

Foch the Man eBook

Foch the Man

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Foch the Man eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	8
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	12
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	17
Page 8.....	19
Page 9.....	21
Page 10.....	23
Page 11.....	25
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	33
Page 16.....	35
Page 17.....	37
Page 18.....	39
Page 19.....	41
Page 20.....	43
Page 21.....	45
Page 22.....	47



[Page 23.....49](#)

[Page 24.....51](#)

[Page 25.....53](#)

[Page 26.....55](#)

[Page 27.....57](#)

[Page 28.....59](#)

[Page 29.....60](#)

[Page 30.....62](#)

[Page 31.....64](#)

[Page 32.....66](#)

[Page 33.....68](#)

[Page 34.....69](#)

[Page 35.....71](#)

[Page 36.....73](#)

[Page 37.....75](#)

[Page 38.....77](#)

[Page 39.....79](#)

[Page 40.....81](#)

[Page 41.....83](#)

[Page 42.....85](#)

[Page 43.....87](#)

[Page 44.....89](#)

[Page 45.....91](#)

[Page 46.....92](#)

[Page 47.....94](#)

[Page 48.....96](#)



[Page 49..... 98](#)

[Page 50..... 100](#)

[Page 51..... 102](#)

[Page 52..... 104](#)

[Page 53..... 106](#)

[Page 54..... 108](#)

[Page 55..... 109](#)

[Page 56..... 110](#)

[Page 57..... 112](#)

[Page 58..... 114](#)

[Page 59..... 116](#)

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
ILLUSTRATIONS		1
FOREWORD TO REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION		1
I		3
II		5
III		8
IV		9
V		12
VI		14
VII		16
VIII		19
IX		21
X		23
XI		26
XII		29
XIII		31
XIV		34
XV		38
XVI		43
XVII		47
XVIII		53



Page 1

ILLUSTRATIONS

Marshal Foch at the Peace Conference *Frontispiece*

The room in which Ferdinand Foch was born

The house in Tarbes where Foch was born

Ferdinand Foch as a schoolboy of twelve

The school in Tarbes

Marshall Joffre—General Foch

General Petain—Marshal Haig—General Foch—General Pershing

General Foch—General Pershing

Marshal Foch, Executive head of the allied forces

Ferdinand Foch, Marshal of France

FOREWORD TO REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

When the Great War broke out, one military name “led all the rest” in world-prominence: Kitchener. Millions of us were confident that the hero of Kartoum would save the world. It was not so decreed. Almost immediately another name flashed into the ken of every one, until even lisping children said *Joffre* with reverence second only to that wherewith they named Omnipotence. Then the weary years dragged on, and so many men were incredibly brave and good that it seemed hard for anyone to become pre-eminent. We began to say that in a war so vast, so far-flung, no one man *could* dominate the scene.

But, after nearly four years of conflict, a name we had heard and seen from the first, among many others, began to differentiate itself from the rest; and presently the whole wide world was ringing with it: Foch!

He was commanding all the armies of civilization. Who was he?

Hardly anyone knew.



Up to the very moment when he had compassed the most momentous victory in the history of mankind, little was known about him, outside of France, beyond the fact that he had been a professor in the Superior School of War.

Now and then, as the achievements of his generalship rocked the world, someone essayed an account of him. They said he was a Lorrainer, born at Metz; they said his birthday was August 4; they said he was too young to serve in the Franco-Prussian war; and they said a great many other things of which few happened to be true.

Then, as the summer of 1918 waned, there came to me from France, from Intelligence officers of General Foch's staff, authoritative information about him.

And also there came those, representing France and her interests in this country, who said:

"Won't you put the facts about Foch before your people?"

If I could have fought for France with a sword (or gun) I should have been at her service from the first of August, 1914, when I heard her tocsin ring, saw her sons march away to fight and die on battlefields as familiar to me as my home neighborhood.

Not being permitted that, I have yielded her such service as I could with my pen.

And when asked to write, for my countrymen, about General Foch, I felt honored in a supreme degree.

Page 2

In due course we shall have many volumes about him: his life, his teachings, his writings, his great deeds will be studied in minutest details as long as that civilization endures which he did so much to preserve to mankind.

But just now, while all hearts are overflowing with gratefulness to him, it may be—I cannot help thinking—as valuable to us to know a little about him as it will be for us to know a great deal about him later on.

My sources of information are mainly French; and notable among them is a work recently published in Paris: “Foch, His Life, His Principles, His Work, as a Basis for Faith in Victory,” by Rene Puaux, a French soldier-author who has served under the supreme commander in a capacity which enabled him to study the man as well as the General.

French, English and some few American periodicals have given me bits of impression and some information. French military and other writers have also helped. And noted war correspondents have contributed graphic fragments. The happy fortune which permitted me to know France, her history and her people, enabled me to “read into” these brief accounts much which does not appear to the reader without that acquaintance. And distinguished Frenchmen, scholars and soldiers, including several members of the French High Commission to the United States, have helped me greatly; most of them have not only close acquaintance with General Foch, having served as staff officers under him, but are eminent writers as well, with the highest powers of analysis and of expression.

Lieutenant-Colonel Edouard Requin of the French General Staff, who was at General Foch’s side from the day Foch was made commander of an army, has been especially kind to me in this undertaking; I am indebted to him, not only for many anecdotes and suggestions, but also for his patience in reading my manuscript for verification (or correction) of its details and its essential truthfulness.

And I want especially to record my gratefulness to M. Antonin Barthelemy, French Consul at Chicago, the extent and quality of whose helpfulness, not alone on this but on many occasions, I shall never be able to describe. Through him the Spirit of France has been potent in our community.

Thus aided and encouraged, I have done what I could to set before my countrymen a sketch of the great, dominant figure of the World War.

The thing about Foch that most impresses us as we come to know him is not primarily his greatness as a military genius, but his greatness as a spiritual force.

Those identical qualities in him which saved the world in war, will serve it no less in peace—if we study them to good purpose.



As a leader of men, his principles need little, if any, adaptation to meet the requirements of the re-born world from which, we hope, he has banished the sword.

Not to those only who would or who must captain their fellows, but to every individual soul fighting alone against weakness and despair and other foes, his life-story brings a rising tide of new courage, new strength, new faith.

Page 3

For the young man or woman struggling with the principles of success; for the man or woman of middle life, fearful that the time for great service has gone by; to the preacher and the teacher and other moulders of ideals—to these, and to many more, he speaks at least as thrillingly as to the soldier.

This is what I have tried to make clear in my simple sketch here offered.

I

WHERE HE WAS BORN

Ferdinand Foch was born at Tarbes on October 2, 1851.

His father, of good old Pyrenean stock and modest fortune, was a provincial official whose office corresponded to that of secretary of state for one of our commonwealths. So the family lived in Tarbes, the capital of the department called the Upper Pyrenees.

The mother of Ferdinand was Sophie Dupre, born at Argeles, twenty miles south of Tarbes, nearer the Spanish border. Her father had been made a chevalier of the empire by Napoleon I for services in the war with Spain, and the great Emperor's memory was piously venerated in Sophie Dupre's new home as it had been in her old one. So her first-born son may be said to have inherited that passion for Napoleon which has characterized his life and played so great a part in making him what he is.

There was a little sister in the family which welcomed Ferdinand. And in course of time two other boys came.

[Illustration: The Room in Which Ferdinand Foch was Born.]

[Illustration: The House in Tarbes Where Foch was Born.]

These four children led the ordinary life of happy young folks in France. But there was much in their surroundings that was richly colorful, romantic. Probably they took it all for granted, the way children (and many who are not children) take their near and intimate world. But even if they did, it must have had its deep effect upon them.

To begin with, there was Tarbes.

Tarbes is a very ancient city. It is twenty-five miles southeast of Pau, where Henry of Navarre made his dramatic entry upon a highly dramatic career, and just half that distance northeast of Lourdes, whose famous pilgrimages began when Ferdinand Foch was a little boy of seven.



He must have heard many soul-stirring tales about little Bernadette, the peasant girl to whom the grotto's miraculous qualities were revealed by the Virgin, and whose stories were weighed by the Bishop of Tarbes before the Catholic Church sponsored them. The procession of sufferers through Tarbes on their way to Lourdes, and the joyful return of many, must have been part of the background of Ferdinand Foch's young days.

Many important highways converge at Tarbes, which lies in a rich, elevated plain on the left bank of the River Adour.

The town now has some 30,000 inhabitants, but when Ferdinand Foch was a little boy it had fewer than half that many.



Page 4

For many centuries of eventful history it has consisted principally of one very long street, running east and west over so wide a stretch of territory that the town was called Tarbes-the-Long. Here and there this “main street” is crossed by little streets running north and south and giving glimpses of mountains, green fields and orchards; and many of these are threaded by tiny waterways—small, meandering children of the Adour, which take themselves where they will, like the chickens in France, and nobody minds having to step over or around them, or building his house to humor their vagaries.

Tarbes was a prominent city of Gaul under the Romans. They, who could always be trusted to make the most of anything of the nature of baths, seem to have been duly appreciative of the hot springs in which that region abounds.

But nothing of stirring importance happened at or near Tarbes until after the battle of Poitiers (732), when the Saracens were falling back after the terrible defeat dealt them by Charles Martel.

Sullen and vengeful, they were pillaging and destroying as they went, and probably none of the communities through which they passed felt able to offer resistance to their depredations—until they got to Tarbes. And there a valiant priest named Missolin hastily assembled some of the men of the vicinity and gave the infidels a good drubbing—killing many and hastening the flight, over the mountains, of the rest.

This encounter took place on a plain a little to the south of Tarbes which is still called the Heath of the Moors.

When Ferdinand Foch was a little boy, more than eleven hundred years after that battle, it was not uncommon for the spade or plowshare of some husbandman on the heath to uncover bones of Christian or infidel slain in what was probably the last conflict fought on French soil to preserve France against the Saracens. And there may still have been living some old, old men or women who could tell Ferdinand stories of the 24th of May (anniversary of the battle) as it was observed each year until the Revolution of 1789. At the southern extremity of the battlefield there stood for many generations a gigantic equestrian statue, of wood, representing the holy warrior, Missolin, rallying his flock to rout the unbelievers. And in the presence of a great concourse singing songs of grateful praise to Missolin, his statue was crowned with garlands by young maidens wearing the picturesque gala dress of that vicinity.

Some forty-odd years after Missolin’s victory, Charlemagne went with his twelve knights and his great army through Tarbes on his way to Spain to fight the Moors. And when that ill-starred expedition was defeated and its warriors bold were fleeing back to France, Roland—so the story goes—finding no pass in the Pyrenees where he needed one desperately, cleaved one with his sword Durandal.



Page 5

High up among the clouds (almost 10,000 feet) is that Breach of Roland—200 feet wide, 330 feet deep, and 165 feet long. A good slice-out for a single stroke! And when Roland had cut it, he dashed through it and across the chasm, his horse making a clean jump to the French side of the mountains. That no one might ever doubt this, the horse thoughtfully left the mark of one iron-shod hoof clearly imprinted in the rock just where he cleared it, and where it is still shown to the curious and the stout of wind.

It is a pity to remember that, in spite of such prowess of knight and devotion of beast, Roland perished on his flight from Spain.

But, like all brave warriors, he became mightier in death even than he had been in life, and furnished an ideal of valor which animated the most chivalrous youth of all Europe, throughout many centuries.

With such traditions is the country round about Tarbes impregnated.

It has been suggested that the name Foch (which, by the way, is pronounced as if it rhymed with “hush”) is derived from Foix—a town some sixty miles east of St. Gaudens, near which was the ancestral home of the Foch family.

Whatever the relatives of Ferdinand may have thought of this as a probability, it is certain that Ferdinand was well nurtured in the history of Foix and especially in those phases of it that Froissart relates.

Froissart, the genial gossip who first courted the favor of kings and princes and then was gently entreated by them so that his writing of them might be to their renown, was on his way to Blois when he heard of the magnificence of Gaston Phoebus, Count of Foix. Whereupon the chronicler turned him about and jogged on his way to Foix. Gaston Phoebus was not there, but at Orthez—150 miles west and north—and, nothing daunted, to Orthez went Froissart, by way of Tarbes, traveling in company with a knight named Espaing de Lyon, who was a graphic and charming raconteur thoroughly acquainted with the country through which they were journeying. A fine, “that-reminds-me” gentleman was Espaing, and every turn of the road brought to his mind some stirring tale or doughty legend.

“Sainte Marie!” Froissart cried. “How pleasant are your tales, and how much do they profit me while you relate them. They shall all be set down in the history I am writing.”

So they were! And of all Froissart's incomparable recitals, none are more fascinating than those of the countryside Ferdinand Foch grew up in.

II

BOYHOOD SURROUNDINGS



The country round about Tarbes has long been famed for its horses of an Arabian breed especially suitable for cavalry.

Practically all the farmers of the region raised these fine, fleet animals. There was a great stud-farm on the outskirts of town, and the business of breeding mounts for France's soldiers was one of the first that little Ferdinand Foch heard a great deal about.



Page 6

He learned to ride, as a matter of course, when he was very young. And all his life he has been an ardent and intrepid horseman.

A community devoted to the raising of fine saddle horses is all but certain to be a community devotedly fond of horse racing.

Love of racing is almost a universal trait in France; and in Tarbes it was a feature of the town life in which business went hand-in-hand with pleasure.

In an old French book published before Ferdinand Foch was born, I have found the following description of the crowds which flocked into Tarbes on the days of the horse markets and races:

“On these days all the streets and public squares are flooded with streams of curious people come from all corners of the Pyrenees and exhibiting in their infinite variety of type and costume all the races of the southern provinces and the mountains.

“There one sees the folk of Provence, irascible, hot-headed, of vigorous proportions and lusty voice, passionately declaiming about something or other, in the midst of small groups of listeners.

“There are men of the Basque province—small, muscular and proud, agile of movement and with bodies beautifully trained; plain of speech and childlike in deed.

“There are the men of the Bearnais, mostly from towns of size and circumstance—educated men, of self-command, tempering the southern warmth which burns in their eyes by the calm intelligence born of experience in life and also by a natural languor like that of their Spanish neighbors.

“There are the old Catalonians, whose features are of savage strength under the thick brush of white hair falling about their leather-colored faces; the men of Navarre, with braided hair and other evidences of primitiveness—vigorous of build and handsome of feature, but withal a little subnormal in expression.

“Then, in the midst of all these characteristic types, moving about in a pell-mell fashion, making a constantly changing mosaic of vivid hues, there are the inhabitants of the innumerable valleys around Tarbes itself, each of them with its own peculiarities of costume, manners, speech, which make them easily distinguishable one from another.”

It was a remarkable crowd for a little boy to wander in.

If Ferdinand Foch had been destined to be a painter or a writer, the impressions made upon his childish mind by that medley of strange folk might have been passed on to us long ago on brilliant canvas or on glowing page.

[Illustration: Ferdinand Foch (center) as a Schoolboy.]

[Illustration: The School in Tarbes Where Foch Prepared for the Military Academy.]

But that was not the way it served him.

I want you who are interested to comprehend Ferdinand Foch, to think of those old horsefairs and race meets of his Gascony childhood, and the crowds of strange types they brought to Tarbes, when we come to the great days of his life that began in 1914—the days when his comprehension of many types of men, his ability to “get on with” them and harmonize them with one another, meant almost as much to the world as his military genius.



Page 7

Tarbes had suffered so much in civil and religious wars, for many centuries, that not many of her ancient buildings were left. The old castle, with its associations with the Black Prince and other renowned warriors, was a ramshackle prison in Ferdinand Foch's youth. The old palace of the bishops was used as the prefecture, where Ferdinand's father had his office.

There were two old churches, much restored and of no great beauty, but very dear to the people of Tarbes nevertheless.

Ferdinand and his brothers and sister were very piously reared, and at an early age learned to love the church and to seek it for exaltation and consolation.

Later on in these chapters we shall see that phase of a little French boy's training in its due relation to a marechal of France, directing the greatest army the world has ever seen.

The college of Tarbes, where Ferdinand began his school days, was in a venerable building over whose portal there was, in Latin, an inscription recording the builder's prayer:

"May this house remain standing until the ant has drunk all the waves of the sea and the tortoise has crawled round the world."

Ferdinand was a hard student, serious beyond his years, but not conspicuous except for his earnestness and diligence.

When he was twelve years old, his fervor for Napoleon led him to read Thiers' "History of the Consulate and the Empire." And about this time his professor of mathematics remarked of him that "he has the stuff of a polytechnician."

The vacations of the Foch children were passed at the home of their paternal grandparents in Valentine, a large village about two miles from the town of St. Gaudens in the foothills of the Pyrenees. There they had the country pleasures of children of good circumstances, in a big, substantial house and a vicinity rich in tranquil beauty and outdoor opportunities. And there, as in the children's own home at Tarbes, one was ashamed not to be a very excellent child, and, so, worthy to be descended from a chevalier of the great Napoleon.

