

ON THE ROAD TO A GREAT ADVENTURE

My gaze had fixed itself upon the nearest of the lean, grey gunboats. As I watched, the sleeping greyhound seemed to move; in another moment the seeming illusion gave way to certainty—it *was* moving; gradually its pace accelerated and it slipped quietly out toward the open sea. A second gunboat followed, then a third, all making for the open. Immediately we were all excitement, for the rumour had been current that we might be there for several days. But the rumour was speedily disproved as the rattle of anchor chains became audible from the transports nearest the harbour mouth, and one by one they followed their little grey guides; and so, at three of the clock on October the third, 1914, the First Canadian Contingent with guns, ammunition, horses and equipment, left Gaspé en route to the great war.

Gradually method evolved itself out of apparent chaos. Three gunboats took the lead and the transports fell into line about a thousand yards from one another, so that eventually three lines were formed of about a dozen in each and the whole fleet moved forward into the Atlantic. The shores of Gaspé, dotted with white cottages; yellow stubble fields; hills red and purple with autumnal foliage—these were our last pictures of Canada—truly the last that many of us were ever to see, and we looked upon them, our hearts filled with emotions that these scenes had never given rise to before. Our ruddy Canadian emblem, the maple leaf, gave its characteristic tinge to the receding shores—a colour to be seen often on the field of battle, but never in the foliage of a European landscape.