



# A Soldier's Song

*C G Feltham*

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## **A Soldier's Song** C G Feltham

August 1914 saw the beginning of the First World War. A surge of patriotism ensued in Britain that brought floods of volunteers to recruiting stations, amongst which was Archibald Channing an ex-performer on the music halls but currently working for his father in a green grocer's shop. The prospect of joining up, becoming a private in the British Army, brought not only the chance of adventure and the pride of serving one's country and the Empire in its time of need, but an escape from a humdrum life of work and everyday toil. He had not informed his family yet that he had joined up. But that task would turn out to be the least of his worries. Like so many others their initial belief that the war would be over and won by Christmas was soon to be dismissed. Not only that but the illusion of an exciting and glory sating conflict was even more quickly replaced by a gut wrenching agonising stalemate with all the unexpected horrors of the most destructive war in history to that date coupled with an appalling loss of life. Disillusion soon set in. Archie and his new found infantry friends underwent the retreat from Mons and on to the construction of the trenches on the Western Front.

Captain Charles Ponsonby-Smythe was to play an important part in Private Channing's life, advising him of a secret operation behind enemy lines, because of his facial similarity to Edward Prince of Wales, an impersonation was to be considered. The Captain came from a privileged position and was engaged to Felicity, an heiress from the same social background. Though this situation was to be placed in danger on one of his leaves.

The Great War was to see the downfall of three Empires. As for the British Empire the participation of the self governing Dominions would give them more confidence eventually leading to the formation of the Commonwealth. The involvement of the Indian Army and troops from Africa was also to be significant.

Archie was to experience many things, including firing squads, the Battle of the Somme, and other predicaments affecting all who came into his orbit amidst the ever growing threat to life.

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