In the mid-sixties the family moved from Tarbes to Rodez—almost two hundred miles northeast of their old locality in which both parents had been born and where their ancestors had long lived.

It was quite an uprooting—due to the father's appointment as paymaster of the treasury at Rodez—and took the Foch family into an atmosphere very different from that of their

old Gascon home, but one which also helped to vivify that history which was Ferdinand's passion.

There Ferdinand continued his studies, as also at Saint-Etienne, near Lyons, whither the family moved in 1867 when the father was appointed tax collector there.

And in 1869 he was sent to Metz, to the Jesuit College of Saint Clement, to which students flocked from all parts of Europe.

He had been there a year and had been given, by unanimous vote of his fellow students, the grand prize for scholarly qualities, when the Franco-Prussian war began.



Page 8

Immediately Ferdinand Foch enlisted for the duration of the war.

III

A YOUNG SOLDIER OF A LOST CAUSE

There is nothing to record of Ferdinand Foch's first soldiering except that from the depot of the Fourth Regiment of Infantry, in his home city of Saint-Etienne, he was sent to Chalon-sur-Saone, and there was discharged in January, 1871, after the capitulation of Paris.

He did not distinguish himself in any way. He was just one of a multitude of youths who rushed to the colors when France called, and did what they could in a time of sad confusion, when a weak government had paralyzed the effectiveness of the army—of the nation!

Whatever blows Ferdinand Foch struck in 1870 were without weight in helping to avert France's catastrophe. But he was like hundreds of thousands of other young Frenchmen similarly powerless in this: In the anguish he suffered because of what he could not do to save France from humiliation were laid the foundations of all that he has contributed to the glory of new France.

At the time when his Fall term should have been beginning at Saint Clement's College, Metz was under siege by the German army, and its garrison and inhabitants were suffering horribly from hunger and disease; Paris was surrounded; the German headquarters were at Versailles; and the imperial standards so dear to young Foch because of the great Napoleon were forever lowered when the white flag was hoisted at Sedan and an Emperor with a whole army passed into captivity.

How much the young soldier-student of the Saone comprehended then of the needlessness of the shame and surrender of those inglorious days we do not know. He cannot have been sufficiently versed in military understanding to realize how much of the defeat France suffered was due to her failure to fight on, at this juncture and that, when a stiffer resistance would have turned the course of events.

But if he did not know then, he certainly knew later. And as soon as he got where he could impress his convictions upon other soldiers of the new France he began training them in his great maxim: "A battle is lost when you admit defeat."

What his devotion to Saint Clement's College was we may know from the fact of his return there to resume his interrupted studies under the same teachers, but in sadly different circumstances.



He found German troops quartered in parts of the college, and as he went to and from his classes the young man who had just laid off the uniform of a French soldier was obliged to pass and repass men of the victorious army of occupation.

The memory of his shame and suffering on those occasions has never faded. How much France and her allies owe to it we shall never be able to estimate.

Page 9

For the effect on Foch was one of the first acid tests in which were revealed the quality of his mind and soul. Instead of offering himself a prey to sullen anger and resentment, or of flaring into fury when one time for fury was past and another had not yet come, he used his sorrow as a goad to study, and bent his energies to the discovery of why France had failed and why Prussia had won. His analysis of those reasons, and his application of what that analysis taught him, is what has put him where he is to-day—and *us* where *we* are!

From Metz, Foch went to Nancy to take his examination for the Polytechnic at Paris.

Just why this should have been deemed necessary I have not seen explained. But it was, like a good many other things of apparent inconsequence in this young man's life, destined to leave in him an impress which had much to do with what he was to perform.

I have seldom, if ever, studied a life in which events "link up" so marvelously and the present is so remarkably an extension of the past.

Nancy had been chosen by General Manteuffel, commander of the First German Army Corps, as headquarters, pending the withdrawal of the victors on the payment of the last sou in the billion-dollar indemnity they exacted of France along with the ceding of Alsace-Lorraine. (For three years France had to endure the insolent victors upon her soil.)

And with the fine feeling and magnanimity in which the German was then as now peculiarly gifted General Manteuffel delighted in ordering his military bands to play the "Retreat"—to taunt the sad inhabitants with this reminder of their army's shame.

Ferdinand Foch listened and thought and wrote his examinations for the school of war.

Forty-two years later—in August, 1913—a new commandant came to Nancy to take control of the Twentieth Army Corps, whose position there, guarding France's Eastern frontier, was considered one of the most important—if not *the* most important—to the safety of the nation.

The first order he gave was one that brought out the full band strength of six regiments quartered in the town. They were to play the "March Lorraine" and the "Sambre and Meuse." They were to fill Nancy with these stirring sounds. The clarion notes carrying these martial airs were to reach every cranny of the old town. It was a veritable tidal wave of triumphant sound that he wanted—for it had much to efface.

Nancy will never forget that night! It was Saturday, the 23d of August, 1913. And the new commandant's name was Ferdinand Foch!

Less than a year later he was fighting to save Nancy, and what lay beyond, from the Germans.



And *this* time there was to be a different story! Ferdinand Foch was foremost of those who assured it.

IV

PARIS AFTER THE GERMANS LEFT

Page 10

Ferdinand Foch entered the Polytechnic School at Paris on the 1st of November, 1871, just after he had completed his twentieth year.

This school, founded in 1794, is for the technical education of military and naval engineers, artillery officers, civil engineers in government employ, and telegraphists—not mere operators, of course, but telegraph engineers and other specialists in electric communication. It is conducted by a general, on military principles, and its students are soldiers on their way to becoming officers.

Its buildings cover a considerable space in the heart of the great school quarter of Paris. The Sorbonne, with its traditions harking back to St. Louis (more than six centuries) and its swarming thousands of students, is hard by the Polytechnic. So is the College de France, founded by Francis I. And, indeed, whichever way one turns, there are schools, schools, schools—of fine arts and applied arts; of medicine in all its branches; of mining and engineering; of war; of theology; of languages; of commerce in its higher developments; of pedagogy; and what-not.

Nowhere else in the world is there possible to the young student, come to advance himself in his chosen field of knowledge, quite such a thrill as that which must be his when he matriculates at one of the scores of educational institutions in that quarter of Paris to which the ardent, aspiring youth of all the western world have been directing their eager feet from time immemorial.

Cloistral, scholastic atmosphere, with its grave beauty, as at Oxford and Cambridge, he will not find in the Paris Latin Quarter.

Paris does not segregate her students. Conceiving them to be studying for life, she aids them to do it in the midst of life marvelously abundant. They do not go out of the world—so to speak—to learn to live and work in the world. They go, rather, into a life of extraordinary variety and fullness, out of which—it is expected—they will discover how to choose whatever is most needful to their success and well-being.

There is no feeling of being shut in to a term of study. There is, rather, the feeling of being “turned loose” in a place of vast opportunity of which one may make as much use as he is able.

To a young man of Ferdinand Foch’s naturally serious mind, deeply impressed by his country’s tragedy, the Latin Quarter of Paris in those Fall days of 1871 was a sober place indeed.

Beautiful Paris, that Napoleon III had done so much to make splendid, was scarred and seared on every hand by the German bombardment and the fury of the communards, who had destroyed nearly two hundred and fifty public and other buildings. The

government of France had deserted the capital and moved to Versailles—just evacuated by the Germans.

The blight of defeat lay on everything.

In May, preceding Foch's advent, the communards—led by a miserable little shoemaker who talked about shooting all the world—took possession of the buildings belonging to the Polytechnic, and were dislodged only after severe fighting by Marshal MacMahon's Versailles troops.



Page 11

The cannon of the communards, set on the heights of Pere-Lachaise (the great city of the dead where the slumber of so many of earth's most illustrious imposed no respect upon the "Bolsheviki" of that cataclysm) aimed at the Pantheon, shot short and struck the Polytechnic. One shell burst in the midst of an improvised hospital there, gravely wounding a nurse.

At last, on May 24, the Polytechnic was taken from the revolutionists by assault, and many of the communards were seized.

In the days following, the great recreation court of the school was the scene of innumerable executions, as the wretched revolutionists paid the penalty of their crimes before the firing squad. And the students' billiard room was turned into a temporary morgue, filled with bodies of those who had sought to destroy Paris from within.

The number of Parisians slain in those days after the second siege of Paris has been variously estimated at from twenty thousand to thirty-six thousand. And all the while, encamped upon the heights round about Paris, were victorious German troops squatting like Semitic creditors in Russia, refusing to budge till their account was settled to the last farthing of extortion.

The most sacred spot in Paris to young Foch, in all the depression he found there, was undoubtedly the great Dome des Invalides, where, bathed in an unearthly radiance and surrounded by faded battle flags, lies the great porphyry sarcophagus of Napoleon I.

With what bitter reflections must the young man who had been nurtured in the adoration of Bonaparte have returned from that majestic tomb to the Polytechnic School for Warriors—to which, on the day after his coronation as Emperor, Napoleon had given the following motto:

"Science and glory—all for country."

But, also, what must have been the young southerner's thought as he lifted his gaze on entering the Polytechnic and read there that self-same wish which was inscribed over the door of his first school in Tarbes:

"May this house remain standing until the ant has drunk all the waves of the sea and the tortoise has crawled round the world."

The edifice in which part of the Polytechnic was housed was the ancient College of Navarre, and a Navarrias poet of lang syne had given to the Paris school for his countrymen this quaint wish, repeated from the inscription he knew at Tarbes.

France had had twelve different governments in fourscore years when Ferdinand Foch came to study in that old building which had once been the college of Navarre. Houses of cards rather than houses of permanence seemed to characterize her.



Yet she has always had her quota—a larger one, too, than that of any other country—of those who look toward far to-morrows and seek to build substantially and beautifully for them.

That forward-looking prayer of old Navarre, and recollection of the centuries during which it had prevailed against destroying forces, was undoubtedly an aid and comfort to the heavy-hearted youth who then and there set himself to the study of that art of war wherewith he was to serve France.



Page 12

Among the two hundred and odd fellow-students of Foch at the Polytechnic was another young man from the south—almost a neighbor of his and his junior by just three months—Jacques Joseph Cesaire Joffre, who had entered the school in 1869, interrupted his studies to go to war, and resumed them shortly before Ferdinand Foch entered the Polytechnic.

Joffre graduated from the Polytechnic on September 21, 1872, and went thence to the School of Applied Artillery at Fontainebleau.

Foch left the Polytechnic about six months later, and also went to Fontainebleau for the same special training that Joffre was taking.

Both young men were hard students and tremendously in earnest. Both were heavy-hearted for France. Both hoped the day would come when they might serve her and help to restore to her that of which she had been despoiled.

But if any one, indulging in the fantastic extravagancies of youth, had ventured to forecast, then, even a tithe of what they have been called to do for France, he would have been set down as madder than March hares know how to be.

V

LEARNING TO BE A ROUGH RIDER

When Ferdinand Foch graduated, third in his class, from the artillery school at Fontainebleau, instead of seeking to use what influence he might have commanded to get an appointment in some garrison where the town life or social life was gay for young officers, he asked to be sent back to Tarbes.

No one, to my knowledge, has advanced an explanation for this move.

To so earnest and ambitious a student of military art (Foch will not permit us to speak of it as “military science”) sentimental reasons alone would never have been allowed to control so important a choice.

That he always ardently loved the Pyrenean country, we know. But to a young officer of such indomitable purpose as his was, even then, it would have been inconceivable that he should elect to spend his first years out of school in any other place than that one where he saw the maximum opportunity for development.

“Development,” mind you—not just “advancement.” For Foch is, and ever has been, the kind of man who would most abhor being advanced faster than he developed.



He would infinitely rather be prepared for a promotion and fail to get it than get a promotion for which he was not thoroughly prepared.

Nor is he the sort of individual who can comfortably deceive himself about his fitness. He sustains himself by no illusions of the variety: "If I had so-and-so to do, I'd probably get through as well as nine-tenths of commanders would."

He is much more concerned to satisfy himself that his thoroughness is as complete as he could possibly have made it, than he is to "get by" and satisfy the powers that be!

So we know that it wasn't any mere longing for the scenes of his happy childhood which directed his choice of Tarbes garrison when he left the enchanting region of Fontainebleau, with its fairy forest, its delightful old town, and its many memories of Napoleon.



Page 13

His mind seems to have been fixed upon a course involving more cavalry skill than was his on graduating. And after two years at Tarbes, with much riding of the fine horses of Arabian breed which are the specialty of that region, he went to the Cavalry School at Saumur, on the Loire.

King Rene of Anjou, whose chronic poverty does not seem to have interfered with his taste for having innumerable castles, had one at Saumur, and it still dominates the town and lends it an air of medievalism.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century Saumur was one of the chief strongholds of Protestantism in France and the seat of a Protestant university.

But the revocation of the Edict of Nantes granting tolerance to the Huguenots, brought great reverses upon Saumur, whose inhabitants were driven into exile. And thereupon (1685) the town fell into a decline which was not arrested until Louis XV, in the latter part of his reign, caused this cavalry school to be established there.

It is a large school, with about four hundred soldiers always in training as cavalry officers and army riding masters. And the riding exhibitions which used to be given there in the latter part of August were brilliant affairs, worth going many miles to see.

There Ferdinand Foch studied cavalry tactics, practiced "rough riding" and—by no means least important—learned to know another type of Frenchman, the men of old Anjou.

In our own country of magnificent distances and myriad racial strains we are apt to think of French people as a single race: "French is French."

This is very wide of the truth. French they all are, in sooth, with an intense national unity surpassed nowhere on earth if, indeed, it is anywhere equaled. But almost every one of them is intensely a provincial, too, and very "set" in the ways of his own section of country—which, usually, has been that of his forbears from time immemorial.

In the description I quoted in the second chapter, showing some of the types from the vicinity of Tarbes which frequent its horse market, one may get some idea of the extraordinary differences in the men of a single small region which is bordered by many little "pockets" wherein people go on and on, age after age, perpetuating their special traits without much admixture of other strains.

Not every part of France has so much variety in such small compass. But every province has its distinctive human qualities. And between the Norman and the Gascon, the Breton and the Provencal, the man of Picardy and the man of Languedoc, there are greater temperamental differences than one can find anywhere else on earth in an equal number of square miles—except in some of our American cities.



To the commander of General Foch's type (and as we begin to study his principles we shall, I believe, see that they apply to command in civil no less than in military life) knowledge of different men's minds and the way they work is absolutely fundamental to success.



Page 14

And his preparation for this mastery was remarkably thorough.

At Saumur he learned not only to direct cavalry operations, but to know the Angevin characteristics.

In each school he attended, beginning with Metz, he had close class association with men from many provinces, men of many types. And this was valuable to him in preparing him to command under-officers in whom a rigorous uniformity of training could not obliterate bred-in-the-bone differences.

Many another young officer bent on “getting on” in the army would have felt that what he learned among his fellow officers of the provincial characteristics was enough.

But not so Ferdinand Foch.

Almost his entire comprehension of war is based upon men and the way they act under certain stress—not the way they might be expected to act, but the way they actually do act, and the way they can be led to act under certain stimulus *of soul*.

For Ferdinand Foch wins victories with men’s souls—not just with their flesh and blood, nor even with their brains.

And to command men’s souls it is necessary to understand them.

VI

FIRST YEARS IN BRITTANY

Upon leaving the cavalry school at Saumur, in 1878, Ferdinand Foch went, with the rank of captain of the Tenth Regiment of Artillery, to Rennes, the ancient capital of Brittany and the headquarters of France’s tenth army corps.

He stayed at Rennes, as an artillery captain, for seven years.

It is not a particularly interesting city from some points of view, but it is a very “livable” one, and for a student like Foch it had many advantages. The library is one of the best in provincial France and has many valuable manuscripts. There is also an archaeological museum of antiquities found in that vicinity, many of them relating to prehistoric warfare. Some good scientific collections are also treasured there.

What is now known as the University of Rennes was styled merely the “college” in the days of Foch’s residence there. But it did substantially the same work then as now, and among its faculty Foch undoubtedly found many who could give him able aid in his perpetual study of the past.



Rennes especially cherishes the memory of Bertrand du Guesclin, the great constable of France under King Charles V and the victorious adversary of Edward III. This brilliant warrior, who drove the English, with their claims on French sovereignty, out of France, was a native of that vicinity. And we may be sure that whatever special opportunity Rennes afforded of studying documents relating to his campaigns was fully improved by Captain Foch.

In that time, also, Foch had ample occasion to know the Bretons, who are, in some respects, the least French of all French provincials—being much more Celtic still than Gallic, although it is a matter of some fifteen hundred years since their ancestors, driven out of Britain by the Teutonic invasions, came over and settled “Little Britain,” or Brittany.

Page 15

The Bretons maintained their independence of France for a thousand years, and only became united with it through the marriage of their last sovereign, Duchess Anne, with Charles VIII, in 1491 and—after his death—with his successor, Louis XII.

