

**THE LAST FOUR
MONTHS: HOW THE
WAR WAS WON**

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The Last Four Months: How the War Was Won by Sir F. Maurice

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SIR F. MAURICE

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PREFACE

Who won the war? is a question that has been often asked. In the countries of all the great Allied Powers there have been found those who answered it to their own satisfaction as patriots, because it is easy to demonstrate that the war would not have been won, as and when it was won, had any of those countries failed to do what it actually achieved. Most of us, however, are agreed that victory was the result of combination, and I am convinced that that opinion will grow stronger the better the story is known. During the struggle the news we received of the doings of the armies of our Allies was naturally even more limited than was that of the doings of our own men, and it was not easy to allot to each its place in the general scheme.

In this book I have sought to give a picture of Foch's great campaign and to sketch in due proportion the parts which went to make up the whole. I have reduced my descriptions of the battles to the simplest terms, because my object is to explain the broad causes of success and of failure, and there is danger, in entering into details of operations on so vast a scale, of losing sight of the wood for the trees. As no story of a campaign can be complete unless

Preface

it describes the intentions, aims and feelings of the enemy, at least at the most critical periods, I have collected the best information available on these points from captured documents or from publications in Germany. Fortunately, there has in that country been considerable public discussion between Hindenburg, Ludendorff and their critics as to the conduct of the former during the period with which I am here chiefly concerned, and material has not been lacking.

F. MAURICE.

London, July 10, 1919.

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CHAPTER I

WHAT WENT BEFORE

Unity of Command — The British Reverses in the Spring

IN Europe 1917 was a year of disappointment for the arms of the Allies; only in Asia, where our earlier ventures had failed, did fortune smile on us. At the beginning of that year Ludendorff and Hindenburg brought off their first coup on the Western Front, when they withdrew the German forces from the awkward position in which they were placed as the result of the first battle of the Somme, and retired behind the Hindenburg line, which then first became famous. By this manœuvre they checked the plans of the Allies and brought about the failure of General Nivelle's great offensive upon which such high hopes had been set. The result of this failure had been to throw a great strain upon the British Army, which had to obtain for the French the time to recover. In the battle of Arras Allenby had won the greatest success yet gained by