WAR PUZZLES

British Generalship Before the Judgment Bar of History By Philip Gibbs

For many years after this war, perhaps in every generation that folneedlessly sacrificed in certain acmade from time to time, and that victory might have been gained at less cost if the strategy and tactics of the High Command had been more scientific, and quicker in understanding the enemy's weakness or strength in certain places on certain days. There is no man at present who can give exact judicial decisions upon the particular conduct of the generals in the fields, whoever they may be, because a mass of minute and technical evidence is required before there can be a summing up of defence or blame a series of battles like those fought on the British front, and that is hardly available. All that is possible at the present time is to analyze in a broad and general way the leading qualities of our command, and to touch upon some of the weaknesses and failures of the system, character and actions of the commanders. this article L propose to put down. the conclusions I have reached about British generalship, as far as I was able to observe it during the war. The official war correspondent with the British armies in the field. whom I had the honor to be one, had considerable opportunity of gauging the quality of the generals in command, because we visited their headquarters constantly during the progress of battles, had a close knowledge of their staffs, and enjoyed personal friendship with many of them

or invited us to theirs. From the point of view of personal character, no body of men could be more admirable, as great gentlemen of the old-fashioned English typewhich is a very good type too, in its own way. They had the easy dig-f nity of men who belonged to good English, Irish and Scottish families, and who, for the most part, had been dedicated from youth to the profes-Egypt and South Africa, and had ed during the South African war, and the premier branch of the army. This was noticeable by the number on his white horse in the Peninsular mies were worked like clock-work of cavalry generals among the military chiefs, Sir John (afterward Old Guard, or even as when Lord Lord) French and Sir Douglas Haig, Roberts, "Our Bobs," came perched both our commanders-in-chief, being like a little old falcon on his big of the cavalry school of training and charger. Nine men out of ten in tradition. In a war which depend- the ranks did not even know the that was his food. The motor sup-

OUCH! CORNS! LIFT CORNS OFF



sore, touchy corn off with



Freezone on that bothersome corn,

every hard corn, soft corn, or corn personal influence among his armies neys, and strengthening those organs, at a time when our armies had been between the toes, and calluses, with- but for one defect in his character, they have made many an old person grievously weakened. by all those

other subjects which enter largely mand. He was intensely shy and err, and some of them due to sheer, into modern warfare, provided he has reserved, shrinking from publicity in simple, regrettable stupidity. the greater quality of generalship, in- an almost morbid way, and holding cluding personal magnetism as an in- himself aloof from the human side fluence over the imagination of his of war. He was constitutionally troops, rapidity and sureness of judg- unable to make a dramatic gesture

Mentally they had similar qual-

ship, which, above the rank of brigadier, works far from the actual line grey hair and experience. They tions, to the torment of the adjutants were industrious, able, conscientious and to the scorn of the troops. This men, never sparing themselves long prejudice against the staff was stackwho came as guests to our own mess hours of work for a life of ease, and ed high by the fires of passion and because they were willing to sacrifice despair. A good deal of it was uttheir own lives, if need be, for their terly unjust, and even the jaunty country's sake, they demanded equal young staff officer, with red tabs and willingness of sacrifice from every of- polished boots, was often not quite ficer and man under their authority, such a fool as he looked, but a gal-

No General with Magnetism. It is unfortunate that among these sion of arms, like their fathers and British generals there was not one grandfathers, as a hereditary caste. whose personality had that mysteri-Many of them had served in India, ous but essential quality of great generalship-inspiring large bodies gained distinction first of all in their of men with exalted enthusiasm, deyoung days by personal gallantry, votion and faith. It did not seem and then by administrative talent or to matter very much to the men prestige in their own profession. whether an army commander, a The "social pull" had been abandon- corps commander or a divisional commander stood in the roadside to see certainly in this war there were no them march past on their way to batsociety favorites in our High Com- tle, or on their way back. They mand owing their position to petti- saw one of thes sturdy men in his coat or aristocratic influence in ex- "brass hat," with his ruddy face and alted places. Instead, there was a white moustache, but no thrill passcertain clannishness of command, ed down their ranks, no hoarse due to the influence of the cavalry as cheers broke from them because he was there, as when Wellington sat method and organization, and the ar-