And even to-day, after more than four centuries of political union, the people of Brittany are French in name and in spirit rather than in speech, customs, or temperament. Many of them do not speak or understand the French language. Few of them, outside of the cities, have conformed appreciably to French customs. Quaint, sturdy, picturesque folk they are—simple, for the most part, superstitious, tenacious of the old, suspicious of the new, and governable only by those who understand them.

Foch must have learned, in those seven years, not only to know the Bretons, but to like them and their rugged country very well. For he has had, these many years past, his summer home near Morlaix on the north coast of Brittany. It was from there that he was summoned into the great war on July 26, 1914.

In 1885 Captain Foch was called to Paris and entered the Superior School of War.

This institution, wherein he was destined to play in after years a part that profoundly affected the world's destiny, was founded only in 1878 as a training school for officers, connected with the military school which Louis XV established in 1751 to “educate five hundred young gentlemen in all the sciences necessary and useful to an officer.”

One of the “young gentlemen” who profited by this instruction was the little Corsican whom Ferdinand Foch so ardently venerated.

The building covers an area of twenty-six acres and faces the vast Champ-de-Mars, which was laid out about 1770 for the military school's use as a field for maneuvers.

This field is eleven hundred yards long and just half that wide. It occupies all the ground between the school buildings and the river.

Across the river is the height called the Trocadero, on which Napoleon hoped to build a great palace for the little King of Rome; but whereon, many years after he and his son had ceased to need mansions made by hands, the French republic built a magnificent palace for the French people. This vast building, with its majestic gardens, was the principal feature of the French national exhibition of 1878, which, like its predecessor of 1867 and its successors of 1889 and 1900, was held on the Champ-de-Mars.

Facing the Trocadero Palace, on the Champ-de-Mars, is the Eiffel Tower (nearly a thousand feet high) which was erected for the exposition of 1889, and has served, since, then-unimaginable purposes during the stress and strain of war as a wireless station. The “Ferris” wheel put up for the exposition of 1900 is close by. And a stone's throw from the military school are the Hotel des Invalides, Napoleon's tomb, and the



magnificent Esplanade des Invalides down which one looks straightway to the glinting Seine and over the superb Alexander III bridge toward the tree-embowered palaces of arts on the Champs-Élysées.



Page 16

On the other side of the Hotel des Invalides from that occupied by the military school and Champ-de-Mars is the principal diplomatic and departmental district of Paris, with many embassies (not ours, however, nor the British—which are across the river) and many administrative offices of the French nation.

Soldiers and government officials and foreign diplomats dominate the quarter—and homes of the old French aristocracy.

The Hotel des Invalides, founded by Louis XIV and designed to accommodate, as an old soldiers' home, some seven thousand veterans of his unending wars, has latterly served as headquarters for the military governor of Paris, and also—principally—as a war museum.

Here are housed collections of priceless worth and transcendent interest. The museum of artillery contains ten thousand specimens of weapons and armor of all kinds, ancient and modern. The historical museum, across the court of honor, was—in the years when I spent many fascinating hours there—extraordinarily rich in personal souvenirs of scores of illustrious personages.

What it must be now, after the tragic years of a world war, and what it will become as a treasure house for the years to come, is beyond my imagination.

It was into this enormously rich atmosphere, pregnant with everything that conserves France's most glorious military traditions, that Captain Ferdinand Foch was called in 1885 for two years of intensive training and study.

VII

JOFFRE AND FOCH

After quitting the School of War in 1887 (he graduated fourth in his class, as he had at Saumur; he was third at Fontainebleau), Ferdinand Foch was sent to Montpellier as a probationer for the position of staff officer.

He remained at Montpellier for four years—first as a probationer and later as a staff officer in the Sixteenth Army Corps, whose headquarters are there.

[Illustration: Marshall Joffre, General Foch]

It is a coincidence—without special significance, but interesting—that Captain Joseph Joffre had spent several years at the School of Engineering in Montpellier; he left there in 1884, after the death of his young wife, to bury himself and his grief in Indo-China; so the two men did not meet in the southern city.[1]



Joffre returned from Indo-China in 1888, while Foch was at Montpellier, and after some time in the military railway service, and a promotion in rank (he was captain for thirteen years), received an appointment as professor of fortifications at Fontainebleau.

Some persons who claim to have known Joffre at Montpellier have manifested surprise at the greatness to which he attained thirty years later; he did not impress them as a man of destiny. That is quite as likely to be their fault as his. And also it is possible that Captain Joseph Joffre had not then begun to develop in himself those qualities which made him ready for greatness when the opportunity came.

Page 17

If, however, any one has ever expressed surprise at Ferdinand Foch's attainment, I have not heard of it. He seems always to have impressed people with whom he came in contact as a man of tremendous energy, application, and thoroughness.

The opportunities for study at Montpellier are excellent, and the region is one of extraordinary richness for the lover of history. The splendor of the cities of Transalpine Gaul in this vicinity is attested by remains more numerous and in better preservation than Italy affords save in a very few places. And awe-inspiring evidences of medievalism's power flank one at every step and turn. Without doubt, Foch made the most of them.

Needless to remark, the commander-in-chief of the allied armies has not confided to me what were his favorite excursions during these four years at Montpellier. But I am quite sure that Aigues-Mortes was one of them. And I like to think of him, as we know he looked then, pacing those battlements and pondering the warfare of those militant ages when this vast fortress in the wide salt marshes was one of the most formidable in the world. What fullness of detail there must have been in the mental pictures he was able to conjure of St. Louis embarking here on his two crusades? What particularity in his appreciation of those defenses!

The place is, to-day, the very epitome of desolation—much more so than if the fortifications were not so perfectly preserved. For they look as if yesterday they might have been bristling with men-at-arms—whereas not in centuries has their melancholy majesty served any other purpose than that of raising reflections in those to whom the past speaks through her monuments.

From Montpellier, Ferdinand Foch returned to Paris, in February, 1891, as major on the general army staff.

He and Joffre had now the same rank. Joffre became lieutenant colonel in 1894 and colonel in 1897; similar promotions came to Foch in 1896 and 1903. He was six years later than Joffre in attaining a colonelcy, and exactly that much later in becoming a general.

Neither man had a quick rise but Foch's was (as measurable in grades and pay) specially slow.

About the time that Major Joffre went to the Soudan, to superintend the building of a railway in the Sahara desert, Major Foch went to Vincennes as commander of the mounted group of the Thirteenth Artillery.

Vincennes is on the southeastern skirts of Paris, close by the confluence of the Seine and the Marne; about four miles or so from the Bastille, which was the city's

southeastern gate for three hundred years or thereabouts, until the fortified inclosure on that side of the city was enlarged under Louis XIV.

The fort of Vincennes was founded in the twelfth century to guard the approach to Paris from the Marne valley. And on account of its pleasant situation—close to good hunting and also to their capital—the castle of Vincennes was a favorite residence of many early French kings.

Page 18

It was there that St. Louis is said to have held his famous open-air court of justice, which he established so that his subjects might come direct to him with their troubles and he, besides settling them, might learn at first hand what reforms were needed.

Five Kings of France died there (among them Charles VI, the mad king, and Charles IX, haunted by the horrors of the massacre on St. Bartholomew's eve), and one King of England, Harry Hotspur. King Charles V was born there.

From the days of Louis XI the castle has been used as a state prison. Henry of Navarre was once a prisoner there, and so was the Grand Conde, and Diderot, and Mirabeau, and it was there that the young Duc d'Enghien was shot by Napoleon's orders and to Napoleon's everlasting regret.

The castle is now (and has been for many years) an arsenal and school of musketry, artillery, and other military services. Before its firing squad perish many traitors to France, whose last glimpse of the country they have betrayed is in the courtyard of this ancient castle.

The vicinity is very lovely. The Bois de Vincennes, on the edge of which the castle stands, is scarcely inferior to the Bois de Boulogne in charm. We used to go out there, not infrequently, for luncheon, which we ate in a rustic summerhouse close to the edge of the lake, with many sociable ducks and swans bearing us company and clamoring for bits of bread.

It would be hard to imagine anything more idyllic, more sylvan, on the edge of a great city—anything more peaceful, restful, anywhere.

Yet the whole locality was, even then, a veritable camp of Mars—forts, barracks, fields for maneuvers and for artillery practice, infantry butts, rifle ranges, school of explosives; and what not.

France knew her need of protection—and none of us can ever be sufficiently grateful that she did!

But she did not obtrude her defensive measures. She seldom made one conscious of her military affairs.

In Germany, for many years before this war, remembrance of the army and reverence to the army was exacted of everyone almost at every breath. Forever and forever and forever you were being made to bow down before the God of War.

In France, on the contrary, it was difficult to think about war—even in the very midst of a place like Vincennes—unless you were actually engaged in organizing and preparing the country's defenses.



After three years at Vincennes, Ferdinand Foch was recalled to the army staff in Paris. And on the 31st of October, 1895, he was made associate professor of military history, strategy, and applied tactics, at the Superior School of War.

He had then just entered upon his forty-fifth year; and the thoroughness of his training was beginning to make itself felt at military headquarters.

[1] I have found it interesting to compare the careers of Joffre and Foch from the time they were at school together, and I daresay that others will like to know what steps forward he was taking who is not the subject of these chapters but inseparably bound up with him in many events and forever linked with him in glory.



Page 19

VIII

THE SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF WAR

After a year's service as associate professor of military history, strategy, and applied tactics at the Superior School of War in Paris, Ferdinand Foch was advanced to head professorship in those branches and at the same time he was made lieutenant-colonel. This was in 1896. He was forty-five years old and had been for exactly a quarter of a century a student of the art of warfare.

His old schoolfellow, Joseph Joffre, was then building fortifications in northern Madagascar; and his army rank was the same as that of Foch.

It was just twenty years after Foch entered upon his full-fledged professorship at the Superior School of War that Marshal Joffre, speaking at a dinner assembling the principal leaders of the government and of the army, declared that without the Superior School of War the victory of the Marne would have been impossible.

All the world knows this now, almost as well as Marshal Joffre knew it then. And all the world knows now as not even Marshal Joffre could have known then, how enormous far, far beyond the check of barbarism at the first battle of the Marne—is our debt and that of all posterity to the Superior School of War and, chiefly, to Ferdinand Foch.

It cannot have been prescience that called him there. It was just Providence, nothing less!

For that was a time when men like Ferdinand Foch (whose whole heart was in the army, making it such that nothing like the downfall of 1870 could ever again happen to France), were laboring under extreme difficulties. The army was unpopular in France.

This was due, partly to the disclosures of the Dreyfus case; partly to a wave of internationalism and pacifism; partly to jealousy of the army among civil officials.

An unwarranted sense of security was also to blame. France had worked so hard to recoup her fortunes after the disaster of 1870 that her people—delighted with their ability as money makers, blinded by the glitter of great prosperity—grudged the expanse of keeping up a large army, grudged the time that compulsory military training took out of a young man's life. And this preoccupation with success and the arts and pleasures of prosperous peace made them incline their ears to the apostles of "Brotherhood" and "Federation" and "Arbitration instead of Armament."

Little by little legislation went against the army. The period of compulsory service was reduced from three years to two; that cut down the size of the army by one-third. The supreme command of the army was vested not in a general, but in a politician—the

Minister of War. The generals in the highest commands not only had to yield precedence to the prefects of the provinces (like our governors of states), but were subject to removal if the prefects did not like their politics and the Minister of War wished the support of the prefects.

Page 20

Even the superior war council of the nation might be politically made up, to pay the War Minister's scores rather than to protect the country.

All this can happen to a people lulled by a false sense of security—even to a people which has had to defend itself against the savage rapacity of its neighbors across the Rhine for two thousand years!

It was against these currents of popular opinion and of government opposition that Ferdinand Foch took up his work in the Superior School of War—that work which was to make possible the first victory of the Marne, to save England from invasion by holding Calais, and to do various other things vital to civilization, including the prodigious achievements of the days that have since followed.

Foch foresaw that these things would have to be done and, with absolute consecration to his task, he set himself not only to train officers for France when she should need them, but to inspire them with a unity of action which has saved the world.

I have various word-pictures of him as he then appeared to, and impressed, his students.

One is by a military writer who uses the pseudonym of "Miles."

"The officers who succeeded one another at the school of war between 1896 and 1901," he says, referring to the first term of Foch as instructor there, "will never forget the impressions made upon them by their professor of strategy and of general tactics. It was this course that was looked forward to with the keenest curiosity as the foundational instruction given by the school. It enjoyed the prestige given it by the eminent authorities who had held it; and the eighty officers who came to the school at each promotion, intensely desirous of developing their skill and judgment, were always impatient to see and hear the man who was to instruct them in these branches.

"Lieutenant-Colonel Foch did not disappoint their expectations. Thin, elegant, of distinguished bearing, he at once struck the beholder with his expression—full of energy, of calm, of rectitude.

"His forehead was high, his nose straight and prominent, his gray-blue eyes looked one full in the face. He spoke without gestures, with an air of authority and conviction; his voice serious, harsh, a little monotonous; amplifying his phrases to press home in every possible way a rigorous reasoning; provoking discussion; always appealing to the logic of his hearers; sometimes difficult to follow, because his discourse was so rich in ideas; but always holding attention by the penetration of his surveys as well as by his tone of sincerity.

“The most profound and the most original of the professors at the school of war, which at that time counted in its teaching corps many very distinguished minds and brilliant lecturers: such Lieutenant-Colonel Foch seemed to his students, all eager from the first to give themselves up to the enjoyment of his lessons and the acceptance of his inspiration.”



Page 21

Colonel E. Requin of the French general staff, who has fought under Foch in some of the latter's greatest engagements, says:

"Foch has been for forty years the incarnation of the French military spirit." For forty years! That means ever since he left the cavalry school at Saumur and went, as captain of the Tenth regiment of artillery, to Rennes. "Through his teachings and his example," Colonel Requin goes on to say, in a 1918 number of the *World's Work*, "he was the moral director of the French general staff before becoming the supreme chief of the allied armies. Upon each one of us he has imprinted his strong mark. We owe to him in time of peace that unity of doctrine which was our strength. Since the war we owe to him the highest lessons of intellectual discipline and moral energy.

"As a professor he applied the method which consists in taking as the base of all strategical and tactical instruction the study of history completed by the study of military history—that is to say, field operations, orders given, actions, results, and criticisms to be made and the instructions to be drawn from them. He also used concrete cases—that is to say, problems laid by the director on the map or on the actual ground.

"By this intellectual training he accustomed the officers to solving all problems, not by giving them ready-made solutions, but by making them find the logical solution to each individual case.

"His mind was trained through so many years of study that no war situation could disturb him. In the most difficult ones, he quickly pointed out the goal to be reached and the means to employ, and each one of us felt that it must be right."

But best of all the things said about Foch in that period of his life, I like this, by Charles Dawbarn, in the *Fortnightly Review*:

"Such was"—in spite of many disappointments—"his fine confidence in life, that he communicated to others not his grievances, but his secret satisfactions."

IX

THE GREAT TEACHER

Foch made the men who sat under him love their work for the work's sake and not for its rewards. He fired them with an ardor for military art which made them feel that in all the world there is nothing so fascinating, so worth while, as knowing how to defend one's country when she needs defense.

He was able, in peace times when the military spirit was little applauded and much decried, to give his students an enthusiasm for "preparedness" which flamed as high



and burned as pure as that which ordinarily is lighted only by a great national rush to arms to save the country from ravage.

It was tremendously, incalculably important for France and for all of us that Ferdinand Foch was eager and able to impart this enthusiasm for military skill.

But also it is immensely important, to-day, when the war is won, and in all days and all walks of life, that there be those who can kindle and keep alight the enthusiasm of their fellows; who can overlook the failure of their own ardor and faithfulness to win its fair reward, and convey to others only the alluring glow of their "secret satisfactions."



Page 22

In the five years, 1895-1901 (his work at the school was interrupted by politics in 1901), “many hundreds of officers,” as Rene Puaux says, “the very elite of the general staffs of our army, followed his teaching and were imbued with it; and as they practically all, at the beginning of the war, occupied high positions of command, one may estimate as he can the profound and far reaching influence of this one grand spirit.”

Let us try to get some idea of the sort of thing that Foch taught those hundreds of French army officers, not only about war but about life.

From all his study, he repeatedly declared, one dominant conviction has evolved: Force that is not dominated by spirit is vain force.

Victory, in his belief, goes to those who merit it by the greatest strength of will and intelligence.

It was his endeavor, always, to develop in the hundreds of officers who were his students, that dual strength in which it seemed to him that victory could only lie: moral and intellectual ability to perceive what ought to be done, and intellectual and moral ability to do it.

In his mind, it is impossible to be intelligent with the brain alone. The Germans do not comprehend this, and therein, to Ferdinand Foch, lies the key to all their failures.

He believes that each of us must think with our soul’s aid—that is to say, with our imagination, our emotions, our aspiration—and employ our intelligence to direct our feeling.

And he asks this combination not from higher officers alone, but from all their men down to the humblest in the ranks.

