

COMRADES IN ARMS

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Comrades in arms by Philippe Millet

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PHILIPPE MILLET

**COMRADES
IN ARMS**

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COMRADES IN ARMS

BY
CAPTAIN PHILIPPE MILLET

TRANSLATED BY LADY FRAZER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
J. ST. LOE STRACHEY

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN I say that it is an honour to introduce Captain Phillippe Millet's book to the British reading public, I mean it in no mere complimentary or conventional sense. Captain Millet is an interpreter of the British Army, officers and men alike, of unsurpassed merit. He not only understands and loves our soldiers, but by a happy chance he can make others know what he knows, feel what he feels. He has the sympathy of comprehension as well as the sympathy of approbation, and he has the quality of expression. Yet even all these gifts would not have been enough to accomplish the task he set himself, unless he had also been endowed with the power of giving vitality to his writing. This last best gift is his, and therefore his book goes home to the hearts

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as well as the heads of his readers. He has himself got a clear mental picture of the British fighting man, and he lets us share that picture. Captain Millet makes no pretence at great literary finesse, but his book is all the better for that. There are no metaphysical subtleties, no straining to find the unfindable, none of the proverbial seeking in the dark room for the black cat which is not there. It is a plain story which he has to tell, but it is lightened throughout by the lamp of humour, and a very English type of humour.

There are two more reasons why the author of *Comrades in Arms* has made so satisfactory a book. In the first place, he did not make the acquaintance of the British Army for the first time on the battlefields of Picardy or Flanders, but knew it well before. Next, and this is really perhaps the most important of all, he knows the British people at home as well as the British Army abroad. He knows, that is,

the land out of which the old army and the new army grew. Therefore he can see us in true perspective. And now I can hear Captain Millet saying that in spite of my rather long-winded exposition of his qualifications, I have left out one thing, and that is that he loves our army and our nation only second to his own. True: and that of course in the last resort is why he is able to be just to us, for justice, as Pater so finely said, is a higher knowledge through love. However, one must not grow sentimental about so sane and soldierly a book as *Comrades in Arms*. I shall therefore hold myself in check and play the reticent Englishman, though, as Captain Millet himself points out in his book, the reticent Englishman, if he ever existed—which may be doubted—is becoming very much of a myth just now. But whether we are what the conventional Frenchman supposes us, glum and dumb, or as Captain Millet reads us, cheerful and talkative, we shall all be one in feeling deeply

touched at the spirit of his book. Here at any rate is a man who does not misunderstand us, and that is what every human being really wants for himself and his work.

The way in which Captain Millet came to know us is very simple. He was appointed in his capacity of a military writer on the *Temps* to come over here and attend our manœuvres. My own acquaintance with him began in that way. I happened to be spending a few days of delightful holiday with a Yeomanry Brigade on Salisbury Plain, accompanied by a tent and two good ponies. On the first night in camp I was unpacking my kitbag, if I remember rightly, with the aid of a Hampshire Yeoman, and getting ready for mess. At the moment of highest pressure there appeared in the door of the tent a very lightly attired figure of a tall man, who was asking for the loan of candle, or a looking-glass, or some one or other of the indispensables which are so apt to be missed by even the very oldest campaigners. The man with