war, or as when Napoleon saluted his

ed less upon cavalry (as far as the name of their army general or of the ply columns and ammunition dumps the most perfectly organized battle Western Front was concerned) than corps commander. It meant noth- were organized to the last item of ef- of which I know anything, and was a any war in history, this perhaps was ing to them. They did not face ficiency. Our map department was great and complete victory, owing unfortunate, though no commander-death with more passionate courage magnificent, and the admiration of entirely to preliminary preparations in-chief needs deep' technical know; to win the approval of a military idol. They did not lace magnificent, and the admiration of entirely to preliminary preparations the French. Our intelligence branch of all details. Sir Herbert Plumer ledge of engineering, chemistry and That was due partly to the conditions was, as a rule, excellent, and often had the advantage of being advised of modern warfare, which make it almost uncanny in the accuracy of its by a Chief of Staff who had real gedifficult for generals of high rank to information about the enemy's dis- nius, and was, in my humble opinion, get into direct personal touch with position and plans. So that the staff the one sustaining brain of the Brittheir troops, and to the masses of men engaged. But those difficulties was not altogether hopeless in its efcould have been overcome by a gen- with sharp tongues and a sense of Sir John Harington, who had a brain eral of impressive personality, able injustice in their hearts, made out, like a sharp sword, an immense to stir the imaginations of men by with pardonable blasphemy, in their grasp of detail, and a fine nobility of words of fire spoken at the right dugouts. time, by deep human sympathy, and Nevertheless, there was a good burning endeavor. Colonel Mitchby the luck of victory seized by dar- deal to criticise justly enough, and ell, directing the intelligence branch ing adventure against great odds. No there is no doubt that British gene- of the Second Army, was also a man such man appeared on the Western raiship and staff work made many of outstanding ability, and many oth-Front until Foch obtained the su- mistakes, some of them no doubt un- er staff officers in that army were preme command. On the British avoidable, because it is human to brilliant and able men. front there was no general with the gift of speech— a gift too much de-spised by our British men of action Strong Words of a -or with a character and prestige which could raise him to the service rank in popular imagination. During the retreat from Mons, Sir John He Says Dodd's Kidney Pills Saved French had a touch of that personal power-his presence meant something to the men because of his repu- James Black at the Age of Eighty- the series of battles in Flanders durtation in South Africa; but after-

ward, when trench warfare began

was washed out in blood and mud. Haig's Shyness His Weak Point. Sir Douglas Haig, who followed French, had the disadvantage of inheriting the disillusionment of armies who saw now that war on the end beyond a vista of dreadful years. Sir Douglas Haig, in his general headquarters at St. Omer, and afterward at Montrevil, near the coast, had the affection and loyalty of the life to Dodd's Kidney Pills, and nevstaff officers. A man of remarkably er tires of singing their praises. good looks, with fine delicate fea- "They are worth twice their weight instantly that corn stops hurting, tures strengthened by the firm line in gold," he says. then you lift it off with the fingers.
No pain at all! Try it!

Why wait? Your druggist sells a tiny bottle of Freezone for a few cents, sufficient to rid your feet of raised him to the supreme height of the suprementation of the supreme height of the suprementation of the suprementati

lost place in their admiration.

rificial actions. -containing impracticable instruc- battles, grievously at fault,

now doing his duty -about equal to the work of a boy clerk-with real industry and an exaggerated sense tribute to many of our staff officers at divisional, corps and army headquarters, because of their industry, seen them, hundreds of times, working desperately for long hours, withfighting men should get their food should support their actions, and the troops in reserve move up to their relief at the proper time and place. All the administrative side of our war was quite marvellous in its machines. The transport was good beyond all words of praise, and there was one thing which never failed to reach poor old Tommy Atkins, un-

His Lafe.

