

Happy Odyssey

Adrian Carton de Wiart

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Adrian Carton de Wiart's autobiography is one of the most remarkable of military memoirs.

He was intended for the law, but abandoned his studies at Balliol College, Oxford, in 1899 to serve as a trooper in the South African War. Carton de Wiart's extraordinary military career embraced service with the Somaliland Camel Corps (1914-15), liaison officer with Polish forces (1939), membership of the British Military Mission to Yugoslavia (1941), a period as a prisoner of war (1941-43), and three years as Churchill's representative to Chiang Kai-shek (1943-46). (Churchill was a great admirer.) During the Great War, besides commanding the 8th Glosters, Carton de Wiart was GOC 12 Brigade (1917) and GOC 105 Brigade (April 1918). Both these commands were terminated by wounds. He was wounded eight times during the war (including the loss of an eye and a hand), won the VC during the Battle of the Somme, was mentioned in dispatches six times, and was the model for Brigadier Ben Ritchie Hook in the Sword of Honour trilogy of Evelyn Waugh.



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