He believes in the invincibility of men fighting for a principle dearer to them than life—but he knows that ardor without leadership means a lost cause; that men must know how to fight for their ideals, their principles; but that their officers are charged with the sacred responsibility of making the men’s ardor and valor count.

At the beginning of his celebrated course of lectures on tactics he always admonished his students thus:

“You will be called on later to be the brain of an army. So I say to you to-day: Learn to think.”

By this he was far from meaning that officers were to confine thinking to themselves, but that they were to teach themselves to think so that they might the better hand on intelligence and stimulate their men to obey not blindly but comprehendingly.

It was a maxim of Napoleon's, of which Foch is very fond, that "as a general rule, the commander-in-chief ought only to indicate the direction, determine the ends to be attained; the means of getting there ought to be left to the free choice of the mediums of execution, without whom success is impossible."

This leaves a great responsibility to officers, but it is the secret of that flexibility which makes the French army so effective.

For Foch carries his belief in individual judgment far beyond the officers commanding units; he carries it to the privates in the ranks.

Page 23

An able officer, in Foch's opinion, is one who can take a general command to get his men such-and-such a place and accomplish such-and-such a thing, and so interpret that command to his men that each and every one of them will, while acting in strict obedience to orders, use the largest possible amount of personal intelligence in accomplishing the thing he was told to do.

It is said that there was probably never before in history a battle fought in which every man was a general—so to speak—as at the battle of Chateau Thierry, in July, 1918. That is to say, there was probably never before a battle in which so many men comprehended as clearly as if they had been generals what it was all about, and acted as if they had been generals to attain their objectives.

It was an intelligent democracy, acting under superb leadership that vanquished the forces of autocracy.

Foch has worked with a free hand to test the worth of his lifelong principles. And the hundreds of men he trained in those principles were ready to carry them out for him.

No wonder his first injunction was: Learn to think!

To him, the leadership of units is not a simple question of organization, of careful plans, of strategic and tactical intelligence, but a problem involving enormous adaptability.

Battles are not won at headquarters, he contends; they are won in the field; and the conditions that may arise in the field cannot be foreseen or forestalled—they must be met when they present themselves. In large part they are made by the behavior of men in unexpected circumstances; therefore, the more a commander knows about human nature and its spiritual depressions and exaltations, the better able he is to change his plans as new conditions arise.

German power in war, Foch taught his students, lay in the great masses of their effective troops and their perfect organization for moving men and supplies. German weakness was in the absolute autocracy of great headquarters, building its plans as an architect builds a house and unable to modify them if something happens to make a change necessary.

This he deduced from his study of their methods in previous wars, especially in that of 1870.

And with this in mind he labored so that when Germany made her next assault upon France, France might be equipped with hundreds of officers cognizant of Germany's weakness and prepared to turn it to her defeat.



X

A COLONEL AT FIFTY

“It was not,” Napoleon wrote, “the Roman legions which conquered Gaul, but Caesar. It was not the Carthaginian soldiers who made Rome tremble, but Hannibal. It was not the Macedonian phalanx which penetrated India, but Alexander. It was not the French army which reached the Weser and the Inn, but Turenne. It was not the Prussian soldiers who defended their country for seven years against the three most formidable powers in Europe; it was Frederick the Great.”

Page 24

And already it has been suggested that historians will write of this war: "It was not the allied armies, struggling hopelessly for four years, that finally drove the Germans across the Rhine, but Ferdinand Foch."

But I am sure that Foch would not wish this said of him in the same sense that Napoleon said it of earlier generals.

For Foch has a greater vision of generalship than was possible to any commander of long ago.

His strategy is based upon a close study of theirs; for he says that though the forms of making war evolve, the directing principles do not change, and there is need for every officer to make analyses of Xenophon and Caesar and Hannibal as close as those he makes of Frederick and Napoleon.

But his conception of military leadership is permeated with the ideals of democracy and justice for which he fights.

One of his great lectures to student-officers was that in which he made them realize what, besides the route of the Prussians, happened at Valmy in September, 1792.

On his big military map of that region (it is on the western edge of the Argonne) Foch would show his students how the Prussians, Hessians and some Austrian troops; under the Duke of Brunswick, crossed the French frontier on August 19 and came swaggering toward Paris, braggartly announcing their intentions of "celebrating" in Paris in September.

Brunswick and his fellow generals were to banquet with the King of Prussia at the Tuileries. And the soldiers were bent upon the cafes of the Palais Royal.

Foch showed his classes how Dumouriez, who had been training his raw troops of disorganized France at Valenciennes, dashed with them into the Argonne to intercept Brunswick; how this and that happened which I will not repeat here because it is merely technical; and then how the soldiers of the republic, rallied by the cry, "The country is in danger," and thrilled by "The Marseillaise" (written only five months before, but already it had changed the beat of nearly every heart in France), made such a stand that it not only halted Prussia and her allies, but so completely broke their conquering spirit that without firing another shot they took themselves off beyond the Rhine.

"We," Foch used to tell his students, "are the successors of the revolution and the empire, the inheritors of the art, new-born upon the field of Valmy to astonish the old Europe, to surprise in particular the Duke of Brunswick, the pupil of Frederick the Great, and to tear from Goethe, before the immensity of a fresh horizon, this profound cry: 'I tell you, from this place and this day comes a new era in the history of the world!'"



It is that new era which Foch typifies—that new era which his adversaries, deaf to Goethe's cry and blind to Goethe's vision, have not yet realized.

It was "the old Europe" against which Foch fought—the old Europe which learned nothing at Valmy and had learned nothing since; the old Europe that fought as Frederick the Great fought and that had not yet seen the dawn of that new day which our nation and the French nation greeted with glad hails much more than a century ago.



Page 25

In 1792 Prussia measured her military skill and her masses of trained men against France's disorganization—and overlooked "The Marseillaise."

In 1914 she weighed her might against what she knew of the might of France—and omitted to weigh certain spiritual differences which she could not comprehend, but which she felt at the first battle of the Marne, has been feeling ever since, and before which she had to retire, beaten but still blind.

In 1918 she estimated the probable force of those "raw recruits" whom we were sending overseas—and laughed. She based her calculations on our lack of military tradition, our hastily trained officers, our "soft," ease-loving men uneducated in those ideals of blood and iron wherein she has reared her youth always. She overlooked that spiritual force which the "new era" develops and which made our men so responsive to the command of Foch at Chateau Thierry and later.

"The immensity of a fresh horizon" whereon Goethe saw the new era dawning, is still veiled from the vision of his countrymen. But across its roseate reaches unending columns of marching men passed, under the leadership of Ferdinand Foch, to liberate the captives the blind brute has made and to strike down the strongholds of "old Europe" forever.

For nearly six years Foch taught such principles as these and others which I shall recall in connection with great events which they made possible later on.

Then came the anti-clerical wave in French politics, and on its crest a new commandant to the School of War—a man elevated by the anti-clericals and eager to keep his elevation by pleasing those who put him there.

Foch adheres devoutly to the religious practices in which he was reared, and one of his brothers belongs to the Jesuit order.

These conditions made his continuance at the school under its new head impossible. Whether he resigned because he realized this, or was superseded, I do not know. But he left his post and went as lieutenant-colonel to the Twenty-ninth artillery, at Laon.

He was there two years and undoubtedly made a thorough study of the country round Laon—which was for more than four years to be the key to the German tenure in that part of France.

Ferdinand Foch, with his brilliant knowledge and high ideals of soldiering, was now past fifty and not yet a colonel.

Strong though his spirit was, sustained by faith in God and rewarded by those "secret satisfactions" which come to the man who loves his work and is conscious of having given it his best, he must have had hours, days, when he drank deep of the cup of



bitterness. There are, though, bitters that shrivel and bitters that tone and invigorate. Or perhaps they are the same and the difference is in us.

At any rate, Foch was not poisoned at the cup of disappointment.

And when the armies under his command encircled the great rock whereon Laon is perched high above the surrounding plains I hope Foch was with them—in memory of the days when he was “dumped” there, so to speak, far away from his sphere of influence at the School of War.



Page 26

In 1903 he was made colonel and sent to the Thirty-fifth artillery at Vannes, in Brittany.

Only two years later he was called to Orleans as chief of staff of the Fifth army corps.

On June 20, 1907, he was made Brigadier General and passed to the general staff of the French army at Paris. Soon afterwards, Georges Clemenceau became Minister of War, and was seeking a new head for the Staff College. Everyone whose advice he sought said: Foch. So the redoubtable old radical and anti-clerical summoned General Foch.

“I offer you command of the School of War.”

“I thank you,” Foch replied, “but you are doubtless unaware that one of my brothers is a Jesuit.”

“I know it very well,” was Clemenceau’s answer. “But you make good officers, and that is the only thing which counts.”

Thus was foreshadowed, in these two great men, that spirit of “all for France” which, under the civil leadership of one and the military leadership of the other, was to save the country and the world.

In 1911 Foch, at 60, was given command of the Thirteenth division at Chaumont, just above the source of the Marne. On December 17, 1912, he was placed at the head of the Eighth Army Corps, at Bourges. And on August 23, 1913, he took command of the Twentieth corps at Nancy.

“When,” says Marcel Knecht, “we in Nancy heard that Foch had been chosen to command the best troops in France, the Twentieth Army Corps, pride of our capital, everybody went wild with enthusiasm.”

It is M. Knecht who tells us about the visit to General Foch at Nancy, in the spring of 1914, of three British generals whose presence there Foch utilized for two purposes: He showed them what he was doing to strengthen Nancy’s defensibility, and thereby urged upon them France’s conviction that an attack by Germany was imminent and unavoidable; and he utilized the occasion to show the Lorrainers his warm friendliness for England—which Lorraine was inclined still to blame for the death of Joan of Arc. Foch knew that German propagandists were continually fanning this resentment against England. And he made it part of his business to overcome that prejudice by showing the honor in which he held Great Britain’s eminent soldiers.

XI

FORTIFYING FRANCE WITH GREAT PRINCIPLES



So much has been said about France's unreadiness for the war that it is easy for those who do not know what the real situation was to suppose that the French were something akin to fools. For twenty centuries the Germans had been swarming over the Rhine in preying, ravaging hordes, and France had been beating them back to save her national life. That they would swarm again, more insolent and more rapacious than ever after their triumph of 1870, was not to be doubted. Everyone in France who had the slightest knowledge of the spirit that has animated the Hohenzollern empire knew its envy of France, its cupidity of France's wealth, its hatred of France's attractions for all the world. Everyone who came in contact with the Germans felt the bullet-headed belligerence of their attitude which they were never at any pains to conceal.



Page 27

The military men of France knew that Germany had for years been preparing for aggression on a large scale. They knew that she would strike when she felt that she was readiest and her opponents of the Triple Entente were least ready.

The state of mind of the civilians—busy, prosperous, peace-loving, concerned with conversational warfare about a multitude of petty internal affairs—is difficult to describe. But I think it may not be impertinent to say of it that it was something like the state of mind of a congregation, well fed, comfortable, conscious of many pleasant virtues and few corroding sins, before whom a preacher holds up the last judgment. None of them hopes to escape it, none of them can tell at what moment he may be called to his account, none of them would wish to go in just his present state, and yet none of them does anything when he leaves church to put himself more definitely in readiness for that great decision which is to determine where he shall spend eternity.

In 1911 it seemed for a brief while that the irruption from the east was at hand. But Germany did not feel quite ready; she “dickered”; and things went on seemingly as before.

France seemed to forget. But she was not so completely abandoned to hopefulness as was England—England, who turned her deafest ear to Lord Roberts’ impassioned pleas for preparedness.

France has an institution called the Superior War Council. It is the supreme organ of military authority and the center of national defense; it consists of eleven members supposed to be the ablest commanding generals in the nation. The president of this council is the Minister of War; the vice president is known as the generalissimo of the French army.

In 1910 General Joseph Joffre became a member of the Superior War Council, and in 1911 he became generalissimo.

It was because the Council felt the imminence of war with Germany that General Pau—to whom the vice presidency should have gone by right of his priority and also of his eminent fitness—patriotically waived the honor, because in two years he would be sixty-five and would have to retire; he felt that the defense of the country needed a younger man who could remain more years in service. So Joffre was chosen and almost immediately he began to justify the choice.

Joffre and his associates of the council not only foresaw the war, but they quite clearly previsioned its extent and something of its character. In 1912 Joffre declared “the fighting front will extend from four hundred to five hundred miles.” He talked little, but he worked prodigiously; and always his insistence was: “We must be prepared!”



“With whole nations,” he said, “engaged in a mortal combat, disaster is certain for those who in time of peace failed to prepare for war.” And “To be ready means, to-day, to have mustered in advance all the resources of the country, all the intelligence of its citizens, all their moral energy, for the purpose of attaining this one aim—victory. Getting ready is a duty that devolves not only upon the army, but upon all public officials, upon all organizations, upon all societies, upon all families, upon all citizens.”

Page 28

This complete readiness was beyond his power to effect. But in his province—the army—he achieved marvels that were almost miracles.

It was France's good fortune (and that of her allies) that in all he undertook for the purification and strengthening of the army Joffre had, from January, 1912, the complete co-operation of the Minister of War, M. Millerand. Together, these two men, brilliantly supported by some of Joffre's colleagues in the Superior Council—notably Pau and Castelnau—achieved results that have been pronounced “unparalleled in the history of the Third Republic.” They freed the army from the worst effects of political influence, made it once more a popular institution, and organized it into an effectiveness which needs, now, no comment.

When Foch was put in command of the Twentieth army corps at Nancy it was in the expectation that Nancy would sustain the first shock of the German invasion when it came. The opinion prevailed that Nancy could not be held. Whether Joffre was of this opinion or not, I do not know. If he was, he probably felt that Foch would give it up only after harder fighting than any other general. But Foch believed that Nancy could be defended, and so did his immediate superior, the gallant General Castelnau, in command of the Second Army of Lorraine.

For nearly a year following upon his appointment to Nancy, Foch labored mightily to strengthen Nancy against the attack which was impending. He seems never to have doubted that Germany would make her first aggression there, only seventeen miles from her own border, and with Metz and Strassburg to back the invading army.

But that there were other opinions, even at Nancy, I happen to know. For, one day while the war was still new, I chanced in rooting in an old bookstall in Paris, to find a book which was written by an officer of the Twentieth Corps, in 1911.[1]

The officer was, if I mistake not, of the artillery, and he wrote this “forecast” to entertain the members of his mess or battery.

He predicted with amazing accuracy the successive events which happened nearly three years later, only he “guessed” the order for mobilization in France to fall on August 14, instead of August 1; and all his subsequent dates were just about two weeks later than the actualities. But he “foresaw” the invasion of Belgium, the resistance at Liege and Namur, the fall of Brussels, the invasion of France by her northeastern portals. Almost—at the time I read this book—it might have served as history instead of prophecy. I would that I had it now! But I clearly remember that it located the final battle of the war in Westphalia, describing the location exactly. And that it said the Emperor would perish in that downfall of his empire. And it cited two prophecies current in Germany—the long-standing one to the effect that Germany's greatest disaster would come to her under an Emperor with a withered arm, and one made in Strassburg in 1870, declaring that the new empire would dissolve under its third Emperor.



Page 29

The book was published in January, 1912, if I remember rightly, and was almost immediately translated into German. And I was told that one hundred thousand copies were sold in Germany in a very short time, and it was made the subject of editorials in nearly every prominent German paper.

Probably Foch read it. He may even have discussed it with the author. But he held to the belief that when the attack came it would come through Nancy.

He was not, however, expecting it when it came.

[1] The reason I cannot give his name, nor quote directly from his book, is that a fellow-traveler borrowed the book from me and I have never seen it since.

XII

ON THE EVE OF WAR

In the first days of July, 1914, divisional maneuvers were held as usual in Lorraine. Castelnau and Foch reviewed the troops, known throughout the army as “the division of iron.”

A young captain, recently assigned from the School of War to a regiment of Hussars forming part of the Twentieth army corps, wrote to his parents on July 5 an account of the maneuvers in which he had just taken part. He said that “the presence of these two eminent men gave a great interest” to the events he described. And the impression made upon him by Foch is so remarkable that his letter is likely to become one of the small classics of the war—endlessly reproduced whenever the story of Foch is told.

“General Foch,” he reminds his parents, “is a former commander of the School of War, where he played, on account of his great fitness, a very remarkable role.

“He is a man still young [he was almost 63!], slender and supple, and rather frail; his powerful head seems like a flower too heavy for a stem too slight.

“What first strikes one about him is his clear gaze, penetrating, intellectual, but above all and in spite of his tremendous energy, luminous. This light in his eyes spiritualizes a countenance which otherwise would be brutal, with its big mustache bristling above a very prominent, dominant jaw.

“When he speaks, pointing lessons from the maneuver, he becomes animated to the extent of impassionedness, but never expressing himself otherwise than with simplicity and purity.



