

# WAR HISTORIES APPEAR WHILE THE FIGHTING STILL GOES ON

## FRANK H. SIMONDS TRIES TO RECORD VERDICT OF POSTERITY

The First Volume of His History of the War Contains View of an Impartial Spectator—Conan Doyle's History Favors the English



FRANK H. SIMONDS Photo copyright by Arnold.

"ONE of the pleasantest recollections of my childhood," remarked Doctor McFabre as he settled himself into an easy chair, "is connected with a contemporary history of the Civil War. My father bought the history from a book agent and I was allowed to look at the pictures as a reward for good behavior. I was about five years old at the time. One afternoon I was lying flat on my stomach on the floor with the book in front of me. I had a pencil with which I was drawing a line around the portraits of the generals. My brother protested and told me my father would spank me. I recall that I replied, 'No, he won't,' with perfect confidence in his tolerant sympathy."

"I did not know Conan Doyle was a historian," said Doctor McFabre.

"History writing is only one of his many activities," I explained. "He was head physician in a military hospital in South Africa in the Boer War and when he returned to England he wrote a history of that conflict, which was widely read at the time of its publication. His first novel was a semi-historical study of the Mormons in America. 'The White Company' is also a historical novel. He has written poetry and plays besides creating Sherlock Holmes, the most popular detective in fiction for a century. If you want to read some rattling stories of the Napoleonic wars you should get his 'Adventures of Gildard.' They will show you what war was like when it was fought by men with a sense of chivalry. As I have looked over the second volume of his history of the part the British are taking in the present war I have regretted that he did not use his dramatic imagination in telling his story. He describes what happened in 1915 in a narrative that is devoid of color and difficult to read because of the multitude of details. He looks at the British actions with a microscope and tells us what regiments were engaged in the various actions, who commanded them and what they did. It is important, however, that there should be a record of these things. The record will be interesting to military students of the technique of fighting. And the American who wishes to get a friendly and sympathetic view of the part the British troops have played on the continent will find it worth while."

He was silent for a moment or two. A whimsical smile crept over his features as he added:

"And I didn't get a spanking."

"Was it a good history?" Dick Owen wanted to know.

"Better and more complete histories have been written since," said he, "but as I have looked over the volume in later years—I have it in my library now, lead pencil marks and all—I have thought it served a useful purpose when it was published."

"I have seen it announced that histories of the present war are already on the market," said Owen, as he turned toward me. "Are they worth reading?"

"Of course it is too early to write a definitive history," said I. "The war is still in progress and the testimony regarding certain actions that are already completed is conflicting. Years are likely to pass before we know the exact truth about them. Yet there is sufficient interest in the subject to justify assembling all that is known and putting it in the form of a connected narrative, subject to correction as our knowledge increases. I have on my table now the first volume of Frank H. Simonds's history of the war as a whole and the second volume of Conan Doyle's account of the actions of the British in Flanders."

"You don't mean to say that you have not heard of him?" I asked. "He is the one American newspaper writer whose articles on the war raised him into prominence from the beginning. He was the editor of the New York Evening Sun in 1914 and his editorial articles showed such a comprehensive knowledge of military history and such a grasp of the great issues involved in the war that they were quoted in all parts of the country. Early in the spring of 1915 he went over to the New York Tribune and was put in charge of the editorial page to continue his commentaries on the war. The first volume of his history carries us to May, 1915. But before he begins to discuss the fighting he gives us a brief resume of the political events in Europe since 1870. His discussion of the history of the twelve fateful days that preceded the actual declaration of war is in a different temper from most that has been written. Former Ambassador Morgenthau, for example, wrote last Sunday that Germany had decided on the war weeks before the Austrian Archduke was assassinated and he put the entire blame for the cataclysm on the Germans. Mr. Simonds, however, after remarking that volumes have been published to prove that this nation or that was most anxious to preserve the peace, remarks that it seems probable that in the future all these details will be forgotten by the historian who will perceive that the twelve days were not significant, as all hope for peace had expired long before; and he says that the statesmen who frantically labored for peace were as important as the medicine man who invokes charms to check the approach of a cyclone. I know there are persons who hold a different view, but I am inclined to think that this is the correct one."

"Then you think that Germany did not start the war?" asked Owen.

"In a broad sense, no. In a narrow sense, yes," I said. "The war grew out of the conflicting selfishness of the nations of Europe. Events were shaping themselves for years before the first of August, 1914, which made war inevitable. Far-sighted men had long been aware of the condition, but they had hoped the inevitable could be escaped. If the nations had been prepared for war as Germany was prepared the conflict would not have lasted three years. Mr. Simonds, writing in America, and so able in a way to find that verdict of a foreigner, which

"I thought that Sir John French did splendid work," said Doctor McFabre.

"The British thought so, too, at first," said I. "But you know that they displaced him and put General Haig in his place. Mr. Simonds, who has followed the war from the beginning and has visited the battlefields and talked with the French officers, gives us the benefit of something broader than the British view—about their own achievements. When he writes we have to be revised in the light of fuller knowledge when the war is over. But his book deserves to take rank as a most brilliant and comprehensive study of the great movements of the early months of the war. If the succeeding volumes fulfill the promise of the first one, America can boast of a historian of whom any nation might be proud."

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**HIMSELF, HIMSELF AND MYSELF.** A romance. By Ruth Sawyer. New York: Harper & Bros., \$1.35.

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**THE WAY OF THE AIR.** A description of modern aviation. By Edgar C. Middleton. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, \$1.00.

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The latest volume in Lippincott's series of "Stories All Children Love" is Kingsley's "Water Babies." As is told in an introduction by Louise R. Bull, the story was written for Kingsley's youngest boy, after he had written other stories for his three elder children. The distinguishing feature of this new edition is eight colored illustrations by Maria L. Kirk. Five of them show the baby beneath the water. They are delicate in coloring and poetic in imagination. They will increase the delight of every one who reads the famous book.

**THE WATER BABIES.** By Charles Kingsley. With illustrations in color by Maria L. Kirk. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, \$1.35.

**A Preacher of Optimism**

As a logical sequel to Susanna Cecrot's "What to Eat and When" comes her latest book, "Growth of Silence." The former contained suggestions for building up a strong and healthy body; the latter contains suggestions for developing a strong mind and the proper concept of life. Optimism is the keynote of the book, and that doctrine is preached not for the good of the individual alone, but for the good of the universe through the individual. The one great duty we owe to humanity, the author asserts, is the constant cultivation of the habit of happiness.

**GROWTH IN SILENCE.** By Susanna Cecrot. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$1.50.

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**A TOP-FLOOR IDYL.** By George Van Schaick. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., \$1.50.

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**A CHASTE MAN.** By Louis Wilkinson. New York: Alfred Knopf, \$1.50.

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