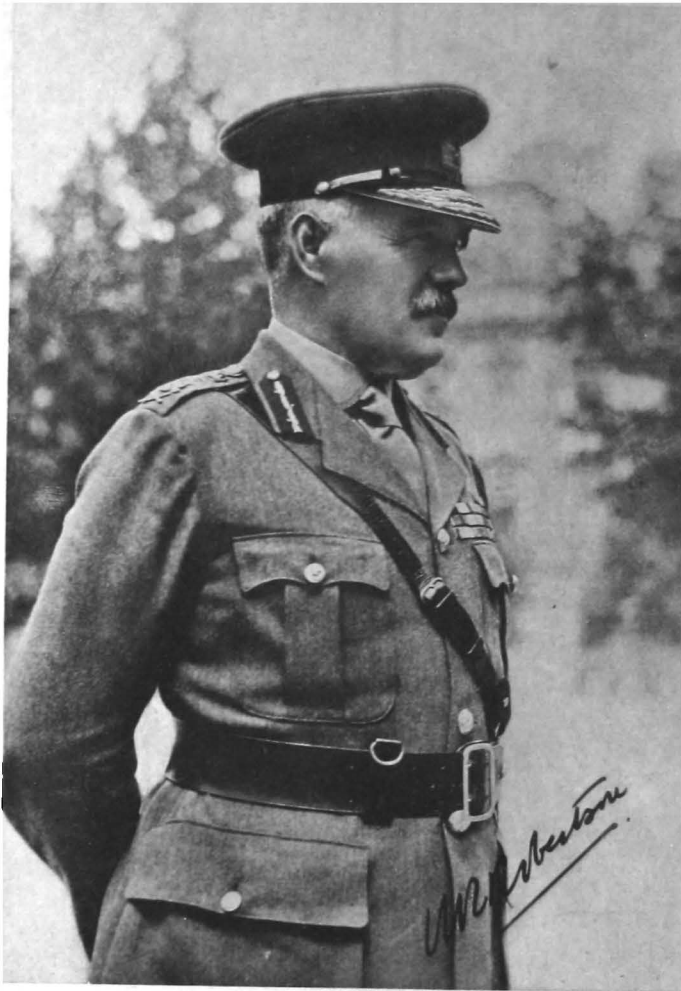


**FROM PRIVATE TO FIELD-MARSHAL**



*The Author*

*From a Snapshot taken by an American Soldier at Coblenz, 1919*

# FROM PRIVATE TO FIELD-MARSHAL

BY FIELD-MARSHAL

SIR WILLIAM ROBERTSON BART.

G.C.B., G.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., D.S.O.

HON. LL.D. CAMBRIDGE, HON. D.C.L. OXFORD

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**Dedicated**

**TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER**

**TO WHOSE AFFECTIONATE AND INSPIRING TEACHINGS**

**IN EARLY LIFE IS ATTRIBUTABLE SUCH MERIT,**

**IF ANY, AS MAY ATTACH TO MY CAREER.**

## PREFACE

THE only justification for publishing this book is that it describes the climbing of a soldier from the bottom to the top of the military ladder, and even in this feat there is nothing remarkable beyond the fact that it happens to be the first of its kind in the annals of the British Army.

Energy and determination are usually essential to advancement in any vocation, and are at the disposal of every one possessing a good constitution. Given the exercise of these qualities and the same help from real friends as I enjoyed—friends who had nothing to gain and perhaps something to lose by showing friendship—any man can equal what I have accomplished.

Still, the story here given may not be wholly without interest, especially to those who have their lives in front of them, and in the hope that it will prove to be so I have decided to let it go forth. Doubtless it has many defects, both in substance and style, which would have been less apparent if its preparation had been in more practised hands, and for these imperfections I ask lenient treatment.

In writing the chapters dealing with my service in the ranks and as a Subaltern Officer I have had to depend chiefly upon memory, which has become blurred and unreliable owing to the lapse of time and the crowded events of the last few years. Consequently it has not been possible to make this part of the book as complete as, to my mind, it deserves to be, for the period in question was in some ways the most fascinating and happy of all. For instance, I derived greater satisfaction from being promoted Lance-Corporal in 1878—the first rung of the ladder—than I did from being created a Baronet forty years later ;

and, as Lieutenant, I felt prouder to be in command at the railhead of a Frontier Expeditionary Force in India of less than 10,000 men than, as General, to be Chief of the Imperial General Staff in the greatest conflict the world has ever known, when the number of our troops ran into several millions.

In building up the chapters referring to the Great War, I was embarrassed by having not too little but too much material. The difficulty here was to make a suitable selection, and to include just so much about my share of the war as seemed appropriately to fall within the scope of the book. In particular I tried to avoid enlarging upon old controversies connected with the supreme direction of the war, and which occur to a greater or less extent in all wars. I felt that a discussion of them would merely bore the ordinary reader, who is content to know that the war was in fact won; while it would be of little use to any one unless the points in dispute were thoroughly examined in the light of complete evidence, and this would require a book for itself as well as access to official documents which are not at my disposal. I have therefore made, as a rule, no more reference to these matters than was required to enable me to illustrate the work of the Imperial General Staff, of which I was Chief for about half the period of the war—four other officers filling that post at different times during the remaining half—and to emphasise the achievements, though very inadequately, of the regimental officers and men of the Imperial Forces who won the war for us, and with whom I have had the honour to be associated for nearly forty-four years.

W. R. ROBERTSON,  
*Field-Marshal.*

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