“His speech is sober, direct; he affirms principles, condemns faults, appeals to our energies in a brief but comprehensive style.

“He is a priest, who judges, condemns, and instructs in the name of the faith which illumines him and to which he has consecrated all the powers of his mind and his heart. General Foch is a prophet whom his God transports.”

The young officer who wrote thus to his parents was Captain Andre Dubarle; and he later laid down his life for his country on the field of honor commanded by General Foch.

The letter seems to me as treasurable for what it conveys to us of the sort of young man Foch found among his officers and soldiers (there were many such!) as for what it tells us of the impression Foch created even in those days before men’s souls were set on fire with fervor for France.



Page 30

On July 18 General Foch asked and obtained a leave of absence for fifteen days, so that he might join the family group gathered at his home near Morlaix in Brittany. His two sons-in-law, Captain Fournier and Captain Becourt, also obtained leave. The former was attached to the general army staff at Paris, and was granted seventeen days. The latter was in command of a company of the Twenty-sixth battalion of Foot Chasseurs at Pont-a-Mousson. He was given twenty-five days' leave. The wives and children of both were at Morlaix with Madame Foch.

So little expectation of immediate war had France on July 18 that she granted a fortnight's absence to the commander of those troops which were expected to bear the first shock of German aggression when it came.

But I happen to know of a French family reunion held at Nancy on July 14 and the days following, which was incomplete. One of the women of this family was married to a German official at Metz whose job it was to be caretaker for three thousand locomotives belonging to the imperial government and kept at Metz for "emergencies." On July 12 (as it afterwards transpired) he was ordered to have fires lighted and steam got up in those three thousand engines, and to keep them, night and day, ready for use at a moment's notice.

Those smoking iron horses in Metz are a small sample of what was going on all over Germany while France's frontier-defenders were being given permission to visit Brittany.

But for that matter German war-preparations were going on much nearer to Nancy than in Metz, while Foch was playing with his grandchildren at Morlaix.

Beginning about July 21 and ending about the 25th, twelve thousand Germans left Nancy for "points east," and six thousand others left the remainder of French Lorraine.

The pretexts they gave were various—vacations, urgent business matters, "cures" at German watering places. They all knew, when they left, that Germany was mobilizing for attack upon France. They had known it for some time before they left.

Since the beginning of July they had been working in Nancy to aid the German attack. They had visited the principal buildings, public and private, and especially the highest ones, with plans for the installation of wireless at the modest price of \$34. "It is so interesting," they said, "to get the exact time, every day, from the Eiffel Tower!"

They had also some amazingly inexpensive contrivances for heating houses, or regulating the heating already installed, or for home refrigeration—things which took them into cellars in Nancy—and before they left to join their regiments they were exceedingly busy demonstrating those things.

They were all gone when General Foch was recalled, on July 26.



On July 30 German under-officers crossed the frontier.

On August 3 Uhlans and infantrymen on motorcycles were shooting and pillaging on the French side of the border, although it was not until 6:45 P.M. that day that Germany declared war on France.



Page 31

That which France had been unable to suppose even Germany capable of, happened: The treaty with Belgium became a scrap of paper and the main attack upon France was made by way of the north.

But the expectation that Nancy would be one of the first objectives of the Hun-rampant was not without fulfillment. For the hordes advanced in five armies; and the fifth, the German left wing under Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, was ordered to swarm into France south of that of the Imperial Crown Prince, spread itself across country behind the French armies facing northward, join with Von Kluck's right wing somewhere west of Paris, and "bag" the French—armies, capital and all—"on or about" September 1.

It was all perfectly practicable—on paper. The only difficulty was that there were so many things the German staff had omitted from its careful calculations—omitted, perforce, because it had never guessed their existence. And that spoiled their reckoning.

Foch had, for years, been teaching that fighting demands supreme flexibility, adaptability; that war is full of surprises which must be met as they arise; that morale, the spiritual force of an army, is subject to fluctuations caused by dozens of conditions which cannot be foreseen and must be overcome. The phrase oftenest on his lips was: "What have we to do here?" For, as he conceived warfare, officers and even privates must constantly be asking themselves that. One plan goes awry. Very well! we'll find a better.

But Foch had not trained the German general staff. They made war otherwise. And well he knew it! Well he knew what happened to them when their "blue prints" would not fit unexpected conditions.

He knew that they expected to take Nancy easily, that they were looking for some effort to defend it, but not for a French attack.

They did not know his maxim: "The best means of defense is to attack."

He attacked. His Twentieth corps fought its way through the center of the Bavarian army, into German Lorraine. Then something happened. Just what it was is not clear—but doubtless will be some day. The offensive had to be abandoned and the French troops had to withdraw from German soil to defend their own.

How bitter was the disappointment to Foch we may guess but shall never know. But remaking plans in his genius.

"What have we to do here?" he asked himself.



Then, “in the twinkling of an eye,” says one military historian, “General Foch found the solution to the defense problem wherewith he was so suddenly confronted when his offensive failed of support.”

XIII

THE BATTLE OF LORRAINE

What is known as the battle of Lorraine began at the declaration of war and lasted till August 26—though the major part of it was fought in the last six of those days.

I shall not go into details about it here, except to recall that it was in this fighting that General Castelnau lost his oldest son, stricken almost at the father's side.

Page 32

A German military telegram intercepted on August 27 said:

“On no account make known to our armies of the west [that is to say, the right wing, in Belgium] the checks sustained by our armies of the east [the left wing, in Lorraine].”

So much depended on those plans which Castelnau and Dubail and Foch—and very particularly Foch!—had frustrated.

Joffre realized what had been achieved. And on August 27 he issued the following “order of the day”:

“The First and Second armies are at this moment giving an example of tenacity and of courage which the commander-in-chief is happy to bring to the knowledge of the troops under his orders.

“These two armies undertook a general offensive and met with brilliant success, until they hurled themselves at a barrier fortified and defended by very superior forces.

“After a retreat in perfect order, the two armies resumed the offensive and, combining their efforts, retook a great part of the territory they had given up.

“The enemy bent before them and his recoil enabled us to establish undeniably the very serious losses he had suffered.

“These armies have fought for fourteen days without a moment’s respite, and with an unshakable confidence in victory as the reward of their tenacity.

“The general-in-chief knows that the other armies will be moved to follow the example of the First and Second armies.”

Now, where were those other armies? And what were they doing?

France had then eight armies in the field, and was soon to have a ninth—commanded by General Foch.

There was the First army, under General Dubail; the Second, under General Castelnau; the Third, under General Sarrail; the Fourth, under General Langle de Cary; the Fifth, under General Franchet d’Esperey; the Sixth, under General Manoury; the Seventh and Eighth armies are not mentioned in the Battle of the Marne, and I have not been able to find out where they were in service.

The First and Second armies, fighting in Lorraine, we know about. They developed, in that battle, more than one great commander of whose abilities Joffre hastened to avail himself. On the day he issued that order commending the First and Second armies, the generalissimo called Manoury from the Lorraine front, where he had shown



conspicuous leadership, and put him in command of the newly-created Sixth army, which was to play the leading part in routing Von Kluck. And on the next day (August 28) Joffre called Foch from Lorraine to head the new Ninth army, which was to hold the center at the Battle of the Marne and deal the smashing, decisive blow.

In two days, while his troops were retreating before an apparently irresistible force, Joffre created two new armies, put at the head of each a man of magnificent leadership, and intrusted to those two armies and their leaders the most vital positions in the great battle he was planning.



Page 33

The German soldiers facing Joffre were acting on general orders printed for them eight years before, and under specific orders which had been worked out by their high command with the particularity of machine specifications. And all their presumptions were based on the French doing what Teutons would do in the same circumstances. Their extra-suspender-button efficiency and preparedness were pitted against the flexible genius of a man who could assemble his two “shock” armies in two days and put them under the command of men picked not from the top of his list of available commanders, but practically from the bottom.

The Third, Fourth and Fifth armies of Joffre were those which had sustained the terrific onslaught in the north and had been fighting in retreat, practically since the beginning.

On August 25 Joffre declared; “We have escaped envelopment”—thanks largely to the action in Lorraine, holding back the Bavarians—and, clearly seeing that he could not hope for favorable results from a great battle fought in the north, he gave the order for retreat which meant the abandonment of north-eastern France to the Hunnish hordes.

What anguish that order caused him we shall never know. He realized to the full what the people of that great, prosperous part of France would have to suffer. He was aware what the loss of those resources would mean to the French, and also what their gain would mean to the Germans. He understood the effect of retreat upon the morale of his men. And he must have been aware of the panic his order would create throughout the yet-uninvaded parts of France where no one could know at what point the invasion would be checked. He knew that the nation’s faith in him would be severely shaken, and that even his army’s faith in him would be put to a supreme test.

But when a man trains himself to be a commander of men, he trains himself to go through, heroically and at any cost, what he believes must be done. To sacrifice one’s self comes comparatively easy—given compelling circumstances and an obedient soul. But to sacrifice others never becomes easy to a man who respects the rights of others. And we shall never begin to comprehend men like Joffre and Foch until we shake ourselves free from any notion we may have that military expediency makes it easy for them to order great mental and physical suffering.

General Foch detached himself, on August 29, from his beloved Twentieth corps and betook himself to the little village of Machault, about twenty miles northeast of Chalons-sur-Marne, where he found assembled for his command an army made up of units from other armies. They were all more or less strange to one another and to him.

There was the Ninth army corps, from Tours, made up of Angevins (men such as Foch had learned to know when he was at Saumur) and Vendéans (the Bretons’ south neighbors). Some of these men had been fighting without respite for nine days as they fell back, with the Fourth army, from the Belgian border. With them, since August 22, had been the remarkable Moroccan division under General Humbert.



Page 34

Then there was the Eleventh corps of Bretons and Vendéans, which had been through the same terrible retreat.

And—not to enumerate too far—there was that Forty-second division of infantry which was destined to play one of the most dramatic, thrilling, forever-memorable parts in all warfare. It had been in the Ardennes, and had fallen back, fighting fiercely as it came.

To help him command these weary men whose hearts were heavy with forebodings for France, Foch had, as he himself has said, “a general staff of five or six officers, gathered in haste to start with, little or no working material, our note books and a few maps.”

“Those who lived through these tragic hours near him,” says Rene Puaux, “recall the chief questioning the liaison officers who did not know exactly where the different units were, punctuating his questions with: ‘You don’t know? Very well, then go and find out!’; putting together in his head the mosaic of which there were still so many pieces missing; gradually visioning a plan for bringing them together; calculating his effectives; estimating approximately his reserves of ammunition; discovering his bases of food supply.”

And through all this stress he had the personal anguish of being unable to get word of his only son, Germain Foch, or of his son-in-law, Captain Becourt, both of whom had been fighting on the Belgian front.

“It was not, however,” M. Puaux says, “the time for personal emotions. The father effaced himself before the soldier. There was nothing to be thought of save the country.”

Thus we see Ferdinand Foch, on the eve of the first Battle of the Marne.

XIV

THE FIRST VICTORY AT THE MARNE

It was Saturday, August 29, 1914, when General Foch went to Machault to take command of the various units he was to weld into the Ninth army.

On the Tuesday following (September 1) Joffre was quartered with his general staff at the little old town of Bar-sur-Aube, fifty miles south of Chalons, and he had then determined the limits to which he would permit the retreat of his armies.

If a stand could be taken and an offensive launched further north than the Aube River, it should be done; but in no event would the withdrawal go beyond the Seine, the Aube and the region north of Bar-le-Duc.



He then placed his armies in the field in the relation in which he deemed they would be most effective: the First army, under General Dubail, was in the Vosges, and the Second army, under General Castelnau, was round about Nancy; the Third army, under General Sarrail, east and south of the Argonne in a kind of "elbow," joining the Fourth army, under General de Langle de Cary; then the Ninth army, under General Foch; then the Fifth army, under General Franchet d'Esperey; then the little British army of three corps, under General Sir John French; and then the new Sixth army, under General Manoury.



Page 35

So Foch, on the third day of organizing his new command, received orders—at once terrible and immensely flattering—that he was to occupy the center of Joffre's battle line and to sustain the onslaught of Von Buelow and the famous Prussian Guards.

In the morning of Saturday, September 5, all commanders received from Joffre the now historic message:

“The moment has come for the army to advance at all costs and allow itself to be slain where it stands rather than give way.”

The men to whom this order was relayed by their commanders had, five-sixths of them, been ceaselessly engaged, without one single day's rest of any kind and much of the time without night rest either, for fourteen days, fighting as they fell back, and falling back as they fought; the skin was all worn from the soles of their feet, and what shoes they had left were stuck to their feet with blood.

“They had marched under a torrid sky,” says Louis Madelin, “on scorching roads, parched and suffocated with dust. In reality they moved with their hearts rather than with their legs. According to Pierre Lasserre's happy expression, 'Our bodies had beaten a retreat, but not our hearts,' . . . But when, worn out with fatigue, faces black with powder, blinded by the chalk of Champagne, almost dying, they learned Joffre's order announcing the offensive, then the faces of our troops from Paris to Verdun beamed with joy. They fought with tired limbs, and yet no army ever showed such strength, for their hearts were filled with faith and hope.”

At daybreak on Sunday, the 6th, Foch pitched his headquarters in a modern chateau near the little village of Pleurs, which you probably will not find on any map except a military one, but it is some six miles southeast of Sezanne. And the front assigned to Foch ran from Sezanne to the Camp de Mailly, twenty-five miles east by a little south. The Marne was twenty-five miles to north of him. Between him and its south bank were many towns and villages; the clay pocket (ten miles long) called the Marshes of St. Gond, but far from marshy in that parching heat; and north of that the forest of Epernay. His vanguards were north of the marshes. But as that Sunday wore on, the Prussian Guards drove Foch's Angevins and Vendéans of the Ninth Corps back and occupied the marshes. The Bretons on the east of Foch's line were obliged to dislodge, and the Moroccans and Forty-second Division had to yield on Foch's left.

Thus, at nightfall of the first day's fighting, Foch's new army had given ground practically everywhere.

The next day the German attack became fiercer, and it seemed that more ground must be yielded.

That was the day when Foch made his memorable deduction: “They are trying to throw us back with such fury I am sure that means things are going badly for them elsewhere and they are seeking compensation.”

He was right! Von Kluck was retiring in a northeasterly direction under Manoury’s blows; and even Von Buelow (whom Foch faced) was withdrawing parts of his troops from the line at Foch’s left.

Page 36

But the attempt to break through the center Foch held, waxed fiercer as the Germans realized the strength opposing them on their right.

And on Tuesday, the 8th, Foch was unable to hold—save at certain points—and had to move his headquarters eleven miles south, to Plancy.

He had now reached the Aube, beyond which Joffre had decreed that he must not retire. On its north bank his gallant army must, if it could not do otherwise, “allow itself to be slain where it stands rather than give way.”

On that evening he sent Major Requin to the Forty-second Division with orders for the morrow. The most incredible orders!

The enemy had found his point of least resistance—on his right wing. He ought to strengthen that wing, but he could not. All the reserves were engaged—and the enemy knew it as well as he did. And it is a fixed principle of war not to withdraw active troops from one part of the line to strengthen another.

Only one part of his army had had any success that day: Toward evening the Forty-second Division and the Moroccans had made an irresistible lunge forward and driven the enemy to the north edge of the marshes.

They were weary—those splendid troops—but they were exalted; they had advanced!

Foch believes in the power of the spirit. He appealed to the Forty-second to do an extraordinary thing—to march, weary as it was, from left to right of his long line and brace the weak spot. And to cover up the gap their withdrawal would make he asked General Franchet d’Esperey to stretch out the front covered by his right wing and adjoining Foch’s left.

In a letter to me, Lieutenant-Colonel (then Major) Requin gives some graphic bits descriptive of that historic errand. He was a sort of liaison officer between General Grossetti, commanding the Forty-second Division, and the latter’s chief, General Foch, his special duty being to carry General Foch’s orders to General Grossetti and to keep the army chief informed, each evening, how his commands were being carried out.

“It was 10 P.M.,” he writes, “when I roused General Grossetti from his sleep in the straw, in the miserable little shell-riddled farm of Chapton.

“The order astonished him; but like a disciplined leader, he started to execute it with all the energy of which this legendary soldier was capable.”

The Forty-second came! While they were marching to the rescue the Prussian Guard in a colossal effort smashed through Foch’s right. They were wild with joy. The French line was pierced. They at once began celebrating, at La Fere-Champenoise.



When this was announced to Foch he telegraphed to general headquarters:

“My center gives way, my right recedes; the situation is excellent. I shall attack.”

For this, we must remember, is the man who says: “A battle won is a battle in which one is not able to believe one’s self vanquished.”



Page 37

He gave the order to attack. Everything that he cared about in this world was at stake. This desperate maneuver would save it all—or it would not. He gave the order to attack—and then he went for a walk on the outskirts of the little village of Plancy. His companion was one of his staff officers, Lieutenant Ferasson of the artillery; and as they walked they discussed metallurgy and economics.