Dodd's Kidney Pills.

and the daily routine of slaughter under German gunfire, when our artillery was weak, and when our in- "I would have had to undergo an by artillery, with hundreds of brooks fantry was reduced to attack fixed operation, or be dead only for Dodd's overflowing their broken banks and positions of terrible strength, with- Kidney Pills." These are strong with incessant rains for five months, out adequate support and not a dog's words. But Mr. James Black, an old those attacks were murderous to our chance of luck against such odds, gentleman who moved here recently men. And there was the most horthe prestige of the commander-in- from Maldstone, makes the state- rible mess of blood and mud on the chief faded from men's minds and he ment without hesitation.

"I suffered from Kidney trouble which has ever been seen in the hisand pain in my back," Mr. Black goes tory of war. The enemy was slaughon to relate, "and a friend told me to tered in immense numbers, and the try Dodd's Kidney Pills. When I had battles of Flanders were part of the ifsed half a box I began to pass sand frightful process of breaking the and gravel. I have half a pound of it German spirit, but the cost to the

that I could not sleep at night. I used 14 or 15 boxes of Dodd's Kidney ills, and now I am cured of all these

Mr. Black who is in his eighty-fifth year, is confident that he owes his

and the tragic condition of his com- shout "I feel young again."

Early Desire to Gain Worthless

command of the British armies on salient, jutting out from their front clared, broke the enemy to bits.

evolted against these massacres of centrated from all points, instead of Thirtieth. They had unfailing physical heir youth and they became embit- having to disperse his fire during a courage—though courage is not put tered against the generalship and general attack on a wide front. In to the test much in modern general- staff work which directed these sac- the days of trench warfare, when the enemy artillery was much stronger liant" fellow and were inclined to attack impossible positions, sent down count; and both generalship and nius. quick to allow young men to gain documents—called by an ugly name officers who know anything of those manding the Canadian corps and af- fought-their way to victory.

Men Had to Die That They Might

After all, our generals had to learn their lessons, like the private soldier been seen before-and it was bad for in the early days of the war, and was talion officer, who died so they might improved, and British generalship was less rash in optimism and less of its importance. Personally and rigid in ideas. I am certain from ship and staff work of the Second efficiency and devotion to duty. And fection as any human organization during the progress of battle I have may be, and all British officers who served in that army will agree. Sir Herbert Plumer did, I think, more out much rest or sleep, so that the nearly approach the position of a leader of men by personality, than and munitions, so that the artillery any other commander I can mention, except perhaps General Birdwoodknown to all his men as "Birdie," because of his dapper figure-who commanded the Australian . corps. Plumer's old bulldog face and blue eyes were known to his men, and they liked him and had faith in him, chiefly because he was anxious for their comfort and never "let them down" in all the spade work that must be done to insure success in battle. The battles of Wytschaete and Messines, on June 7th, 1917, was character which was like a flame of

> The effect of such staff work was apparent throughout the army, and there was very little of that hostility Guelph Veteran between battalion officers and the staff which was violent in expression elsewhere on the front. Unfortunately, by tragic frong, the

staff of the Second Army had to di-

rect its energy to the organization of Five is Shouting the Praises of the ing 1917 in co-operation with the Great Canadian Kidney Remedy, Fifth Army, under General Gough, on its left. And owing to the state Guelph, Ont., May 9th (Special) - of the ground, mangled into chaos way from Ypres to Passchendaele youth of the British empire was ap-"I also had cramps in my legs so palling. The Second Army organtion to detail-startling in its contrast to the handling of other troops -but it was an organization of martyrdom to English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh, Australian and Canadian ties in that black year of 1917.

