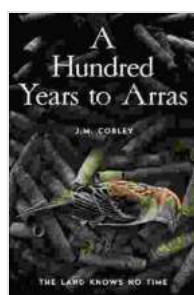


A Century's Journey: Hundred Years to Arras - An Epic Tale of War and Remembrance

Prelude to the Great Conflict

As the summer of 1914 dawned, Europe teetered on the precipice of a cataclysmic conflict. Long-simmering tensions between nations, fueled by nationalist fervor and complex alliances, threatened to ignite a war that would forever alter the world. The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on June 28th, 1914, served as the spark that ignited the powder keg of European diplomacy.

Amidst the escalating tensions, the British Army found itself ill-prepared for the looming conflict. Years of neglect and complacency had left it woefully understaffed and equipped. However, with the outbreak of war on August 4th, 1914, Britain rallied together to support its allies.



A Hundred Years to Arras by Jason Cobley

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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File size : 933 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 320 pages



The Birth of the Hundred Years To Arras

In the early days of the war, the British Army deployed to France, where they faced a formidable foe in the Imperial German Army. The fighting was fierce and relentless, and the British forces sustained heavy losses. In response to the escalating casualties, the British government embarked on a massive recruitment drive to replenish their depleted ranks.

Among those who answered the call to arms was a young man named Edward Thomas. Thomas was a poet and writer by profession, but he eagerly volunteered for service, inspired by a sense of duty and patriotism. He joined the Artists Rifles Officer Training Corps and was soon commissioned as an officer in the Royal Garrison Artillery.

In the summer of 1915, Thomas's unit was ordered to move to the front lines near Arras, a town in northern France that had become a focal point of the fighting. As Thomas and his fellow soldiers took up their positions in the trenches, they could hear the constant roar of artillery fire and the distant chatter of machine guns.

A Poet's Perspective of War

As he witnessed the horrors of war firsthand, Edward Thomas penned down his experiences and observations in a series of letters and poems. His writings offer a unique and profoundly moving perspective on the Great War, capturing both its brutality and its moments of humanity.

In his letters, Thomas described the daily grind of life in the trenches: the constant shelling, the rats, the lice, and the ever-present fear of death. He also wrote about the camaraderie among the soldiers, the shared bond that united them in the face of unimaginable adversity.

In his poems, Thomas explored the deeper emotions of the war: the longing for home, the guilt of survival, and the profound sense of loss. His verse is characterized by its honesty, its clarity, and its deep empathy for the soldiers who fought and died in the trenches.

One of Thomas's most famous poems, "As the Team's Head-Brass," captures the raw experience of warfare:

> As the team's head-brass flashed out on the turn

> The lovers turned with him the slow head round,

> And lingeringly unbraided in the sun

> A white length of her hair, as streamily unbound,

> Heavy with moisture, colours verge on verge,

> That lies beneath a dried-up water-course

> This he had meant to do before he drowned -

> Fully to look her beauty in the face,

> For this he had come secretly from the town,

> From the dull café, the gold napoleons,

> And laughing women, lightly as the wind

> Lighting a candle in the trees across

> The gusty river. His fingers went loose

> Down the long lines of the reins, and slack and slow

> The mass moved forward, dung perfuming air

> That the horn rings through with its clear call.

> But now he watches the brown water thresh,

> Now the high jets of foam charge at his sight,

> And the wide river's sinewy shoulders wrestle

> Majestical with scarred March banks.

> A cold

> And trembling shakes his body, and his face

> Is white except for two red bars of cheek,

> Where shows the blood come throbbing through. He sees

> All the foregoing hundreds of the dead

> Locked in his mind as in a ribbed cage,

> He sees them and he knows them and he hears their cries.

> And clattering hoofs; he knows he hears them plain,

> He knows that they are forever in the wind,

> He knows that they will haunt him evermore.

A Tragic End

Edward Thomas's time at Arras would be short-lived. On April 9th, 1917, during the Battle of Arras, Thomas was killed by a shell while leading his men in an attack on the German lines. He was only 38 years old.

Thomas's death was a devastating blow to his family, friends, and fellow soldiers. His loss was also a profound loss for the world of literature. In the years since his death, Thomas's poetry has been widely acclaimed for its honesty, its beauty, and its enduring relevance.

Legacy of the Hundred Years To Arras

Edward Thomas's service at Arras and his subsequent death serve as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by millions during the Great War. His writings, both in letters and poetry, offer a unique and invaluable glimpse into the human experience of war.

In addition to its literary value, Thomas's time at Arras also holds historical significance. The Battle of Arras was one of the largest and bloodiest offensives of the Western Front. Thomas's experiences and observations provide valuable insights into the challenges and horrors faced by the British troops during that fateful battle.

The Hundred Years To Arras is a story of courage, sacrifice, and remembrance. It is a testament to the enduring power of human spirit, even

in the darkest of times. Edward Thomas's legacy lives on through his writings, which continue to inspire and move readers to this day.

Remembering the Fallen

Edward Thomas's grave can be found in the Tilloy British Cemetery in France. It is one of thousands of cemeteries scattered across the Western Front, each bearing witness to the immense sacrifice made by so many during the Great War.

In the years since the war, countless memorials have been erected to honor the fallen. The most famous of these is the Menin Gate in Ypres, Belgium. The gate is inscribed with the names of over 54,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient and have no known grave.

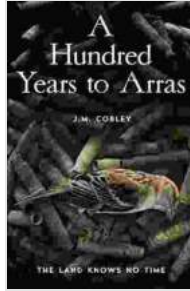
Every evening at 8:00 pm, a Last Post ceremony is held at the Menin Gate. During the ceremony, buglers sound the "Last Post," a traditional military bugle call played at funerals and memorial services. The ceremony is a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by so many during the Great War.

Hundred Years To Arras is a story of war, loss, and remembrance. It is a story that should never be forgotten. Edward Thomas's writings offer a timeless reminder of the horrors of war and the importance of remembering those who have fallen. As we mark the centennial of the Great War, let us take time to reflect on the sacrifices made by so many and to recommit ourselves to the cause of peace.

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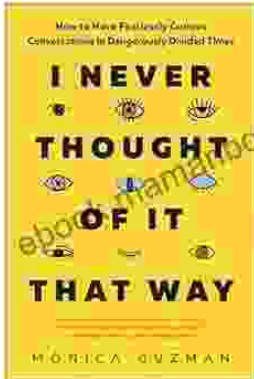
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