There could be nothing more typically French or more diametrically opposed to the conceptions of French character which prevailed in other countries before this war. And I hope that if Lieutenant Ferasson survives, he will accurately designate (if he can) exactly where Foch walked on that Wednesday afternoon, September 9, when, his center having given way, his right wing receded, he pronounced the “situation excellent,” gave the order for attack, and went out to discuss metallurgy.

Toward six o'clock on that evening the Germans, celebrating their certain victory, saw themselves confronted by a “new” French army pouring into the gap they had thought their road to Paris.

The Forty-second Division (more than half dead of fatigue, but their eyes blazing with such immensity and intensity of purpose it has been said the Germans fled, as before spirits, when they saw these men) had not only blocked the roundabout road to Paris; they had broken the morale of Von Buelow's crack troops. Without this brilliant maneuver and superb execution the successes of all the other armies must have gone for naught.

“To be victorious,” said Napoleon, “it is necessary only to be stronger than your enemy at a given point and at a given moment.”

Foch's preferred way to take advantage of that given point and moment is with reserves, which he called the reservoirs of force. “The art of war consists in having them when the enemy has none.”

But as there were no reserves available at that first Battle of the Marne, he exemplified his other principle that conditions must be met as they arise.

“I still seem,” says Rene Puaux, “to hear General Foch telling us, one evening after dinner at Cassel several months later, about that maneuver of September 9.

“He had put matches on the tablecloth”—some red matches which Colonel Requin treasures as a souvenir—“and he illustrated with them the disposition of the troops engaged. For the Forty-second Division he had only half a match, which he moved here and there with his quick, deft fingers as he talked.



“The match representing the Twelfth German Corps (which with the Prussian Guard was cutting the gap in Foch’s weak spot) was about to make a half-turn which would bring it in the rear of the French armies.

“The general, laying down the half-match that was the Forty-second Division, made an eloquent gesture with his hand, indicating the move that the Forty-second made.

“‘It might succeed,’ he said, laconically, ‘or it might fail. It succeeded. Those men were exhausted; they won, nevertheless.’”



Page 38

At nine o'clock the next morning (September 10) the Forty-second entered La Fere-Champenoise, where they found officers of the Prussian Guard lying, dead drunk, on the floors in the cantonments, surrounded by innumerable bottles of stolen champagne wherewith they had been celebrating their victory.

Two days later Foch was at Chalons, to direct in person the crossing of the Marne by his army in pursuit of the fleeing enemy.

“The cavalry, the artillery, the unending lines of supply wagons,” says Colonel Requin, “the infantry in two columns on either side of the road; all this in close formation descending like a torrent to resume its place of battle above the passage on the other side of the river; was an unforgettable sight and one that gave all who witnessed it an impression of the tremendous energy General Foch has for the command of enormous material difficulties.”

XV

SENT NORTH TO SAVE THE CHANNEL PORTS

Germany's plan to enter France by the east gate, in Lorraine, was frustrated with the aid of Foch.

Her plan to smash through the center of the armies on the Marne was frustrated, with the very special aid of Foch.

Blocked in both these moves, there was just one other for Germany to make, then, on the western front.

And on September 14, Joffre, instead of celebrating the victory on the Marne, was deep in plans to forestall an advance upon the Channel ports, and began issuing orders for the transfer of his main fighting bodies to the north.

All this, of course, had to be done so as to leave no vulnerable spot in all that long battle line from Belfort to Calais.

Joffre had clearly foreseen the length of that line. He predicted it, as we have seen, in 1912. Doubtless he had foreseen also that it would be too long a line to direct from one viewpoint, from one general headquarters. What he was too wise to try to foresee before the war began was, which one of France's trained fighting men he would call to his aid as his second in command. He waited, and watched, before deciding that.

And late in the afternoon of October 4 he telegraphed to General Foch at Chalons, telling him that he was appointed first in command under the generalissimo, and asking



him to leave at once for the north, there to coordinate the French, English and Belgian forces that were opposing the German march to the sea.

Five weeks previously Foch had been called to the vicinity of Chalons to assemble an army just coming into existence. Now he was called to leave Chalons and that army he had come to know—that army of which he must have been so very, very proud—and go far away to another task of unknown factors.

But in a few hours he had his affairs in order and was ready to leave.

It was ten o'clock that Sunday night when he got into his automobile to be whirled from the Marne to the Somme.



Page 39

At four in the morning he was at Breteuil, where General Castelnau had the headquarters of his new army, created on September 20 and designated to service on Manoury's left. General Castelnau had not yet heard of the generalissimo's new order. He was sound asleep when the big gray car came to a stop at the door of his headquarters after its one-hundred-and-fifty-mile dash through silent towns and dark, war-invested country.

Six weeks ago Foch had been his subordinate. Then they became equals in command. Now the magnificent hero of Lorraine who, before the war, had done so much on the Superior War Council to aid Joffre in reorganizing the army, rose from his bed in the chill of a fall morning not yet dawned, to greet his superior officer.

Some black coffee was heated for them, and for two hours they discussed the problems of this new front—Castelnau as eager to serve under Foch, for France, as, eight weeks ago, Foch had been to serve under Castelnau. If the sublime unselfishness of such men could have communicated itself to some of the minor figures of this war, how much more inspiring might be the stories of these civilian commanders!

At six o'clock Foch was under way again—to Amiens, Doullens, St. Pol, and then, at nine, to Aubigny, where General Maud'huy had the headquarters of his army, holding the line north of Castelnau's.

The difficulties of Foch's new undertaking were not military alone, but diplomatic. He had to take account of the English and Belgian armies, each under independent command, and each small. It was the fitness of Foch for the diplomacy needed here, as well as his fitness for the great military task of barring the enemy from the Channel ports, that determined Joffre in nominating him to the place.

In 1912 General Foch had been the head of the French military commission sent to witness the British army maneuvers at Cambridge.

He speaks no English; and not many British generals at that time spoke much French. Yet he somehow managed to get on, with the aid of interpreters, so that his relations with the British officers were not only cordial, in a superficial social way, but important in their results of deepened understanding on his part and of respect on theirs.

His study of what seemed to him the military strength and weakness of France's great neighbor and ally was minute and comprehensive.

In his opinion, the soldiers of Britain were excellent; but he was fearful that their commanders lacked seasoned skill to direct them effectively. This lack he laid to that apparent inability to believe in the imminence of war, which was even more prevalent in Britain, with her centuries of inviolate security, than in France.



Two years before the long-suspended sword fell, Foch foresaw clearly what would be the difficulties in the way of England when she should gird herself for land conflict. Doubtless he had resolved in his mind plans for helping her to meet and to overcome them.

Page 40

Now he was placed where he could render aid—where he *must* render aid.

After the Battle of the Marne Sir John French wanted his army moved up north, nearer to its channel communications—that is to say, to its source of supplies. And on October 1 Joffre began to facilitate this movement. It was just well under way when Foch arrived in the north.

And on October 9 the gallant Belgian army withdrew from Antwerp and made its way to the Yser under cover of French and British troops.

Foch soon saw that an allied offensive would not be possible then; that the most they could hope to do was to hold back the invading forces.

Until October 24 he remained at Doullens, twenty miles north of Amiens. Then he removed his headquarters to the ancient town of Cassel, about eighteen miles west and a little south of Ypres.

From there he was able to reach in a few hours' time any strategic part of the north front and from this actual watch-tower (Cassel is on an isolated hill more than 500 feet high, and commands views of portions of France, Belgium, and even—on a clear day—of the chalky cliffs of England; St. Omer, Dunkirk, Ypres, and Ostend are all visible from its heights), he was to direct movements affecting the destinies of all three nations.

The Belgians, whose sublime stand had thwarted Germany's murderous plan against an unready world, were a sad little army when they reached the Yser about mid October. It was not what they had endured that contributed most to break their spirit; but what they had been unable to prevent.

To those heroic men who had left their beautiful country to the arch-fiends of destruction, their parents and wives and children to savages who befoul the name of beasts; who no longer had any possessions, nor munitions wherewith to make another stand on Belgian soil; to them Foch took fresh inspiration with his calm and tremendous personality; to them he sent his splendid Forty-second Division to swell their ranks so frightfully depleted in Honor's cause; to them he gave the suggestion of opening their sluices and drowning out of their last little corner of Belgium the enemy they could not otherwise dislodge.

This done, the next problem of Foch was to establish relations with Sir John French whereby the most cordial and complete cooperation might be insured between the British Field Marshal and the French commander of the armies in the north.

There are several graphic accounts of interviews which took place between these generals.



It was on October 28 that Foch saw the success of the opened sluices and the consequent salvation to the heroic Belgians of a corner of their own earth whereon to maintain their sovereignty.

On the 30th the English suffered severe reverses in spite of the aid lent them by eight battalions of French soldiers and artillery reinforcements. In consequence, they had had to cede considerable ground, their line was pierced, and the flank of General Dubois' army, adjoining theirs, was menaced.



Page 41

When word of this disaster reached Foch that night he at once set out from Cassel for French's headquarters at Saint Omer.

It was 1 A.M. when he arrived. Marshal French was asleep. He was waked to receive his visitor.

"Marshal," said Foch, "your line is cracked?"

"Yes."

"Have you any resources?"

"I have none."

"Then I give you mine; the gap must be stopped at once; if we allow our lines to be pierced at a single point we are lost, because of the masses our enemy has to pour through it. I have eight battalions of the Thirty-second Division that General Joffre has sent me. Take them and go forward!"

The offer was most gratefully received. At two o'clock the orders were given; the gap was stopped.

Nevertheless, the British despaired of their ability to hold. Marshal French had no reserves, and decided to fall back.

A liaison officer hastened to notify General Dubois that the British were about to retire, and General Dubois betook himself in all speed to Vlamertinghe, the Belgian headquarters, to notify their commanding general. Foch happened to be with the Belgian general. And while these three were conferring, the liaison officer (Jamet) saw the automobile of Marshal French pass by.

Realizing the importance of the British commander's presence at that interview, Jamet ventured to stop him and suggest his attendance.

Foch implored French to prevent retreat. French declared there was nothing else for him to do—his men were exhausted, he had no reserves. Foch pointed out to him the incalculable consequences of yielding.

"It is necessary to hold in spite of everything!" he cried; "to hold until death. What you propose would mean a catastrophe. Hold on! I'll help you."

And as he talked he wrote his suggestions on a piece of paper he found on the table before him, and passed it to the British commander.

Marshal French read what was written, at once added to it, "execute the order of General Foch," signed it, and gave it to one of his staff officers.

And the Channel ports were saved.

But a greater thing even than that was foreshadowed: Foch had begun to demonstrate what was in him before which not only the men of his command must bow but the generals of other nations also.

One of the staff officers of General Foch who was closely associated with him there in the north in that time of great anxiety, has given us a pen-picture of the chief as his aides often saw him then. Doubtless it is a good picture also, except for differences in trifling details, of the great commander as he has been on many and many a night since, while the destinies of millions hung in the balance of his decisions.

"All is silence. The little town of Cassel is early asleep. On the rough pavement of the Grande Place, occasional footsteps break the stillness. Now they are those of a staff officer on his way to his billet. Now it is the sentry moving about to warm himself up a bit. Then silence again.



Page 42

“In a little office of the Hotel de Ville, a man is seated at a table. His elbows are on a big military map. A telephone is at his hand. He waits—to hear the results of orders he has given. And while he waits he chews an unlighted cigar and divides his attention between the map and the clock—an old Louis XVI timepiece with marble columns, which ticks off the minutes almost soundlessly. How slowly its hands go round! How interminable seems the wait for news!

“Someone knocks, and Colonel Weygand, chief of staff, enters; he has a paper in his hand: ‘Telephoned from the Ninth army at 1.15 A.M.’ . . .

“The general has raised his head; his eyes are shining.

“‘Good! good!’

“His plans are working out successfully; the reinforcements he sent for have arrived in time. There is nothing more he can do now; so he will go to bed.

“A last look at the map. Then his eye-glasses, at the end of their string, are tucked away in the upper pocket of his coat. The general puts on his black topcoat and his cap.

“In the hall, the gendarme on guard duty gets up, quickly, from the chair wherein he is dozing.

“The general salutes him with a brisk gesture, but with it he seems to say: ‘Sleep on, my good fellow; I’m sorry to have disturbed you.’

“At the foot of the grand staircase, the sentry presents arms; and one of the staff officers joins the commander, to accompany him to the house of the notary who is extending him hospitality.

“A few hours later, very early in the morning, the general is back again at his office.”

Thus he was at Cassel, as he directed those operations on the Yser by which he checked the German attempt to reach Calais and Dunkirk, and revealed to the military world a new strategist of the first order.

By November 15 (six weeks after arriving in the north) Foch had the high command of the German army as completely thwarted in its design as it had been at the Marne. It had fallen to Foch to defeat the German plan on the east (Lorraine), in the center (Marne) and on the west (Ypres). And the consequences of this frustration that he dealt them in Flanders were calculated to be “at least equal to the victory of the Marne.” Colonel Requin calls that Battle of the Yser “like a preface to the great victory of 1918.”



In the spring of 1915 Foch left Cassel and took up headquarters at Frevent, between Amiens and Doullens, whence he directed those engagements in Artois which demonstrated that though trench warfare was not the warfare he had studied and prepared for, and nearly all its problems were new, he was master of it not less than he would have been of a cavalry warfare.

In the autumn of 1915, Foch moved nearer to Amiens—to the village of Dury in the immediate outskirts of the ancient capital of Picardy. For the next chapter in his history was to be the campaign of the Somme including the first great offensive of France in the war, which, together with the Verdun defense, forced the Germans not only again to re-make their calculations, but to withdraw to the Hindenburg line.



Page 43

On September 30, 1916 (just before his sixty-fifth birthday, on which his retirement from active service was due), he was “retained without age limit” in the first section of the general staff of the French army.

Honors were beginning to crowd upon him as the debt of France and of her allies to his genius began to be realized. Responsibility vested in him became heavier and heavier as he demonstrated his ability to bear it. But always, say those who were nearest him, “a great, religious serenity pervaded and illumined his soul.”

This is a serenity not of physical calm. Foch is intensely nervous, almost ceaselessly active. His body is frail, racked with suffering, worn down by the enormous strains imposed upon it. But the self-mastery *within* is always apparent; and it inspires confidence, and renewed effort, in all who come in contact with him.

XVI

THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ALLIED ARMIES

After his position in the first section of the General Staff had been made independent of age limits, General Foch was relieved (for the autumn and winter at least, during which time no operations of importance were expected) of active command of a group of armies; and at once began the organization of a bureau devoted to the study of great military questions affecting not the French lines alone but those of France’s allies.

[Illustration: General Petain—Marshal Haig—General Foch—General Pershing]

At first the headquarters of this bureau were at Senlis, near Paris. Then they were moved close to France’s eastern border where Foch and his associates studied ways and means of meeting a possible attack through Switzerland—if Germany resolved to add that crime to her category—or across northern Italy.

So clearly had Foch foreseen what would happen in the Venetian plain, that he had his plan of French reinforcement perfected long in advance, even to the schedule for dispatching troop trains to the Piave front.

In January, 1917, Marshal Joffre reached the age of retirement (65). He was venerated and loved throughout France as few men have ever been. Gratitude for his great gifts and great character filled every heart to overflowing. His country had no honor great enough to express its sense of his service to France. Yet it was felt that for the operations of the future, the interests of France and of her allies would be best furthered with another strategist in command of the armies in the field. Joffre’s retirement was therefore effected.



Joffre is an engineer, a master-builder of fortifications, a great defense soldier. But defense would not end the war. France must look to her greatest offensive strategist.

There could be no question who that strategist was. No one knew it quite so well as Marshal Joffre. And one of the most splendid things about that mighty and noble man is the spirit in which he concurred in (if, indeed, he did not suggest) the change which meant that another should lead the armies of France to victory.



Page 44

The appointment of General Foch as head of the General Staff was made on May 15, 1917, while Marshal Joffre was in the United States to confer with our officials regarding our part in the war. On the same date General Philippe Petain, the heroic defender of Verdun, who had been Chief of Staff for a month, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of all French armies operating on the French front.

General Foch installed himself at the Invalides, and addressed himself to the study of all the allies' fronts, the assembling American army, and to another task for which he was signally fitted: that of coordinating the plans and purposes of the Generalissimo and the government.

Wherever General Foch goes, one finds him creating harmony and, through harmony, doubling everyone's strength.

He "gets on" with everybody, but not in the way that sort of thing is too generally done—not by methods which have come to be called diplomatic and which involve a great deal of surface affability, of wordy beating about the bush and concealing one's real purposes from persons who see his hand and wonder if they are bluffing him about theirs.

Foch has no stomach for this sort of thing. His whole bent is toward discovering the right thing to do and then making it so plain to others that it is the right thing that they adopt it gladly and cooperate in it with ardor.

In council he is still the great teacher striving always not merely to make his principles remembered, but to have them shared.

