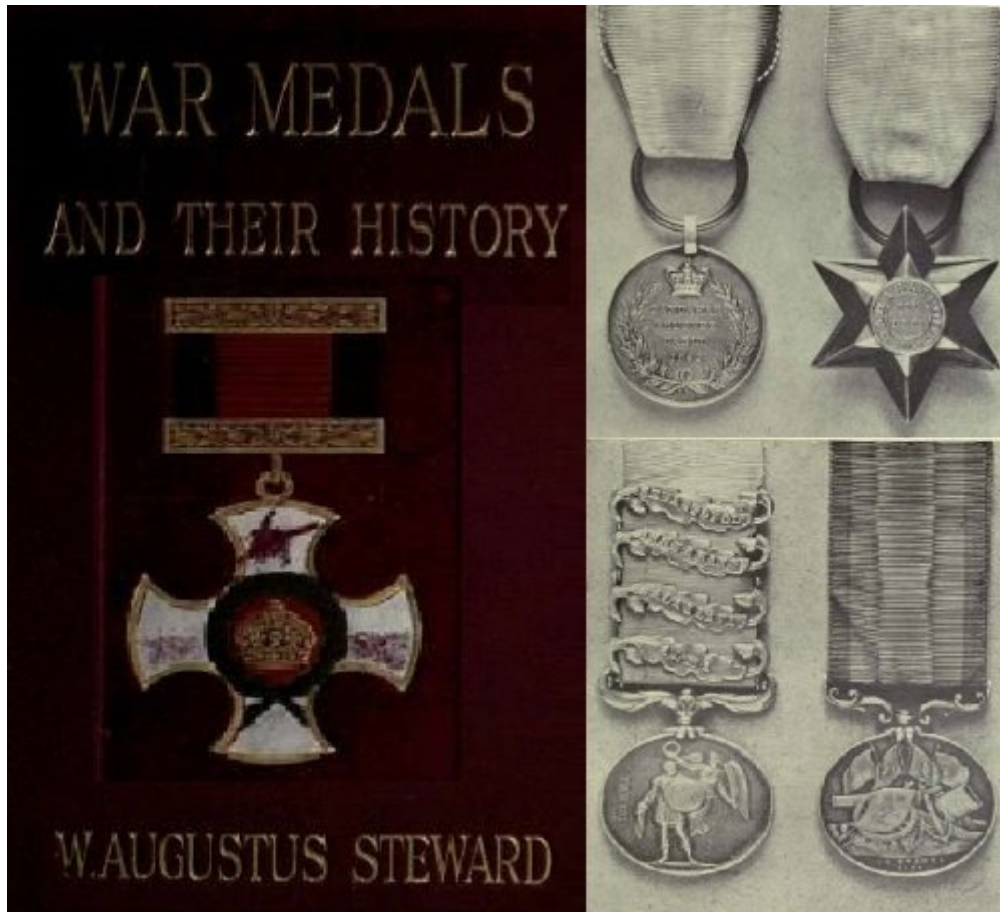




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War Medals And Their History



Synopsis

FOREWORDS

If any excuse were needed for penning this, it is to be found in the exceeding interest which was taken in my monograph "Badges of the Brave." Indeed, many readers have requested me to deal, at greater length, with a subject which not only opens up a great historical vista and awakens national sentiment, but, incidentally, serves an educational mission to those who collect and those who sell the metallic records of many a hard-fought field, which, when collated, form an imperishable record of our island story. The War Medal is a comparatively modern institution, otherwise we might have learned the names of the common folk who fought so tenaciously in the old wars, as, for instance, the Welsh infantry and Irish soldiers who, with the English bowmen, comprised the army of 30,000 which at Crecy routed an army of 120,000; the followers of the Black Prince who captured the impetuous King John at Poitiers, or the English archers whose deadly volleys made such havoc at Agincourt, on that fateful day in October nearly five hundred years ago; the brave seamen who, under Lord Howard, Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher, fought the "Invincible Armada"; and those who, under Raleigh, vigorously pursued the Spaniards on the high seas. We might have learned something of the men who composed the Royal Scots and the 18th Royal Irish, and helped to vindicate the reputation of the British soldier at Namur, and covered themselves with glory at Blenheim; the gallant Coldstream Guards who did such excellent service under Marlborough at Oudenarde and Malplaquet, as well as the Gloucesters and Worcesters who fought so well at Ramillies, or the Royal Welsh Fusiliers who served under George II at Dettingen. When, however, war medals were designed for distribution among successful combatants, a means of decorating surviving soldiers and sailors was established, and at the same time a sentimental and substantial record of a man's labours for his country upon the field of battle. So that, if the veterans of Drake's historic fleet, or Marlborough's dauntless soldiers, were not possessed of badges to distinguish them from the soldiers of industry, we, at any rate, may hold in our hands the medals which were awarded to those who served the immortal Nelson, and be proud to possess the medals which shone upon the breasts of our great grandparents who defied the Conqueror of Europe on that memorable Sunday, and made his sun to set upon the battlefield of Waterloo. Have you listened to the smart British veteran as he explains the disposition of the troops on that historic occasion—how the French cavalry "foamed itself away" in the face of those steady British squares? How he makes the Welsh blood tingle as he records the glorious deeds and death of Sir Thomas Picton, and the Scotsman's dance through his veins as he explains how, with the cold steel of their terrible bayonets, the Black Watch at Quatre Bras, and its second battalion, the Perthshires, at Waterloo, waited for the charge of the cuirassiers; and how Sergeant

Ewart of the Scots Greys captured the Eagle of the 45th, and then, with the rest of the Union Brigade (the English Royals and the Irish Inniskillings), crashed through the ranks of the faltering French, and scattered the veterans of Napoleon's army! Have you seen how the mention of the Guards holding the Chateau of Hougomont brightens the eye of the Englishman ? Yes ! Then just think what it is to touch and possess the solid proofs of the deeds that those men did, and to feel that you have in your possession the only recompense those brave and daring men received from a grateful country. Historical Value. • My collection of medals enables me to cover over a hundred years of history; takes me back to the stirring times when men yet met face to face in the Peninsula and at Waterloo; to the men who founded our Indian Empire. It enables me to keep in touch with sailors who fought in the battle of the Nile, at Trafalgar, and at

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