

**THE GLORY OF THE TRENCHES;  
AN INTERPRETATION. WITH  
AN INTRODUCTION BY W. J.  
DAWSON**

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The Glory of the Trenches; An Interpretation. With an Introduction by W. J. Dawson by  
Coningsby Dawson & W. J. Dawson

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**CONINGSBY DAWSON & W. J. DAWSON**

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# THE GLORY OF THE TRENCHES

AN INTERPRETATION

BY  
CONINGSBY DAWSON

Author of

"CARRY ON: LETTERS IN WARTIME," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY HIS FATHER, W. J. DAWSON

*"The glory is all in the souls of the men  
—it's nothing external."—From "Carry On"*

NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY  
LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
TORONTO: S. B. GUNDY . . . MCMXVIII

### TO YOU AT HOME

*Each night we panted till the runners came,  
Bearing your letters through the battle-smoke.  
Their path lay up Death Valley spouting flame,  
Across the ridge where the Hun's anger spoke  
In bursting shells and cataracts of pain;  
Then down the road where no one goes by day,  
And so into the tortured, pockmarked plain  
Where dead men clasp their wounds and point the way.  
Here gas lurks treacherously and the wire  
Of old defences tangles up the feet;  
Faces and hands strain upward through the mire,  
Speaking the anguish of the Hun's retreat.  
Sometimes no letters came; the evening hate  
Dragged on till dawn. The ridge in flying spray  
Of hissing shrapnel told the runners' fate;  
We knew we should not hear from you that day—  
From you, who from the trenches of the mind  
Hurl back despair, smiling with sobbing breath,  
Writing your souls on paper to be kind,  
That you for us may take the sting from Death.*

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## HOW THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN

In my book, *The Father of a Soldier*, I have already stated the conditions under which this book of my son's was produced.

He was wounded in the end of June, 1917, in the fierce struggle before Lens. He was at once removed to a base-hospital, and later on to a military hospital in London. There was grave danger of amputation of the right arm, but this was happily avoided. As soon as he could use his hand he was commandeered by the Lord High Commissioner of Canada to write an important paper, detailing the history of the Canadian forces in France and Flanders. This task kept him busy until the end of August, when he obtained a leave of two months to come home. He arrived in New York in September, and returned again to London in the end of October.

The plan of the book grew out of his conversations with us and the three public addresses which he made. The idea had already been suggested to him by his London publisher, Mr. John Lane. He had written a few hundred words, but had no

very keen sense of the value of the experiences he had been invited to relate. He had not even read his own published letters in *Carry On*. He said he had begun to read them when the book reached him in the trenches, but they made him homesick, and he was also afraid that his own estimate of their value might not coincide with ours, or with the verdict which the public has since passed upon them. He regarded his own experiences, which we found so thrilling, in the same spirit of modest depreciation. They were the commonplaces of the life which he had led, and he was sensitive lest they should be regarded as improperly heroic. No one was more astonished than he when he found great throngs eager to hear him speak. The people assembled an hour before the advertised time, they stormed the building as soon as the doors were open, and when every inch of room was packed they found a way in by the windows and a fire-escape. This public appreciation of his message indicated a value in it which he had not suspected, and led him to recognise that what he had to say was worthy of more than a fugitive utterance on a public platform. He at once took up the task of writing this book, with a genuine and delighted surprise that he had not lost his love of authorship. He had but a month to devote to it, but by

dint of daily diligence, amid many interruptions of a social nature, he finished his task before he left. The concluding lines were actually written on the last night before he sailed for England.

We discussed several titles for the book. *The Religion of Heroism* was the title suggested by Mr. John Lane, but this appeared too didactic and restrictive. I suggested *Souls in Khaki*, but this admirable title had already been appropriated. Lastly, we decided on *The Glory of the Trenches*, as the most expressive of his aim. He felt that a great deal too much had been said about the squalor, filth, discomfort and suffering of the trenches. He pointed out that a very popular war-book which we were then reading had six paragraphs in the first sixty pages which described in unpleasant detail the verminous condition of the men, as if this were the chief thing to be remarked concerning them. He held that it was a mistake for a writer to lay too much stress on the horrors of war. The effect was bad physiologically — it frightened the parents of soldiers; it was equally bad for the enlisted man himself, for it created a false impression in his mind. We all knew that war was horrible, but as a rule the soldier thought little of this feature in his lot. It bulked large to the civilian who resented inconvenience and discomfort, because he had only