In a previous article I have already dealt with the episode of the osses, the absence of men of our

best fighting divisions sent to the re-, ders. General Elles, commanding lief of Italy, and the lack of defen- the Tank Corps, proved himself to be sive lines strong enough to check a man of extraordinary merit in orthe onrush of such overwhelming ganization of those new fighting maodds as the enemy launched against chines, with a simple nobility of soul us when he attacked with one hun- which endeared him to all his offidred and fourteen divisions to our cers. forty-eight. During these bad days There were many other able, constaff work was strained and broken scientious, gallant men commanding

for a time, owing to the break-down our divisions. What mainly was of communications between the fight- wrong with British generalship was ing units and headquarters, and the system which put the high comwhat orders were given were often mand into the hands of a group of late, contradictory and impossible of men belonging to the old school of fulfilment ewing to a situation which war, unable, by reason of their age changed from hour to hour. But in and traditions, to get away from due time-in the last nick of time- rigid methods and to become elastic In the early days the outstanding the enemy was checked, and British in face of new conditions. ment, and the intuitive sense of ac- before a multitude, or to say easy, fault of our generals, it seems to me, generalship redeemed its reputation Our staff college had been hopetion which belongs alone to genius. stirring things to officers and men was their desire to gain ground by the wonderful sweep back, when, lessly inefficient in its system of Physically many of our generals were whom he reviewed. His shyness which was utterly worthless when in August of last year, after Foch training, if I am justified in forming curiously alike. They were men and reserve prevented him also, I gained. They organized small at had struck his deadly blow on the such an opinion from some specimens

They Were Justified.

of troops by their smartness in salut- manner, was like a red rag to a bull titude, with the result that they were more blunders than ours, in spite of France and Flanders. ing and on parade, which did not ac- among battalion officers and men, shot to pieces, instead of adopting, all their science and all their power. conservative by political tradition dressed in a well-cut tunic and fawn- sharp and terrible blow. The bat- I must not be thought to deny the vative also in military ideas and polished top boots, into the supreme 1915, cost us thousands of casual- sional generals, though in my opinmethods. They distrusted the "bril- folly of "the Staff" which made men ties, and gave us no gain of any ac- ion they did not possess great ge- the faith and spirit of sacrifice of Simpson.

terward the Third Army, was a man of firm will and some audacity of imagination, and many qualities of the great soldier. General Holdane. of the Sixth Corps, who formerly commanded the glorious old Third and the young staff officer, in condities, is a man of keen intellect, vital tions of warfare which had never enerby and ruthless purpose. General Harper, of the Fourth Corps, Ball, Mrs. Frederick Bicknell, of passed their examinations. Mrs. N. having no mercy whatever for the lant fellow who had proved his pluck the private soldier and the young bat- known affectionately as "Uncle Har- Boise, Idaho, visited her cousin, O. Bunker, Ottawa, is the guest of her per," when he commanded the Fifty. Ball, on Thursday. Robert Mott is parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Smythe, learn. As time went on staff work first Highland Division, of deathless laid up this week with an attack of Sunnyside. Mrs. Wyman Rowe is renown in this war, impressed me as sciatica. a soldier of strong character and decision, and had the trust of his men. with utter honesty, I can pay high what I know of war that the general- General Nugent, of the Thirty-sixth men who sing of "mansions in the al of his cousin, Dr. H. Orser, Army, commanded by General Sir Hickey, of the Sixteenth (Irish) Di-(Ulster) Division, and General skies."

turned fifty, with square jaws, tan think, from knowing as much as he tacks against strong positions, dread- Marne, with French, American and produced by it, who had the brains ruddy faces, searching and rather ought to have known about the opin- fully costly to take, and after the British troops, the whole British line of canaries and the manners of Potsstern grey eyes, closely cropped hair lons of officers and men and getting desperate valor of men had seized a moved forward and gained a series dam. There was also a close corpogrowing white, with a little white direct information from them. Un- few yards of mangled earth, found of victories by repeated hammer ration among the officers of the moustache neatly trimmed on the up- fortunately, too, he held the supreme that they had made another small strokes which, as Marshal Foch de- regular army, so that they took the General Horne, of the First Army; the Western front when, in the bat- in a V-shaped wedge, so that ff was Those last battles, lasting from thus keeping out brilliant young men General Byng, of the Third Army; the-fields of the Somme and Flanders, a death-trap for the men who had to August 8th to November 11th, were of the newer armies, whose brain-General Rawlinson, of the Fourth of Picardy and Artois, there was not hold it . This was done again and fine in generalship, and for the first power, to say the least of it, was on Army; General Haldane, of the Sixth much chance for wring strategy, but again, and I remember one distin- time Sir Douglas Haig and his army a higher level than that of the Sand-Army; General Halken, of the Elev-enth Corps; General Snow, of the and blood of men against fortress irony, remembering how many of his the run by a series of strategical and where the unprofessional soldier ob-Seventh Corps, with many divisional positions—the German trench sys- men had died, "Our generals must technical operations well devised, tained a chance of high command or generals like De Lisle, Nogent, tems, twenty-five miles deep in tun- have their little V's at any price, to and carried out to success with the staff authority, he proved the value Braithwaite, Ferguson, Congreve and nelled earth-works and machine-gun justify themselves at G.H.Q."

