



Clarion Review ★★★★☆

GENERAL FICTION

## Follow Me to Glory

**Will Hutchison**

Infinity Publishing (December 2006)

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*Theirs not to make reply / Theirs not to reason why / Theirs but to do & die*

—Alfred Lord Tennyson *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854)

Ian Carlyle a second son of minor Scots nobility sets foot on the shore of Crimea equipped with superb training a hunger for acclaim and a chip on his shoulder. The character evolves and learns difficult lessons about himself and the true nature of war. He acquires the skills of all-out fighting from Billy Murphy an Irish soldier of fortune but combat techniques are only part of what's required. There is a psychological catalyst for Ian's drive rooted in a tragedy during his formative years and in a subtly shifting metaphor revisited throughout *Follow Me to Glory* Ian summons the courage and intensity of a leopard.

The Crimean War was fought for reasons of tangential national interest. Disastrously mismanaged by the British government the soldiers' suffering prompted the formation of the International Red Cross. Hutchison uses Ian's staff officer position as a device to move him around to the most compelling parts of battles. The author points out incompetence and intra-service malevolence where it exists and doesn't shy away from describing reprehensible conditions of trench warfare: "...the putrid stench of filth and decay. He saw with sadness their sunken hollow eyes the grey pallor of their skin chapped and cut lips. The deplorable conditions were sapping them of their energy their dignity their pride. They looked like stooped old men twice —three times their age."

Outstanding historical research underscores a well thought-out story. Experts from various institutions and military units were consulted. The author strives always for clarity even including maps of troop movements. The copy is squeaky clean and the effort at Briticizing dialogue could hardly have worked out better. One of the most notorious flaws of adventure drama Deus ex machina is classically represented by the sudden arrival of the cavalry to miraculously save the hero from certain death. In this case it almost literally occurs. That move and a deep affection for adjectives are really the only negative aspects of any importance to the book.

Will Hutchison picked up base knowledge of military customs and tactics as a career officer in the United States Army and Marines. He's a historical researcher lecturer photographer and participant in reenactments of battles. A planned sequel will transplant the hero into the American Civil War. *Follow Me to Glory* is recommended for readers of military history and for more general fans of crafted fiction as well.

(August 21, 2009)

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