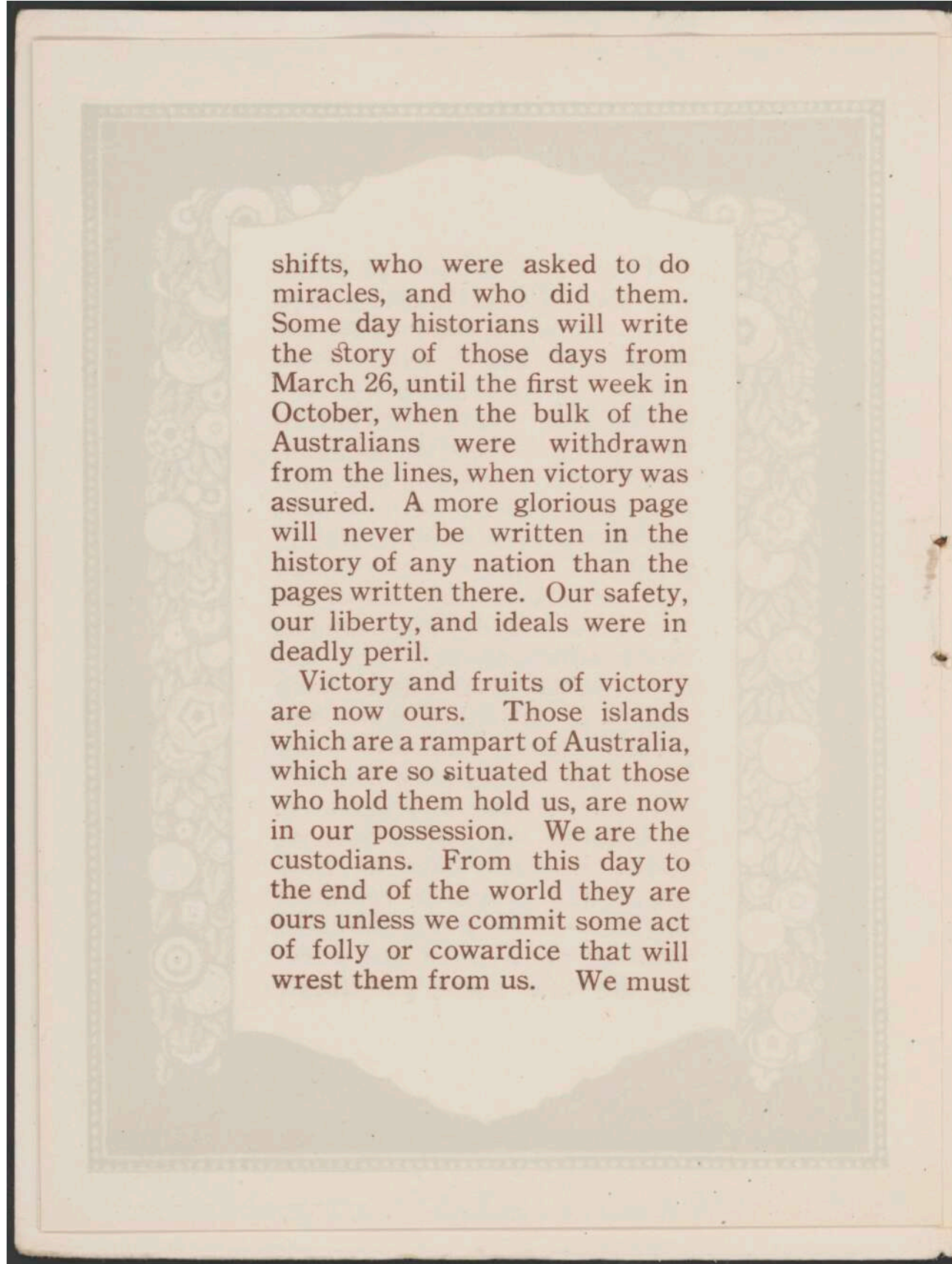
EXTRACT FROM SPEECH
DELIVERED AT BENDIGO,
SEPTEMBER 1, 1919

IT is now 16 months since I left you. We have gone from the very Nadir of our fortunes to the very pinnacle of triumph. You all remember March 21, 1918. To those who have not imagination enough to conjure up for yourselves the possibilities of that fearful day, let me say that on that day everything we have in this world, everything we value, unless we are traitors to our country, to our race, and to our liberties, and civilisation, was in deadly peril. The German legions hacked their way through the 5th British Army and poured

headlong along the road to Amiens. Early in April the rolling tide of the war had come within a few miles of Amiens, to a place called Villers Bretonneux. That name to you citizens perhaps means nothing. But in the days to come it will be engraved in the hearts and in the minds of future generations, not only of Australia, but to all men who love Australia. And it will be like Thermopylae, where the Spartans fell and died to a man to save Greece. On that day Amiens was in deadly peril, and Paris, and all that Paris stood for, was on the verge of black disaster, when the Australian brigades, or some of them, were sent down hurriedly from the north, and were hurled against the mighty hosts of the Germans advancing in high triumph, flushed with victory,