The eminent French painter, Lucien Jonas, who has served in Artois, at Verdun, on the Somme and in Italy, and has been appointed painter of the Army Museum at Des Invalides, was commissioned to make a picture of General Foch holding an allies' council of war at Versailles.

It was, of course, impossible for Jonas to be actually present at a council meeting. But it was arranged that he should sit outside a glass door through which he could see all, but hear nothing.

"General Foch," he tells us, "held his auditors in a sort of fascination. One felt that in his explanations there was not a flaw, not a hesitancy. All seemed clear, plain, irresistible."

This power was his in great degree in the years before the war. But now men who listen to him know that his perceptions are not merely logical—they are workable. His performances prove the worth of his theories.



On March 21, 1918, Ludendorff launched his great offensive against the British army. The line bent; it cracked. Amiens seemed doomed; the British in France were threatened with severance from their allies—with envelopment!

After four days of onrushing disaster a conference was called to meet at Doullens—a conference of representatives of the allied governments. Something must be done to coordinate the various “fronts,” to put them under a supreme command.

Page 45

Foch was hastily empowered to order whatever he deemed advisable to prevent the separation of the English and French armies. It is apparent that the wide powers thus hurriedly given to him were bestowed with the approval of every member of the conference. In October, 1918, however, in responding to a note of greeting from Lloyd-George on the occasion of his sixty-seventh birthday, Foch recognized the weight of the British Prime Minister's influence at the conference:

"I am greatly touched," he replied, "by your congratulations and thank you sincerely.

"I do not forget that it was to your insistence that I owe the position which I occupy to-day."

Foch's new responsibilities were laid upon him on March 26. By evening of the 28th he had the situation so well in hand that he was able to hold in check the German onslaught without even employing all the troops he had brought up for that purpose. He had averted what threatened to be the worst disaster of the war, and he had reserves in readiness against a new and augmented attack. This in two days!

On the 30th an official announcement told all the world that the destinies of the allied armies were by common consent confided to the general direction of Ferdinand Foch.

On that same day there was made public, by the French war authorities, something which had taken place and had contributed in a degree we are not yet able to state, to the investment of Foch with supreme power. This was a visit made by General Pershing to Foch. In the presence of Foch, Petain, Clemenceau and Loucheur (Minister of Munitions) Pershing made the following declaration:

"I come to tell you that the American people would hold it a great honor if our troops were engaged in the present battle. I ask you this in my name and in theirs. At this moment there is nothing to be thought of but combat. Infantry, artillery, aviation—all that we have is yours. Use them as you will. There are more to come—as many more as shall be needed. I am here solely to say to you that the American people will be proud to be engaged in the greatest and most glorious battle in history."

[Illustration: General Foch—General Pershing]

On April 5, a week after his appointment to the supreme command was announced, Foch granted an interview to a group of war correspondents. Their various accounts differ very slightly. Instead of quoting any one I will make a digest of them.

They found the general installed in a provincial mansion, place not named. The room he occupied was nearly bare; an old table, an armchair, a telephone, a huge war map, no profusion of papers, no "air of importance."

Page 46

Foch was writing in a notebook. He rose, when he had finished his entry among those epoch-making memoranda, and received his visitors. He had but a few minutes to give, yet he realized the importance of the occasion and treated it accordingly. These men were to send to millions of people in the great democracies of France, Britain and America their pen pictures of the man just invested with the greatest military responsibility any man in the world's history has ever borne. Battles must be fought, but also those people had a right to such a sense of participation as only their press could give them; it was their issue; their attitude toward it was the foundation of their nation's morale. Foch has neither time nor taste for talk about himself, but he is no war autocrat; he is, as he constantly reiterates, a son of France, defending human liberties. He might not have much time to give journalists, but it is not in him to minimize their place in a world where the will of the majority prevails and the press does much to shape that will.

His manner on that occasion was calm, unhurried, but very direct, to the point.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "our affairs are not going badly; are they? The boche has been halted since March 27. He has, doubtless, encountered some obstacle. We have stopped him. Now we shall endeavor to do better. I do not see that there is anything more to say.

"But as to yourselves, keep at your task. It is a time when everyone ought to work steadfastly. Work with your pens. We will go on working with our arms."

"I regret," wrote Lieutenant d'Entraygues in the Paris *Temps*, "only one thing: that all the people of France were not able to see and hear this soldier as he spoke to us. They would know why it is not possible to doubt our victory."

It was probably about that time that Major Darnley Stuart-Stephens wrote of Foch, for the *English Review*.

"The man who has been consecrated by destiny to the saving from Moloch of this globe's civilization, is he who will prove once more that in the conflict between the finely tempered sword and the finely tempered brain, it is the mental asset that will prevail."

Major Stuart-Stephens had studied the "mental assets" of Ferdinand Foch.

"Now and again at his lectures," he wrote, "I have noticed that far-away look of the mystic in his eyes that I remember so well in those of that other soldier-saint, Charles Gordon."

It was that spiritual greatness in Foch which everyone felt, on which everyone brought into contact with him based his unflinching faith in the outcome.

"We do not know," says an editorial writer in the New York *Evening Sun*, "what the judgments of the military critics will be when they have carefully studied and sifted the



evidence, but to a layman it looks as if Foch was not merely a very great general but one of the greatest generals of all recorded history . . . as great a general as Napoleon or Caesar or Hannibal or Alexander.”

Page 47

But whether they put him, as a military man, on a par with Napoleon, or come sapiently to the conclusion that he was no more than a very able general fortunate in being in command at the time the Germanic morale was breaking, it will never be possible to disprove that he was a supreme leader of men in a great war of ideals—an incarnation of all those qualities of faith and fervor, of self-mastery and dependence on the Divine, of self-realization and with it devotion to the rights and progress of others, which are embodied in the Christian democracy for whose preservation millions have gladly died.

XVII

BRINGING GERMANY TO ITS KNEES

Faith in the ability of Foch to lead us all to victory was, however, not to endure without its grave tests.

The German drive of March 21 was checked by his co-ordination of Allied forces. But checking the enemy just before he reached the key of the Channel ports was not defeating him; preventing him from driving a wedge between the British and French armies was only diverting him to another point of attack. He was desperate—that enemy! He knew that he must win a decisive victory soon, or see his own maladies destroy him.

He knew the genius of Foch; he knew the immense increase in strength that the Allies had achieved in unifying their command. He may have underestimated the worth in battle of our American fighters; but it is scarcely probable that he underestimated the worth, behind the lines, of our army of railroad builders, harbor constructors, supply handlers, and the like. He knew that whether we could fight or not, we had money and men and were pouring both into France to help win the war.

And he also knew that victory after victory which he had won had not only failed to increase his might but had, somehow, weakened him; country after country had fallen before his sword or before his poison-propaganda—or both!—his plunder was vast, his accessions in fighting men available for the Western front were formidable—yet something in his vitals was wrong, terribly wrong; he must stop, soon, and look to his health, or he would be too far-gone for recovery. But not now! not now! “They” must be crushed now or never!

So he fought like a maddened beast whose usual cunning has given place to frenzied desperation.

Again and again and again he lunged—now here, now there. And the defenders of civilization fell back and back, before him.



Where was that calm, quiet man who had said: “Well, gentlemen, our affairs are not going badly; are they?”

“The boche,” he had said, “has been halted . . . now we shall endeavor to do better.”

What had happened? The boche was *not* halted! He was, in fact, shelling Paris!

It was in those days that the “soldier-saint,” as Major Stuart-Stephens has called him, must have had need of all his faith and all his fortitude.

Page 48

We don't know much, yet, except of a very superficial sort, about those days. We know what happened in them insofar as army movements are concerned, and the heartbreaking re-occupation of towns and villages where French and American restoration squads were working to make habitable those places the Huns had laid waste; and the continued shelling of Paris by the "mystery gun"; and the great exodus of civilians from the capital as the ravaging hordes drew nearer and always nearer.

These things we know; but not what Foch was thinking—except that he was not thinking of defeat.

If there was a true heart in France that ever for a moment doubted the outcome of the war, or dreamed of abandoning the conflict before it had made the future safe, I have never heard of that one.

Certainly the man who was leading them never doubted. Nor was it on his own skill that his faith was founded. He knew Who would give his cause the victory.

In the fifth German drive of 1918 the enemy crossed the Marne! Paris was almost in sight—Paris! where millions of French were celebrating the fall of the Bastille and the birth of freedom as if the leering, jeering enemies of all freemen were not so close to the gates of the Capital that the gleam of their tusks might almost have been seen from the city's outermost ramparts. Certainly the drunken fools within—drunk with their deep draughts of liberty—could hear the snarling and snapping of the approaching wolves, the baying of Big Bertha, the barking of her smaller sisters! But it would be like those crazy French to dance and sing and celebrate the overthrow of autocracy, while an autocracy the like of which no French King had ever exercised was on the eve of engulfing them.

So the German General Staff said, sneering, as it laid its plans for the final drive on Paris. They would start that drive on the night of July 14, while the fools were celebrating, when they were least expecting an attack. Probably most of them would be drunk. Oh, almost certainly! Their resistance would be weak, And for all time thereafter it would make an impressive tale for schoolbooks throughout the Pan-Germanized world, that democracy was dispatched in her last orgy of exultation.

As clearly as if he were not only present in the councils of German Headquarters, but present inside the thick round skulls about the council table, this boche attitude and intent was comprehended by the small frail man at Mormant, where his Headquarters then were.

On that night of July 14 he began the great offensive which never stopped until the whining boche was east of the Rhine!



His Intelligence Department told him that the German drive would probably begin at ten minutes past midnight. They might be quite wrong, but that was their guess. Foch was all-but sure they were not wrong; that it was not in German nature to reason other than as I have described.



Page 49

An hour before midnight the Germans were (doubtless) surprised by some lively action of French artillery. Strange! But it couldn't mean anything, of course! So the boche came on. The behavior of the French was not quite what he had expected; one thing after another happened that was not in his calculations. But that did not argue aught against the calculations! It was the exasperating habit of the French to do unexpected things. Most annoying! But not able to affect the outcome, of course.

On July 18th they got "more unexpected still"—they and sundry "green" troops from the flaccid, fatuous U. S. A.! Some "hounds of the devil" were let loose upon the gray-clad armies of righteousness. It was outrageous the way those sons of Satan fought! They rushed upon the legions of the Lord's anointed as if killing Germans were the noblest work a man could be about.

So many things happened that were not down on paper—in the plans of the German General Headquarters! It became distressingly evident that these Yanks knew as little, and cared as little, what was expected of them as the stupid Britishers or the mercurial French or the suicidal Belgians. They didn't know how to fight—they couldn't know—they had never done any fighting, and whom had they had to teach them warfare? They were absurd. They didn't know the simplest rules of war—they didn't know enough to surrender when they were surrounded, cut off, outnumbered. They fought on! They didn't know how to fight; but Lord! how they could kill Germans. And then they were such fools that their medical corps came out onto the battlefield and when they found a German who wasn't dead but was suffering, their doctors bound up his wounds and gave him water to quench his raging thirst, and left him for his own comrades to carry away and nurse—that, instead of gouging his eyes out with a bayonet's end or bashing in his skull with the butt of a gun! Strange people! They never could become good slaves of Kultur; so the wounded Germans whose agonies they had assuaged, rose up on their elbows and shot them dead.

In six hours the Allies, not only reinforced but recreated by this tide of new life, new eagerness, re-took twice as much ground on the Soissons-Rheims salient as the Germans had won in six days' desperate advance.

When the word to fight came to the men of the American army, it was less like a command to them than like a release, a long-desired permission. Many, if not most, of them had for nearly four years been straining at the leash which held them from the place where their sense of honor told them they should be.

[Illustration: Marshal Foch, Executive Head of the Allied Forces]

"They were superb," Marshal Foch has said, paying wholehearted tribute to them. "There is no other word. Our armies were fatigued by years of relentless struggle and the mantle of war lay heavily upon them. We were magnificently comforted by the virility of the Americans. The youth of the United States brought a renewal of the hope

that hastened victory. Not only was this moral factor of the highest importance, but also the enormous material aid placed at our disposal. Nobody among us will ever forget what America did.”

Page 50

Let us hope that neither will any among us ever forget for a single instant how much was paid for us in blood and anguish by those who held the beast at bay from us for long years before we put forth a stroke in our own defense or in friendly help or in support of our ideals.

That our aid arrived in time to help turn the tide, that our men were magnificent when their opportunity was given them, is cause not for vaunting ourselves, but only for gratefulness that our honor remains to us—that we have not had to accept life and liberty at other men's hands while our hands stayed in our pockets.

Our fighting men redeemed us in our own eyes; they restored our souls' dignity; for this we can never be grateful enough to them. But we can never be braggart about it. It might so easily have come too late!

On August 6, Foch was made Marshal of France.

And two days later, the British, on the Somme, launched the first really successful offensive of the war—not stopping a drive, but inaugurating one.

At last Foch was able to make war as he had for years contended that war should be made: The way to make war is to attack.

It was his plan, now that he had the men to make this possible, to keep the enemy busy by striking first at one point of the long line running from Belgium to the Piave, and then at another. And by the first of September the Allied line on the Western front was back where it ran in the deadlock of 1915-16 while the attack on Verdun was raging.

“General Pershing,” Foch has said, “wished to have his army concentrated, as far as possible, in an American sector. The Argonne and the heights of the Meuse were a sector hard to tackle. So I said to him: ‘All right; your men have the devil's own punch. They will get away with it. Go to it.’”

And they went! That was the famous St. Mihiel salient. The American infantry started their advance there on September 26. They went forward with a rush. On their left, the French advanced as rapidly, and on October 1 re-took St. Quentin, which the Germans had held since the beginning of the war. October 2 the British, operating on the left of the French, reached Cambrai which also had been in German hands for more than four years.

October 4 the Hohenzollern King of Bulgaria deserted his doomed allies and his throne and began looking for a place of refuge.

And on that day the Hohenzollern government at Berlin had so little relish for the situation on all fronts, that it besought the President of the United States “to take in hand the restoration of peace, acquaint all the belligerent states with this request and invite



them to send plenipotentiaries for the purpose of opening negotiations. . . . With a view to avoiding further bloodshed, the German Government requests the immediate conclusion of an armistice on land and water and in air.”

October 10, Austria and Turkey joined Germany in appealing for peace terms. Notes continued to pass between the Germanic capitals and Washington, D. C.



Page 51

But Foch fought on.

The Americans had cleared the last corner of the Argonne of German machine-gun nests and gunners, and were widening their offensive on the Meuse. The French had taken Laon, and were pushing on. The British had taken Lens and Cambrai and were advancing on Douai and Lille.

On the 23rd of October the President of the United States referred the matter of the armistice to the Allies. On the 29th, the Allied War Council met at Versailles to fix the armistice conditions.

(Foch meanwhile had launched an offensive against the Austrians on the Piave.)

Now, an armistice is supposed to be a cessation of hostilities for an agreed period, all combatants to remain as they were; if the parley for peace is not successful, the struggle is to resume where it paused, neither side having gained or lost, except as delay may or may not have been favorable to them.

Foch had not the smallest intention of granting the hard-pushed enemy that sort of an armistice—time to recuperate, to parley while Winter came on and postponed the resumption of his offensive until Spring. To do that meant to prolong the war probably another year, at enormous cost in lives, suffering, materials.

What he would grant would be an armistice in which the enemy, so far from keeping his positions would abandon them all and retire far behind the Rhine; in which the Allies, so far from keeping their positions, would follow the retreating enemy into his own country, and police it; in which the enemy, so far from resting on his sword, would hand it over—his swords, and his cannon, and his machine-guns, and his fleet and his submarines and his aircraft and his locomotives; in which he would release all Allied prisoners and not ask the release of any of his captured men.

The terms were the most ignominious ever imposed upon a prostrate enemy. The sole reason for referring to them as “armistice terms” was that peace terms are final and absolute, and these were not final—they would be made much worse if the Germans failed to satisfy their conquerors on every point.

When the Allied War Council had agreed with Foch on the armistice terms, he said:

“Within ten days or a fortnight I can break the German army in three, envelop a section of it, and take a million prisoners. Is there any condition which, in the opinion of any of you, could be imposed upon the enemy then, more conclusive than those of the armistice?”

No one could think of anything that might add a jot to the completeness of Germany's subjugation.



“Then, gentlemen,” answered the Commander-in-Chief, “we will proceed with the armistice. When all is won that can be won for the safety and honor of France and her Allies, I cannot for the sake of prestige or gratification or personal glory, order action that would cost the life of any parents’ young son, any little child’s father. I am a bereaved father. I think of the fathers and mothers whom further fighting must bereave. The enveloping advance which our armies could make in ten to fourteen days would cost us thousands of lives, many maimed men. If those things must be to bring the triumph of Right, we can bear them again as we have borne them these years past. But not for any other reason!”

