

**A REGIMENTAL
SURGEON IN
WAR AND PRISON**

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A regimental surgeon in war and prison by Robert V. Dolbey

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ROBERT V. DOLBEY

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PREFACE

THESE recollections of the fighting in France from August to November, 1914, do not pretend, in any way, to be an authentic history of the Campaign. They are merely the record of the work and wanderings of a regimental medical officer in part of the Retreat, the Advance, at the Marne, the Aisne, and the fighting at and near La Bassée. There they come to an abrupt conclusion, for, in the grey dawn of a foggy October morning, I was taken prisoner and, with my wounded, my orderlies and stretcher bearers, conducted through our long and eventful pilgrimage into Germany. From the moment the miracle of the Marne occurred we had little doubt that nothing would stop our victorious progress to the Rhine. Little did I think that the invasion of Germany, on my part, would take place in so ignominious a fashion. When I say that the regiment to which I had the honour of being attached was the 2nd Battalion the King's Own Scottish Borderers, of the 13th Brigade,

and that ours was the Fifth Division, I may plead ample justification for these pages.

In this Division there were three Brigades, the 13th, 14th and 15th. None of the four battalions of the 13th Brigade, the Scottish Borderers, the West Kents, the Yorkshire Light Infantry, and the West Riding Regiment needs words of mine to sustain its honour; that lives in the official records of this Campaign. To this day in France they speak of "*La Cinquième Division qui était à Mons.*" If these pages seem only to be concerned with the doings of this battalion, I may plead that a regimental doctor has no time for other regiments. To us the Retreat and the Advance were epitomised in the roads we took, the fights we fought, the billets that gave our battalion the few precarious hours of sleep that we can remember. If the recollections of these days seem to be at variance with official records, one can only say that in the fog of war we saw only one small sector of the line—our part; only one road from Le Cateau—the road we took. All else is merely the remembrance of fatigue beyond expression, of swollen and painful feet beyond the appreciation of pain; of sleep that kept men swaying on the march; of companies