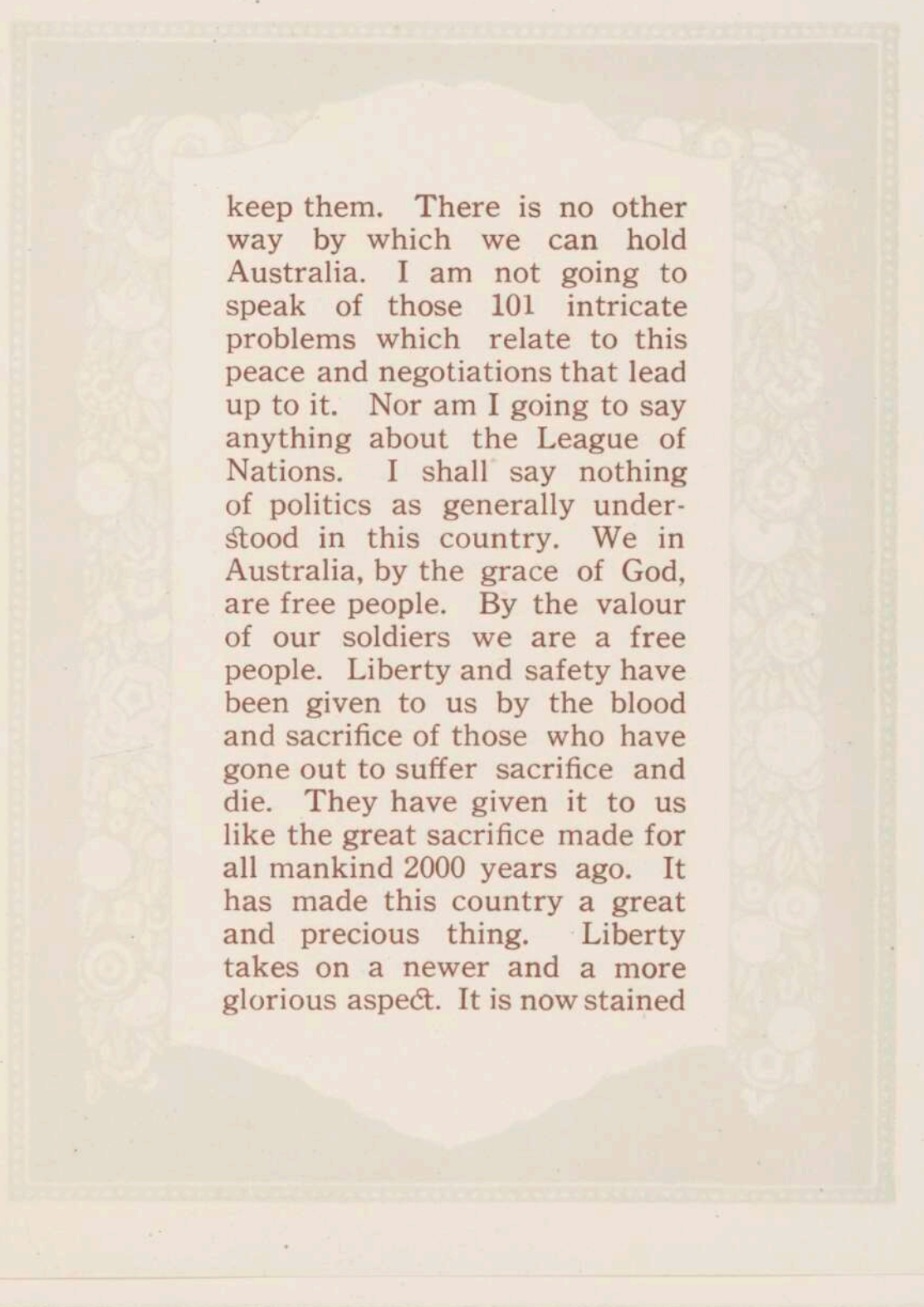


and confident of success. And the Australian brigades stayed them. Most of them know the place, and know what it all meant. There were the fortunes of this great war decided, and on those fateful days in April, between the 4th and 5th, and 24th and 25th, there were fought engagements, or the culminating points of engagements, which stemmed the onward rush of the foe. From that day the Germans never advanced one foot, but day after day were pushed back and back until they were sent reeling back across their vauntedly impregnable Hindenburg line, broken and defeated. Everything we value was at stake. In those days we were urging the people to reinforce the men—those men who were working not 8 hours, but working day and night, and treble



shifts, who were asked to do miracles, and who did them. Some day historians will write the story of those days from March 26, until the first week in October, when the bulk of the Australians were withdrawn from the lines, when victory was assured. A more glorious page will never be written in the history of any nation than the pages written there. Our safety, our liberty, and ideals were in deadly peril.

Victory and fruits of victory are now ours. Those islands which are a rampart of Australia, which are so situated that those who hold them hold us, are now in our possession. We are the custodians. From this day to the end of the world they are ours unless we commit some act of folly or cowardice that will wrest them from us. We must



keep them. There is no other way by which we can hold Australia. I am not going to speak of those 101 intricate problems which relate to this peace and negotiations that lead up to it. Nor am I going to say anything about the League of Nations. I shall say nothing of politics as generally understood in this country. We in Australia, by the grace of God, are free people. By the valour of our soldiers we are a free people. Liberty and safety have been given to us by the blood and sacrifice of those who have gone out to suffer sacrifice and die. They have given it to us like the great sacrifice made for all mankind 2000 years ago. It has made this country a great and precious thing. Liberty takes on a newer and a more glorious aspect. It is now stained

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with the blood of the best and bravest of those who died for you and me. There were men in this country, all of us in fact, to whom liberty came as it were without money and without price. It cost nothing. There were some who thought of it as the eternal prerogative of man to be free without deserving it, without being prepared to do that which free men did when their liberty is assailed — fight for it. Since the war has passed like a scourge over mankind all those except the deliberately blind will realise that liberty is a thing precious beyond price. It has been bought with the blood of 60,000 young Australians. It was by the suffering, privations and the heroisms of the men who went out to fight that we gained a free, a safe, and a White Australia.

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THE SPECIALTY PRESS
PRINTERS
Amico House, Parker St.
Haymarket
Sydney