

75TH BATTALION C.E.F.

IN July, 1915, it was decided to raise an infantry battalion from among the cavalry regiments of Toronto, Brantford and St. Catharines. The 9th Mississauga Horse, with their usual energy, raised men so quickly that permission was obtained to recruit a full battalion. It speaks well for all those connected with the work at this time that the battalion was recruited up to full strength in ten days. A proportion of the credit was due to the energy and organizing ability of Lt.-Col. Le Grand Reed, O.C. 170th Mississaugas then lieutenant in the 9th M. H., in command of the machine gun section. Lt.-Col. S. G. Beckett, Commanding Officer of the 9th M. H., took command of the battalion. Early in August they went to Niagara camp, a breakfast was given to the officers by Mayor Church that morning. The trip was made on the Corona in one of the worst storms experienced on the lake.

It was a tired but cheerful body of men, some in plain clothes, some in uniform, that disembarked at Niagara-on-the-Lake, but they were full of the spirit and enthusiasm which has since resulted in their recognition as one of the best battalions raised in Toronto. During their period in camp 250 men left in a draft and the unit recruited up to strength in four days.

After two months' training in camp they returned to Toronto and took up quarters at Exhibition. It was difficult to realize that the half-uniformed mob which arrived in Niagara that wet morning was the same body which returned in a few weeks a well set-up, smart and businesslike battalion. The work of training was kept up and all remember the excellent appearance they made in a parade through the city which was held while they were quartered in Toronto; every man seemed personally interested in keeping up to the high reputation which the unit had already earned.

In March, 1916, the battalion sailed for England, and after an uneventful voyage, disembarked safely and proceeded to Bramshot. Here training was started all over again from recruit work on. Sections and platoons were engaged in bombing, bayonet, musketry and machine gun work, and all the intricacies of trench tactics were readily absorbed by minds bent on "doing their bit". A high degree of general efficiency was reached when 850 men were drafted to France to reinforce the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Pioneer Battalion and 60th Battalion. All the 75th Battalion officers and the bulk of the non-commissioned officers remained with those left and the battalion was reorganized and brought up to strength by drafts from the 84th Battalion, another Toronto unit. The new material, while arriving in England much later than the 75th Battalion, soon reached a high standard of efficiency and early in August the battalion left for France, disembarking at an unnamed port and proceeding immediately to billets in the rear of the front line. Each company went into the trenches separately with other units for two days' instruction, and ten days after arrival in France the battalion went into the trenches as a unit about the middle of



LIEUT.-COL. S. G. BECKETT

August, in the neighborhood of St. Eloi. This portion of the line was at that time held by the 11th Brigade, under Brig.-General Odium, whose divisional commander was Major-General Watson, of the 4th Division.

The battalion's first turn of duty in the trenches covered a period of 23 days, an unusually long time, but officers and men quickly adapted themselves to the discomfort of trench work and proved themselves quite up to the standard which their friends and admirers expected. The period was one of normal trench warfare, with bombing, artillery fire and trench raids. On the night of Sept. 8th and 9th a trench raid was conducted under Lieut. H. L. Devlin and Lieut. F. C. Howard, both of whom have since been missing, although Devlin is now reported a prisoner. The raid was carried out successfully, though both of these young officers were severely wounded and were placed in a shell-hole by their men for safety. As they did not return a search party was organized in the forenoon of the 5th Sept. in broad daylight, and at about 1 p.m. they set out on their extremely hazardous errand with a devotion and

willingness which is beyond praise. British artillery maintained a barrage during this search. There were five in the party and they carried two stretchers. Their efforts were unsuccessful, though they found a revolver and the caps of the missing officers. All returned safely to the trenches keenly disappointed. The members of this forlorn hope were all rewarded and complimented individually by the General. Sergt. B. C. Rowley, of "A" Company, was awarded the Military Medal and recommended for a commission. Corporal Bullen, "A" Company, the Military Medal, and since promoted to rank of sergeant. Corporal McGowan, "A" Company, was awarded a bar to a Distinguished Conduct Medal earned in South Africa. Private Richardson, of "A" Company, a Military Medal, and since promoted to corporal. Private Nobbs, the Military Medal.

Among the other honors won by this battalion during their first turn in the trenches were Military Cross to Lieut. W. K. Commins, then acting bombing officer, succeeding Lieut. Devlin. Military Medals were awarded Pte. Arding and Pte. Sale, both of the bombing section, making a total of one Military Cross, one bar to D.C.M., and six Military Medals earned by men of the 75th in their first experience of modern fighting.

Casualties numbered about 150 of all ranks, among them being Lieut. Bartle, of Niagara Falls, Ont., who was killed on his first turn of duty. Lieut. Benson Wright, of the machine gun section, was wounded on the second day in the trenches. Capt. G. L. Watt was painfully wounded, by high-explosive, while inspecting his section of their trench and lost his right eye. He is now on leave at home. Lieut. M. A. Neelon was painfully wounded in the face while repelling a German raid, which was a miserable failure and never reached the parapets; he bravely and with fortitude remained on duty. Lieut. J. C. Snelgrove, while conducting a raid on the German lines, was wounded in the mouth by a bomb and is now in Toronto recovering.

(Continued on next page).