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The Good Soldier

Field-Marshal Earl Wavell



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The Good Soldier contains the distilled wisdom of Field Marshal Wavell, collected from his numerous articles and speeches.

"Practically all the articles collected here were written between the two Great Wars, between 1926 and 1938; a few were written during the late war. Nearly all have been previously published, in newspapers or military journals. Whether they are worth collection and republication I must leave readers to judge. Inoculation with the deadly virus of war does not seem to confer immunity on any people or on the world as a whole for more than a very limited period. There must still be soldiers, and I fear there will still be wars in spite of UNO and ATOM. So long as war has to be studied there may be something of value in these notes of one who has studied war for close on fifty years. That is my only excuse for re-enlisting these old soldiers of my pen.

Some of them may be thought old-fashioned and out of date, with little more to tell the modern student of war than would a visit to the pensioners of Chelsea Hospital. But passing down their ranks and looking them over with, I admit, an indulgent eye, I still believe that there may be something in each of these veterans, or at least in some of them, to induce thought and perhaps to sow the germ of a fresh idea. If I can claim to any merit as a soldier, it is that I have always tried to keep my mind receptive to fresh ideas, and that I have striven to present these ideas in as simple and practical a form as possible—in battle dress rather than in review order. If these old soldiers of mine can in any way help a young soldier to learn his trade—the training and handling of men in circumstances of great complexity and difficulty—they will not have come back from the Reserve in vain."—Author's Preface, 1946

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