

CLEMENCEAU, "LE TOMBEUR," SCORES AGAIN

Wrecker of Cabinets Adds Austrian Scalp to His Belt Ornaments

ONCE TAUGHT IN AMERICA

Former Premier Is Recalled to Helm of French Ship of State in His 77th Year

FORESAW GERMAN MADNESS

Republic's Grand Old Man Is Crack Shot, Expert Swordsman, Physician and Novelist, Too

Crack shot and swordsman extraordinary, physician, skeptic, playwright, novelist, editor, a political writer of ever-increasing loftiness and a power, a leader of men with a Rooseveltian genius for delighting and winning the common man, one of the foremost orators of his generation, and above all else, a fighting statesman who has loomed large through the battle smoke of half a century of politics—such is Georges Benjamin Eugene Clemenceau, Premier of the French Republic.

Such is Clemenceau, the Grand Old Man of France, who, in the 77th year of his age, at a time of life when most men would be allowed and expected to sit back and watch the youngsters do the work, was, in the great crisis of November, 1917, called to the helm of the French ship of state.

There today he administers for France the power that in America is Woodrow Wilson's and in Britain Lloyd George's. The war had to run to its fourth year before General Poch, the brilliant strategist of the Marne and the Yser, was created Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces on the Western front and before Georges Clemenceau was named civilian chief of France. And Clemenceau, who, in his day, had in the past so many French ministries that they called him "the Wrecker," has just brought crashing down a ministry on the other side of the Continent, for only the other day he emerged triumphant from an encounter with Count Czernin, of Vienna, in the course of a bitter and unrelenting combat, he called the Austrian a liar. Today Count Czernin is in retirement and his scalp swings at the belt of the Wrecker.

France's Reserve of Strength

"What a reserve of strength for France this emergency has!" exclaimed the late Edward VII, who knew France as few Englishmen knew her and who had a weakness for the inextinguishable Clemenceau. Yet when the great war came, four premiers had to rule and fall before that force was really equal to its full strength. He was called at last because, for years, his had been the most penetrating vision, his the voice raised most clearly in the gospel of preparation against Germany, because, when the calamity he had predicted finally fell upon his land, he proclaimed the policy of no compromise gave voice to the demand for Allied unity and ever took his place as the greatest of all the "jusqu'au-boutistes," as France calls her "fight-to-a-Finish men."

How clear was his vision you can judge best by turning back to the files of his then newly launched journal, L'Homme Libre, and reading what, in his preparedness propaganda, he wrote in the spring of 1913, more than a year before the German hosts first trampled on plucky Belgium.

"All Europe knows that we are on the defensive," wrote Clemenceau then, "and Germany cannot have any doubt on that score. Under the pretext of protecting herself against French aggression, she continues to pile up armaments till the day which she judges suitable to finish with us. For one must be voluntarily blind not to see her madness for pre-eminence, of which the explosion will shake the whole continent and involve her in a policy of extermination against France."

"That Nameless Calvary"

"If the catastrophe be inevitable, we must prepare to meet it with all our strength. That is why I am disposed to support all the Government's defensive measures. Those who saw 1870 cannot allow the slightest loophole for a return to the events of those frightful days, of which the horror nowadays has increased a hundredfold. If my destiny is to inflict me again with that nameless Calvary which still haunts me, I have at least resolved not to incur the slightest responsibility for anything that might weaken my country in her supreme struggle for existence."

Clemenceau had been a withering critic of America and President Wilson during the months before we entered the ranks of the Allies, but he is, of all French leaders, the one ablest to deal with us because he speaks our tongue as well as we do. There is a ludicrous misconception in France that the Premier speaks English. He does nothing of the sort. He speaks American, speaks it with an unmistakable Gotham tang and no French accent whatever. He learned it at no lycée, but in those odd corners of New York he grew up in the days of his adventurous twenties.

After a lively and memorable youth spent among the fire-eating radicals of the Latin Quarter, he was graduated as a physician and set sail for America to make his fortune. His profession did not prove profitable, nor did he grow rich on translating John Stuart Mill into French and sending occasional dispatches to the Parisian newspapers.

So, to butter his parsnips, he was obliged to teach his beloved French language and literature at a school for young ladies in Stamford, Conn.—of all places. Most Frenchmen shake with Homeric laughter at the very thought of the Tiger caged as a teacher in an Ecole de Jeunes Filles.

He remained in America four years—from '65 to '69—during which time he acquired an American vocabulary and an American wife. He returned to the France for which he was to labor all his days in time to be chosen Maire of Montmartre when the Republic was declared in 1870 and to serve in that post during the searing days of the Commune.