Page 52

“The German high command,” he said later, at Treves, “was not ignorant of the fact that it faced a colossal disaster. When it surrendered, everything was prepared for an offensive in which it would infallibly have succumbed. The Germans were lost. They capitulated. That is the whole story.”

The German plenipotentiaries arrived at the French front at nine o'clock on the evening of November 7, and were escorted to the Chateau Francfort to spend the night. The next morning they were taken to Rethondes in the forest of Compiègne. There Foch (whose headquarters were at Semis, twenty-two miles nearer Paris) awaited them in his special train.

I may be quite wrong about his reason for receiving the German envoys in a railway carriage. But my surmise about it is that he did not want any fixed place associated with Germany's humiliation until those empowered to act for the defunct empire of William I came to the Gallery of Mirrors at Versailles and there, where the German empire had been proclaimed, witnessed the formal degradation before the representatives of all civilization of their nation that was built on the principle that Might is Right.

Next to this in poetic justice would have been to summon those plenipotentiaries before him at Senlis where their troops had committed such insensate horrors in September, 1914. But for reasons of his own (which we may be sure had nothing to do with courtesy) Foch went part way to meet them.

They complained, afterwards, that he received them coldly. If he was able to keep his manner cold, it was only because his self-command is so great. For no other man in the world knows so well as he the extent and the enormity of the crimes those men and their masters and their minions are guilty of. A primitive man, or any undisciplined modern man, would have leaped at their throats. Instead, Foch treated them as if they were human though not humane beings, and read to them slowly and in a loud voice, the terms of the armistice for which they had asked.

Mathias Erzberger, their spokesman, requested a cessation of hostilities whilst a courier carried the terms to German General Headquarters at Spa.

There the Kaiser, Hindenburg and others awaited particulars.

Foch declined to cease hostilities. He knew his enemy too well.

As soon as the Kaiser learned what the terms were, he abdicated his throne and fled his country. When the courier had returned, and the German plenipotentiaries once more presented themselves before Foch (again in his car) the “War Lord” of all the world was cowering in a Holland hiding place, his blubbing heir was in another, and a Social Republic had been declared in Berlin.

How the Hohenzollerns knew the terms of the armistice full twenty-four hours before the courier's return to German Headquarters at Spa, I have not seen explained or heard any one conjecture.



Page 53

From Rethondes to Spa is a matter of some two hundred and fifty miles, by road, and nearly forty-eight hours were consumed by the courier in covering that distance; he did not reach German Headquarters until ten o'clock Sunday morning, November 10. But the Kaiser abdicated and the Crown Prince renounced his claims to the throne, in Spa on Saturday morning, and they were both out of the country when the courier was received, his papers were read, and he was sent back with word to the plenipotentiaries to get amelioration of some conditions, if possible, but in any event to sign.

If the press reports are not in error as to the time the courier arrived at Spa, then the terms of the armistice must have been made known to the Hohenzollerns by telegraph or other quick communication very early on Saturday—probably as soon as the courier recrossed his own lines, which he could have done not many hours after quitting Compiègne forest. And Berlin seems to have known the terms at least as soon; for it was “the receipt of an urgent telegram” from Berlin, which the Kaiser is reported to have read with a shiver, that precipitated the abdication and flight.

These details are significant, even in so brief a sketch of Foch's life as this is; for in their very confusion and obscurity they tell a great story of what was either realized or feared in the German camps and in the German capital.

The magnitude of that which Foch was ready (and was by his enemies known to be ready) to do could not be better conveyed to us than by the panicky haste of those who knew themselves doomed, to make any concessions but at all costs to avert Foch's next move.

Shortly after midnight on Sunday, the German delegation (which had by Foch's orders been scrupulously served in the matter of their creature comforts) again presented itself before him in his railway car. Four hours were spent discussing the possibility of performing some of the conditions exacted, and modifications were made which in no degree altered the completeness of Germany's subjugation.

Then the papers were signed.

The Germans were punctiliously escorted to their own lines. I have not heard what Foch did; but it would not surprise me to learn that he went back to bed, and to sleep.

Perhaps, after giving orders for notifying his Government and her Allies, he sent a message to Madame Foch. But I am quite sure that otherwise he did not “celebrate,” except that he gave God thanks for the victory.

XVIII

DURING THE ARMISTICE AND AFTER



When the French army rode into Metz, Foch was not at its head. There may or there may not be another man who could and would have foregone that satisfaction; but certainly there are not many.

It does not seem probable that he avoided the occasion; although it would be like him to take advantage of some good excuse for absence if he thought there was one of his generals who specially deserved and desired the honor of that triumphant entry into reclaimed Metz.



Page 54

The attitude of Foch toward praise and plaudits and personal glory is, it seems to me, one of the supremely great things about him. I cannot imagine him “ducking” shyly away from any place where he knew he ought to for fear of salvos of acclaim; it would be as unsoldierly to him to dodge cheers as to flee from battle, if that way his duty lay. And, similarly, I cannot imagine him going anywhere to gratify his personal feelings and collect the praises due him, if there was an urgent reason for his being somewhere else.

[Illustration: Ferdinand Foch. Showing His Insignia as a Marshal of France, Consisting of Seven Stars on Each Sleeve and Four Rows of Oak Leaves on His Cap.]

The business, military and executive, of seeing that the armistice terms were fulfilled, was tremendous. Much of it devolved upon him and made inconceivably great requisitions on that genius he has “for the command of enormous material difficulties”—a genius he first displayed in getting the Ninth Army across the Marne in pursuit of the fleeing Germans, in September, 1914; and which he further evidenced in every succeeding phase, beginning with the reconstitution of all the forces fighting on the Yser.

The armistice period was a period of extreme demands on him. In it there was scant opportunity to go here or there with his triumphant armies. His work in the field, as a commanding general, had practically ceased with his removal from the Ninth Army after little more than a month of such command. From the time he took up his headquarters on the hill at Cassel, he became “a desk man”; it was no longer his function to execute orders; thenceforth he had the far more trying duty of issuing orders—a truly awful responsibility and one which demands much solitude, much soul-searching as well as map-pondering and other weighing of the ponderable which is so easily off-set by the imponderable, the unguessable.

There are few situations possible in life in which a man could be set apart with his soul and have so much demanded of his communings as was demanded of Foch from October, 1914, on to October, 1918. Every decision he made involved lives—hundreds and thousands or hundreds of thousands of lives—and not one pang of what must be suffered for each life laid down was strange to him; his only son was among the first to die for France and human liberties; and one of his daughters was widowed; the home he “left in the joyousness of a midsummer Sunday” was desolate, and it stood forever to him as a symbol of the homes in France and latterly, in the lands of all the Allies, with whose best-beloved he made this or that move in the war to preserve civilization. Nor were the lives he staked all that were involved; there were all that were incidentally menaced if his strategy failed—all that must suffer immediately and all that must suffer ultimately under the heel of the brute if the brute were not destroyed.

A man who has lived thus for more than four years, sharing the awfulness of his burden only with Almighty God, must needs have passed to a spiritual plane whereon such self-considerations as still sway the rest of us have ceased to obtrude themselves.



Page 55

The quest of personal glory is as hard to associate with Ferdinand Foch as with the little Maid of France. Both fought for God and for France and for a Cause, as their Voices directed them; that he has one of the best brains of modern or of all times, and that she did “not know her A, B, C,” sets them not so far apart as the materialist might imagine; for the thing that made both invincible was the power of their faith to create an unconquerable ardor in themselves and in their men. The churches in France wherein Foch knelt seeking guidance, beseeching strength, are likely to be doubly-consecrate, for ages, no less than those wherein Jeanne d’Arc prayed. She is venerated not as a military leader (though she was that) but as the one who awakened the soul of mediaeval, much-partitioned France and made possible the nationalization of her country. He will be venerated (by the great majority) not as “the first strategist of Europe,” but as the supreme incarnation of that spirit which makes modern France transcendent among nations vowed to democracy.

It is Foch’s “likeness” to the myriad soldiers of France that France adores—not his difference from the rest. Her *poilu* is her beau ideal of faith and courage, of patriotism and devotion to the principles of human rights, of cheerfulness and hopefulness, of invincibility in that his cause is just. France is too essentially democratic to esteem one set of characteristics in the mass of men and another set in the leaders of men. Foch and Joffre will live always in the hearts of their countrymen because, like Jeanne d’Arc, they have so much to say to everyone—so much that illumines every path in life wherever it is laid.

On the 19th of December, 1918, Joffre took his seat among the Immortals of the French Academy. The vacancy to which he had been elected was that made by the death of Jules Claretie who, before his admission to the Academy and before his absorption in the affairs of La Comedie Francaise, had written several books about the leaders of the French Revolution.

It was Ernest Renan who delivered the address of welcome to Claretie (in February, 1889) and he said that it was still too soon to know whether those leaders of whom Claretie had written were supremely justified or were not.

“You are young,” Renan said to the new Immortal, “and you will see this question solved, . . . some years hence it will be known; if in ten or twenty years France is prosperous and free, faithful to right, strong in the friendship of the free peoples of the world, then the cause of the young Revolutionists is won; the world will enjoy the fruits of their endeavor without having had to know their unripe bitterness.”

Joffre quoted this part of Renan’s address, in taking his seat. Claretie had not lived quite long enough to see, save with the eye of faith, that day Renan foretold; but Claretie’s successor in the French Academy had seen it! And it was like him to say:

Page 56

“I think, gentlemen, that in doing me the honor of receiving me into your august body, your desire is to pay homage to that glorious French army which has proved that the soul of France is steadfast for the rights of man, even unto death that men may be free.”

Accepting the honor as paid through him to the men who had proved the worth of that Liberty, Equality and Fraternity the Revolution declared and decreed, Joffre asked permission to name those to whom, he deemed, the gratitude of France and of France's Immortals was due. And first among them he named Foch.

This was gracious; it was generous; but it was more than that. And though Joffre went on to name many leaders, many armies, many moral forces incarnate in many men as co-responsible for victory, no one could know quite so well as he how completely the France of which Renan dreamed as a glorious possibility, is realized and typified in the man whose name leads all the rest as having saved not France only but the liberties of mankind.

Bonaparte, although he was not French (save technically) and not a democrat, captured the hearts of France in spite of all he cost them; because he aggrandized France, made her supreme in many things besides extent and power. It is instinctive in every Frenchman (or woman, or child!) to revere anyone who does new credit to the name of France or brings new glory to it; for the passionate love of country is the primary religion of the French—they may or may not have another, but unless they are totally renegade they have that faith, that devotion.

In Ferdinand Foch they have a great leader who is in no sense an “accident” (as Bonaparte was), a sporadic development in their midst, a spectacular growth on an exotic stem. They have, rather, a quintessential Frenchman of to-day, even more widely representative of his countrymen than Lincoln was of ours.

“The fame of one man,” says Henri Bordeaux, “is nothing unless it represents the obscure deeds of the anonymous multitude.”

This is a typically modern idea, and typically French. France of to-day would not deny the worth of any development because it was singular, isolate; but what she is particularly interested in is the possibilities of development along the lines that are followed by the many and are open (broadly speaking) to all. Guynemer, for a shining instance, is the idol of every schoolchild in France, not for his daring alone, nor for the number of boche birds of prey he brought down; but because wealth and influence were unavailing to get him an opportunity beyond what the poorest, humblest youngster might have got in the same indomitable way; and because frail health and puny strength could not debar him from the sublimest exploits of daring for France. His circumstance—physical and material—tended to bind him to the soft places of earth. His desire to serve France gave him wings to fly far beyond the eagles. He has no grave. He rides

the empyrean for all time, to tell the youth of France how surmountable is everything to one who loves his country and the rights of mankind.

Page 57

Foch is of less legendary sort, but he, too, epitomizes France; and he will be increasingly potent as time goes on, irrespective of whether the sword is or is not superseded in the affairs of men.

“The obscure deeds of the anonymous multitude” are much like his own obscure deeds prior to the great day when France needed him and found him ready.

Every black-smocked schoolboy in France loitering along historic highways to his gray-stuccoed school, may feel in himself a Foch of to-morrow—and quicken his steps so that he may make himself a little more ready for his recitation.

Every youth entering upon his military training must find in Foch a comrade whose influence is all toward thoroughness, “Learn to think,” was Foch’s personal admonition for long years before he thus charged his students.

Every teacher toiling to impart not knowledge alone but the thirst for knowledge, the zeal to use it nobly, has in Foch such a fellow as the annals of that great profession do not duplicate. Other teachers may have influenced more pupils; but no human teacher ever saw such a demonstration of his principles—to the saving of mankind.

Every good father in France may see himself in Foch—and especially every father who gave his son for France and her ideals.

Every man whose work in life calls him to lead other men, in peace or in war, has supreme need of Foch; because Foch embodies those principles of leadership to which men are now responsive, those ideals toward which they are striving. Particularly as a coordinator is Foch great—and potent for the future. There is, probably, no other kind of service so important to the world’s welfare, now, as that of bringing men together; making them see that fundamentally they are all, if they are right-minded, fighting for the same thing; and that in union there is strength.

As a scholar, Foch is brilliant besides being profound. As a man, he is simple—and France admires simplicity; he is elegant—and France loves the elegance that is the expression of fine thinking, fine feeling; he is modest of his own attainments, and proud of France’s glory.

For nearly every great commander, victory in arms has led to power in the state.

Foch is a statesman as preeminently as he is a warrior. His counsel was as weighty in the peace settlement as his strategy was in winning the war.

But one cannot conceive him using his prestige, military or diplomatic, to increase his personal power.



He has served God and man; he has served his country and his conviction of right. He is content therewith—just as he hopes millions of men are content who have done the same according to their best ability.

“I approach the twilight of my life,” he wrote not long ago, “with the consciousness of a good servant who will rest in the peace of his Lord. Faith in eternal life, in a good and merciful God, has sustained me in the hardest hours. Prayer has illumined my soul.”



Page 58

In presenting to Foch the baton of a Marshal of France, President Poincare recalled certain definitions he had often heard Foch reiterate: "War is the department of moral force; battle, the struggle between two wills; victory, the moral superiority of the conqueror, the moral depression of the conquered."

"This moral superiority," said the President of the French Republic to the new Marshal of France, "you have tended like a sacred flame."

Always, the tone of tribute to Foch is one of veneration for the greatness of his soul and his preeminent ability to represent and to lead his people.

"You are not," President Poincare went on, "of those who let themselves be downcast by danger; neither are you of those whom victory dazzles. You do not believe that we are near the end of our efforts and our sacrifices. You guard against optimism as much as against depression."

This he said to Foch, in the field, on August 23, 1918, when the fruits of victory though in sight were not yet within grasp.

Had the presentation been three months later, President Poincare would (I think) have spoken not differently; better even than before, he would have known that Foch is not "of those whom victory dazzles"; and not less clearly than before would he have perceived that Foch does not "believe that we are near the end of our efforts and our sacrifices."

Foch may well feel that he has done his utmost for his country and for mankind, in the crisis for which he prepared himself and which he met with such superb faith in the triumph of Right; but he certainly does not feel that he has ushered in the millennium; he knows what other demands there are and will be upon the souls of men, on their devotion to their country, their perception of truth and honor, and their ardor and ability to serve humanity. He knows that not France alone but every nation has need to-day and henceforth of leaders who will do just what he did: personify the highest ideals of their people and prepare themselves to defend those ideals intelligently, unselfishly, devoutly.

He has established a new standard in leadership. Far from culminating an old order, he has inaugurated a new—an order which everyone may join who wills to serve. Its motto is: "Right is Might; believe in the power of Right; learn to uphold it; strengthen others, as they come in contact with you, to meet the enemies of Right and to vanquish them; never forget that the moving power of the world is *soul*, and the laws of the soul were made by God."

Too deep a student of history, too keen an analyst of human nature to entertain any illusions about the enemy he has conquered but not converted, Foch knows that if what



he has been privileged to do for France and for her allies is to have any lasting value, there must be a league of freedom-loving peoples as strong and as united to preserve peace as they were to win it; and that this league must be supported by a general morale not one whit less devoted to the end in view than was the morale which won the war.



Page 59

Too wise to feel that the victory is his save as he was the leader who re-organized millions and showed them how to make their conviction of Right prevail, he is also too wise to wish that his were the power to create the world anew. He knows that not only will the to-morrows of mankind be as the multitudes of mankind make them, but that they should be not otherwise directed; this, of all things, is what the overthrow of autocracy means.

He helped us to shake off the Beast who sought to impose his will on all the world. Briefly, at least, that Menace is restrained—thanks to the indomitable will of many nations and to the genius of Ferdinand Foch.

It is for us—every one of us!—to say what shall come out of the security that Foch and his armies have maintained for us at so great a price; how long we shall maintain it and how honorably we shall use it.

And to us, with this sacred obligation on us, Foch would say:

“It is not enough to mean well, to desire that righteousness shall prevail; it is not enough even to be willing to give all, should it be required of you. You must *know how* to serve your ideals, your principles. Victory always goes to those who deserve it by possessing the greatest power of will and intelligence.”