



Canada's Little War: Fighting for the British Empire in Southern Africa 1899-1902 (Lorimer Illustrated History)

Carman Miller

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The Boer War in South Africa was Canada's first trial by fire. The pre-eminent superpower of the day, Great Britain, had decided to wage one of its 'little wars' against two white Protestant Dutch-speaking republics in southern Africa who had declared their independence from all European empires. At stake was control of rich resources; gold and diamonds; and strategic advantage.

Canada was divided. Many Canadians wanted to see their country prove its loyalty to the Empire by sending troops to fight alongside the British. Others felt Canada had no quarrel with the Boers, and no justification for taking up arms against them and their much-demonized leader.

The prime minister of the day, Wilfred Laurier, had wide support in Quebec where opposition to the war was strong. In the end his government's decision was to send what at the time was called 'Canada's little army,' a contingent that in the end numbered about 7,000 of a British force that ultimately exceeded 200,000. Some contributed to several conventional military victories, while other Canadian soldiers became part of a horrifying 'dirty war,' in which the British used tactics that included concentration camps for women and children and a scorched earth campaign of burning homes and farms.

Carman Miller is a leading expert on the Boer War, and he has written this short, illustrated account of Canadian involvement in a conflict which has many surprising parallels to contemporary events. In his book, he combines an account of key battles in the war that will interest readers of military history with the story of the political, social and cultural effects of the war on Canadian life, which will intrigue anyone interested in post-Confederation Canadian history.

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