"The Tiger" is one of two nicknames that have stuck like a burr to Clemenceau. He is also known as "Le Tombeur," or "the Wrecker." "Tiger,"

"THE TIGER"



because of his great ferocity as a fighter and because he rather looked like a terrifying sabre tooth as he prowled about the columns of the Palais Bourbon seeking what incompetent ministers he might rend and destroy; "Wrecker," because, all through the eighties and nineties, as well as during the bitter years of this war, he brought down in dust ministry after ministry of which he, as the great Critic-From-Without, had relentlessly exposed the weaknesses.

Long a member of the Chamber of Deputies, later a Senator, and always as a journalist who shook a very wicked pen, he was the terror of all governments.

As editor, at one time or another, of La Justice, L'Aurore, and L'Homme Libre (his present paper), Clemenceau has always led the fight for free speech. Indeed, in the days of his radical youth in Paris, he suffered imprisonment for a too revolutionary article intitled in the declining days of the Empire, a memorable captivity which must not be confused with the two weeks' sentence meted out to him as principal in a sensational duel long ago.

In L'Aurore he fought the good fight for a re-opening of the Dreyfus case, and in L'Homme Libre he said his seldom welcome word about this war and the way it was being run. That war had not been under way many weeks before L'Homme Libre (The Freeman) was squelched. It was suppressed. Clemenceau, however, was not. Next day he appeared before the public as the editor of L'Homme Libre (The Man in Chains) and under this biting title, his journal flourished until the morning after he was made Premier, when it reappeared as L'Homme Libre. You can buy it on any newsstand.

On the Inside Track

L'Homme Libre flourished, but not undisturbed. As leader of the War-to-the-limit group and as President of the Senate's Commission for the Army, its editor always had an unrivalled opportunity at the inside news and an embarrassing disposition to speak his mind in print. In particular, he spoke his mind about M. Caillaux. In fact, he "wrecked" M. Caillaux.

Finally, in the days of the Ribot ministry—this was less than a year ago—the censor ventured an attempt to dray the Tiger's claws. He was censored, his paper appeared only on his signature left in the column usually assigned to his blunt editorial opinion. The same thing happened next day.

It was too much. Clemenceau rose in the Senate and announced that if he were censored again, he would, for the first time since the war began, open his lips in the Senate and speak. He was censored a third time. He opened his lips. The memorable speech that followed flayed alive the unhappy M. Malvy, then Minister of the Interior. Down crashed the Ribot cabinet. The Premier's ministry which followed lasted but a few months, and at last the Wrecker of Cabinets, who had studiously remained outside all the war cabinets which had been formed, was called upon to form his own. Once in the saddle, he was true to his ancient journalist's hostility to political censorship and with a characteristic gleam of ironic humor, promised faithfully that nothing should deprive any writer of his inalienable "right to injure the members of the Government."

LITTLE LOST DOUGHBOY WAS STUDYING GAME



He was a morsel of a doughboy, as small as the law allows, and that may have been one reason why no one paid much attention to him when, fresh from a replacement division, he showed up at the front the other evening and, after reporting to every one he saw, dropped almost unnoticed into the ranks of Company G. The other reason was because Company G was all absorbed at the moment with the immediate preparations for going over the top.

They paid a good deal more attention when, tired but triumphant, they were back in the trenches again. For the little doughboy had, in swift succession, jabbed his bayonet through three mountainous Hun and emerged none the worse for his experience. He was looking pretty grim about it, however, as he squatted down and devoted his first free moment to cleaning his bayonet.

Got Too Darn Excited

"Never mind, old timer," said the corporal, patting him on the back. "You did great work. It comes hard at first, but you'll get used to sticking them after a while. They're a dirty bunch and they've got it coming to them."

"Oh, I don't mind killing them," said the newcomer. "I like it. But I didn't do it right. They told us to be sure and not run the stick in too far. There's no need and you waste too much time taking it out. Now I meant to remember that, but each time I got so darn excited I forgot all about it. I didn't do it right."

The corporal swallowed his laughter until later when he could regale the platoon sergeant with the story.

"Say, he's a game little devil," the corporal concluded. "Where in Gawd's name did he come from?"

"Where did he go to?" was the question being raised in Company H of that same regiment—which hadn't been in the scrap at all—for they had no sooner put the little doughboy down on their rolls than they had mislaid him in the shuffle, and he was down on the books as missing a day or so later when his rightful top spied him swinging solemnly along the road in the hindmost squad of Company G. The top was minded to be disagreeable in his most expert manner, but when he heard the story, he merely pounced on the innocent stray and carried him off in triumph to the ranks of his proper company.

Then he explained that he had reached the war late in the day, that the corporal who had escorted him forward never had told him what company he belonged to, and that all companies looked alike to him, anyway.

So the little doughboy is where he belongs now and he is entirely happy—except when he remembers that whereas he disposed of three Germans, his technique was rotten.

"How do you manage to fill up the paper?" Queried a French little miss. "Well, when we have to, we cut a young caper Just as delightful as this."

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