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A POW's Memoir of the First World War: The Other Ordeal (The Legacy of the Great War)

Georges Connes

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This lyrical memoir offers a fresh look inside the trauma of war and captivity during the First World War, with resonance for today's world.

Georges Connes was a young literature graduate when he was drafted and served in the infamous and bloody battle of Verdun. A survivor, he was captured by the Germans in June 1916 and became a prisoner of war until his repatriation in January 1919. In the Second World War, he was active in the French Resistance, was arrested and detained, and ultimately went into hiding. After the war, he served as the interim mayor of Dijon before returning to his academic life as a professor of British and American literature.

Connes referred to his time as a POW as "The Other Ordeal', recognizing that the most important suffering continued for those who had to endure the 'firing, blood and mud' of war. Connes focuses on the human aspects of war, which are all too easy to forget in the age of mass media. He passionately argues against the predominant black and white view of 'us versus them' to unearth the complexities of war. Rather than demonizing his German captors, for example, he describes individual examples of gratuitous acts of kindness.

Connes offers a pacifist, internationalist perspective on war. A survivor of two of the greatest conflicts in modern history, Connes remained optimistic about humanity. This voice of hope provides insight not only into the First World War but into the contemporary world.

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