

**THE ROMANCE OF THE BATTLE-LINE IN
FRANCE: WITH AN ADDITIONAL
CHAPTER ON THE RESULTS OF THE LATE
WAR AS AFFECTING OUR NATIONAL
LIFE AND IMPERIAL INTERESTS**

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The romance of the battle-line in France: with an additional chapter on the results of the late war as affecting our national life and imperial interests by John Edward Courtenay Bodley

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JOHN EDWARD COURTENAY BODLEY

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THE ROMANCE OF THE
BATTLE-LINE IN FRANCE



First published 1919

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TO
MY SONS

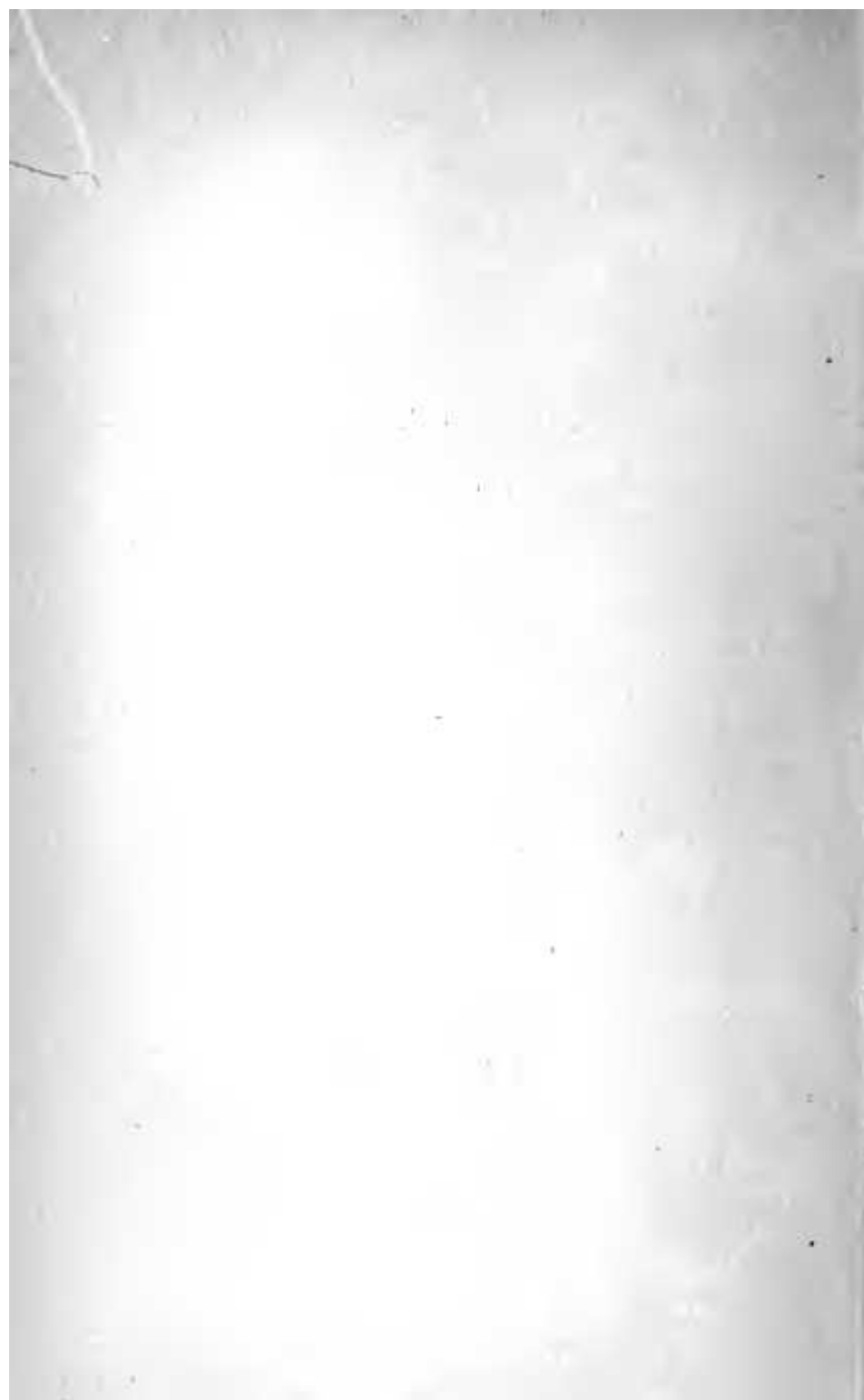
WHO KNOW THE BATTLE-LINE OF THEIR NATIVE FRANCE
WITHOUT ITS ROMANCE.

IN MEMORY OF 575 BROTHER OFFICERS
AND 12,230 N.-C.-OFFICERS AND RIFLEMEN
OF THE

60TH RIFLES

(KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS)

WHO DIED IN THE WAR



INTRODUCTION

THIS little book was almost ready for publication, when the Armistice rendered necessary a number of alterations and additions. To travellers, who, now that the war is over, will repair to the scenes where our soldiers fought and died, it may perhaps be of some use as a tentative historical survey of the battle-fields in France—until a better one appears. The stream of visitors to the old war-zone will go on increasing for many a year; and it is hoped that these pages may show the way to some young writer, who has taken part in the war, to produce an historical itinerary of the battle-lines on a more complete scale. Such a book, to claim any title to completeness, would have to be *un travail de longue haleine*, which my health does not allow me to undertake. For, as we shall see, every square mile of French soil on which our armies have fought is so abundant in historical associations,

that to treat the subject exhaustively would be a formidable task. But its surpassing interest would lighten the labour and redeem the time expended on the work.

The making of the book came about in this wise. In an Introduction to the English edition of *L'histoire de France racontée à tous*, published in 1916, I pointed out that while at normal times there was no pursuit so profitable and so fascinating as the familiar study of French history, its attractiveness for English people had increased a hundredfold, since the war had caused places in France to be associated in countless British homes with the memory of proud sorrow or of pathetic rejoicing. The name of each site so signalised had its part, great or small, in the imposing and picturesque procession of the annals of France. I quoted a number of such places to illustrate the richness in tradition of the French war-zone. The idea thus expressed aroused some interest in France, as well as in England. M. Welschinger, the eminent historian, who at last has had the joy of seeing the forces of Germany expelled from his native Alsace, presented this Introduction to our confrères of the Académie des Sciences Morales, remarking in an eloquent speech that

even Frenchmen are few who rightly appreciate the inexhaustible treasure of memories which cling to the soil of their country. The Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Mr. Harold Cox, having read this 'Introduction,' invited me to amplify the subject of its opening pages in two articles, which were published in his journal in 1918, under the title suggested by him, *The Romance of the Battle-Line in France*. On them the first portion of this book is founded, though nearly all has been rewritten, and as much new matter added as the original essays contained.

I was induced to make a book on their foundation, because of the pleasure these studies gave in their original form to certain young soldiers who had seen them on their return from the battle-line in France, which they had known without its romance. They said that as French history is not studied in our schools and universities, except by specialists, the most highly educated of our soldiers were unacquainted with the traditions and associations attaching to places where they had fought and suffered, or where they had seen their comrades die. The adventure of war had sharpened their curiosity to understand everything that came their way, and they told me how pleased they were to learn