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In Flanders Fields: The 1917 Campaign



Synopsis

Introduction by Major-General J.F.C. Fuller. Maps. Illustrations. Pictorial cover, xxviii+298 pages including Reference Notes, Bibliography, and Index.

Book Information

Hardcover

Publisher: The Folio Society; Collector's Edition edition (2005)

ASIN: B0015NS7VK

Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 6.6 x 1.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds

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Customer Reviews

This edition of IN FLANDERS FIELDS was published as part of Penguin's series of "Classic Military History" and no one should quibble with its inclusion in such a grandiosely named group. As indicated by the title, the book covers only the 1917 Flanders offensive by the British (with a small but equally disastrous contribution by the French), otherwise known as the Third Battle of Ypres or the Passchendaele campaign. But that campaign is emblematic of the senseless slaughter on the Western Front in World War One. IN FLANDERS FIELDS is written from the perspective of the British, who were responsible for the decision to initiate the 1917 Flanders offensive (rather than wait, for example, for the arrival of the Americans to tip the balance and break the stalemate) and who suffered the most from it in terms of casualties. The story is told at a number of levels: the geopolitical, national politics, civilian government versus top military brass, military tactics and strategy, and front-line soldiering. It is first-rate history. But the most striking feature of IN FLANDERS FIELDS is Wolff's superb writing. Some examples: "[At the beginning of 1917 in Britain] the great masses of tired and depressed ordinary people merely got on with the war * * *. The ignorant saw no reason to doubt. The religious prayed. The poor worked. The Liberals wrung their hands. Few surrendered to thought." "Gradually the great guns became silent. On the chessboard of Flanders the opening phase had ended. The pawns lay still, filled with forebodings. The grandmasters stroked their moustaches, surveyed the deadlock, and plotted their next moves." "Haig's own generals wanted him to stop. The politicians had lost their last vestige of faith in his campaign.

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