Pinnie, could all be described in that dugouts—when the immensity of in the battles of the Somme they boys who had come out to fill up the way; in spite of marked individual casualties among British troops was attacked isolated objectives on nar- gaps in the old ranks, and with the blindingly—in the able generalship difference, as all mother's sons differ out of all proportion to their gains row fronts, so that the enemy swept gallant aid of two American divi- of the Australian corps, in which of ground, so that our men's spirits our men with fire by artillery con- sions-the Twenty-seventh and the most of the commanders, like Generals Hobbs, Monash and others, were men in civil life before the war. The same thing was observed in the Canadian corps, General Currie, the So, after ar., in spite of all criti- corps commander, having been an There were times when the sense than ours and when his infantry cism, British generalship was justi- estate agent, and many of his high of battle, unless it "slips" in the of bitterness became intense, to the strength was enormously greater, our fied, and they gained the last victo- officers having had no military trainwrong direction. They were stern point of fury, so that a young staff generals insisted upon the British ries over the German generals—those ing of any scientific importance be-

think him unsafe; and they were not conflicting orders, issued a litter of staff work, in the opinion of most Sir Julian Byng, formerly com- blunders and frightful slaughter, old Cataraqui boy, who has been

Notes from Bath. May 4th, to Mr. and Mrs. Bichard mon Arm, B.C. Evelyn Kiser, Tor-Osborne, a son. The schooner Mer- onto, is here with her mother who rill, which was on a shoal near Fair- has been quite ill. Warden Edwards haven, N.Y., will be here in a day or and Norman Kelly, at Queen's and two with a cargo of coal for Overton, E. Riley and H. Cooke at Guelph,

The devil has a mortgage on some where he went to attend the funer-

Herbert Plummer , was as near per- vision, were fine divisional comman- ligion a convenience or a virtue. every day without use of words.



doing hospital work overseas for over two years, was calling on some old acquaintances here last week. He Bath, May 8 .- Born on Sunday, was on his way to his home in Salstaying with Mrs. D. Smith. R. Curran has returned from New Jersey.



"I Do Wish Vacation Were Here So I Could Get a Rest"

66T AM so tired.

"This teaching seems to keep one's nerves at high tension all day long.

"The children do worry me terribly at times.

"They seem to lose all interest in their lessons in the Spring, and how I will ever get that Entrance Class through their exams. is more than I can guess.

"If I could only rest and sleep at night it would not be so bad. But I cannot. My appetite is gone, and I feel completely discouraged.

"I believe it is all from my nerves. The strain of this school is too much for me. I wonder if Dr. Chase's Nerve Food would do me any good?

"Strange I never thought of it before, for I know that lots of teachers depend on it in the Spring to carry them through and keep up their energy during this trying

"If I could only get the mothers to give it to their nervous, irritable children, I am sure that would help some, too.

"It is worth while trying, anyway, when one gets into such a nervous and worrying condition as I am, and I do not see why it should not help me as well as others."

Dr. Chase's Nerve Food is the greatest of nerve restorers, 50 cents a box, 6 for \$2.75, all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Limited, Toronto. The portrait and signature of A. W. Chase, M.D., the famous Receipt Book author, are on every box of the genuine.