

City companies, while the Barrie, and Whithy companies, again became independent.

Early in 1864 I left the Barrie Grammar School and became a law student in the firm of Messrs. Ardagh & Ardagh, Barristers, etc., in Barrie, while in the firm of Messrs. Boulton & McCarthy, a few doors away were two close chums and schoolmates, Willie Irwin, son of the Head Master of the Barrie Grammar School, and Walter Keating, son of an Irish gentleman settled in Barrie. As at this time the newspapers were printing most disturbing rumours as to all possible and impossible Fenian doings, which stirred the townspeople greatly, while creating a distinctly warlike spirit, it is not surprising that the tone of our frequent meetings was of a like character. This soon brought about a visit to a popular Barrister, Lieutenant William O'Brien of the Barrie Rifles, (now Colonel O'Brien of Shanty Bay), expressing our desire to join, and who, though at first refusing to entertain the proposition, at last consented if our families agreed, which they finally did, greatly to his surprise, and only upon his promise to look after us closely. So soon as the fact that we had joined the company became known, the Rector's nephew, James Anderson, another close friend insisted on going also, greatly to the distress of the Rector and other relatives, as he was inclined to be delicate, he also had his way. This was too much for another schoolmate, Harry Ardagh, of Orillia, who also joined, while other boys were urging their parents for permission to do so. At this time Lieutenant O'Brien called a halt, and would have no more of our friends, saying he already had too many of us. I may say that the eldest of our party was not yet 18 years of age.

Christmas Day fell on a Sunday in 1864, and I shall never forget the gloom that overshadowed the Christmas festivities in Barrie homes, or the Rector's sermon, with the deadly stillness, the broken voices and stifled sobs of those we loved. We were only lads, and in our excitement at being selected had not counted the cost, but now we learned "that war has its darker side." The last days in Barrie fairly dragged along, notwithstanding frequent strenuous drills and watching crowds, as Captain McKenzie was very proud of the Barrie Rifles, and a glutton for work.

We were to leave early in the morning of the 28th December, and with what loving care were our knapsacks packed for us, with little luxuries slipped in, that we would not see, but later had to be removed before inspection was made for just such articles. Irwin and myself living out of Town, said our last good-bye, and who can tell the sadness of those partings, then drove in together to the Armoury, and marched to the station. The hour was early, but the