

# CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE BATTALION

BY THE ORDERLY ROOM SERGEANT

A people are usually judged by the glory of their past, the greatness of their present, and prospects of their future. As a rule they are prone to look back upon their early struggles and view with pride the determined efforts put forth to overcome the difficulties that beset them on their upward climb. This past is known as History and great men and great peoples always find in its pages the necessary incentive to urge them to accomplish great things in their days. So it is with organizations, large and small, each has its history, and its history is the foundation stone upon which its success is built.

If this be true, why not commit to history the early doings of our Regimental organization, in order that those who follow us in the vicissitudes of war may be roused to greater effort in the times that are to come, by a knowledge of the early doings of this unit?

It is with this idea in view that the writer intends to trace in each issue of the "Breath O' The Heather," in chronological order, the course as it is run of "The 236th Overseas Battalion, (The New Brunswick Kilties—Sir Sam's Own), C. E. F."

The idea of having a battalion of Scottish Highlanders represent the Province of New Brunswick on the battlefields of France, Flanders and Germany occurred to Lieut.-Colonel Percy A. Guthrie, late O. C. 10th Battalion, First Division, when lying in No. 2 Canadian Stationary Hospital in France, upon hearing the skirl of the pipes as a Scottish battalion passed on its way up to the line. This idea was concurred in by Capt. Conrad G. Geggie, also late M. O. of the 10th, when he met his one-time O. C. on the decks of the ill-fated "Hesperian," subsequently torpedoed off the coast of Ireland in September, 1915, with both officers aboard.

After returning to Canada and recovering from his wounds, Col. Guthrie set about to form his battalion, along the lines of his previous plans, and in its organization he had the able support of Capt. Geggie, who became Major and M. O. of the new unit.

May 15th, 1916, the New Brunswick Kilties came into existence by an order authorizing its organization, issued from Militia

headquarters at Ottawa. It did not however begin to recruit until September, for the reason that there were under process of enlistment in the Province of New Brunswick some six other battalions, and the Officers Commanding requested that the new unit, with its pipes and kilts, would not break into the field until they had filled their ranks. These new battalions were ready to leave for Overseas in the month of September, and so it was that the campaign to fill the Kilties began September 25th. Following the old traditions of Scottish clans, a novel scheme was devised for the first campaign put on by the unit. There are fifteen counties in the Province of New Brunswick, and in each of the fifteen counties, near the shiretown, on the opening night a meeting was arranged. This meeting was addressed by a soldier back from the front, who had been wounded in the service of his King, as well as by prominent civilian speakers. Huge bonfires were prepared on the highest summit near each shiretown. At 8 o'clock on the night of September 25th there appeared before the large gatherings of citizens on the platform prepared for that purpose a little girl dressed in the tartan of Clan Maclean, who opened the meeting by reciting "Fire the pile on Craig-gowan Height." Immediately upon the close of the recitation, a piper in the distance began playing "The March of the Cameron Men," representing, as the music came to the ears of the listeners, the septs of the different Scottish clans as they gathered at the call of duty to repel the invader and maintain their liberties in the olden days. As the skirl of the pipes reached the ears of the listeners, a torch was touched to the bonfire on the nearby hill and there blazed into the heavens the red call of war. These bonfires were so arranged that no citizen of the Province could stand on his doorstep without viewing in the sky the reflection of one of these calls to arms.

An arrangement was also made by which a flaming torch, in the shape of a St. Andrew's Cross, was passed around the Province, from shiretown to shiretown, by automobile, motor cycle, horseman and foot-runner, representing the method in which the runners carried the word to the different isolated hamlets in the days of Bruce. In the middle of his address, the speaker would be interrupted by this torch-bearer, who, clad in the tartan of the Clan would come dashing into the audience with his blazing torch held on high, and hurl the flaming message at the speaker's feet, whereupon the speaker would pick up the fiery brand and pass it on to another runner, who would carry it to the next village. So, around the province on this night was drawn the "Girdle of Fire" and people, having been advised in the meantime as to the route that would be followed, came for miles to watch the flaming torch on its path of duty, as it called out of the forest and from the farm the sturdy sons of the old sires, who in the days that will never be forgotten, maintained the might of the greatest race that ever graced a world. The accompanying map shows the course of the fiery torch, as it circled the Province. During the fifteen days following the begin-

ning of the campaign, fifteen meetings were held in each County of the Province making 225 meetings in all. The country stirred such as it had never been before, and recruits came trooping to answer the call.

SEPTEMBER, 1916

Sep. 25. When the recruiting campaign opened, Lieut. Col. Percy A. Guthrie had the assistance of the following officers, who had previously returned from France, been commissioned in the Battalion and posted to their respective duties:—Captain Frank Eason, Adjutant, (Lieut. 26th Batt.); Major G. Stewart Ryder, (Lieut. 31st Batt.); Major D. Allan Laurie, (Lieut. 2nd Batt.); Captain Cecil R. Mersereau, (Lieut. 26th Batt.); Major Cuthbert J. Morgan, (Capt. 5th Batt.); Captain Conrad G. Geggie, M. O., (10th Batt.); Captain Joseph P. McPeake, Paymaster, (Lieut. 1st Batt.); Captain Edward J. Mooney, (Lieut. 4th C. M. R.); Lieut. N. Cameron MacFarlane, (L. Cpl. P.P.C.L.I.); Lieut. Ray L. Brewer, (L. Cpl. 26th Batt.); Lieut. Frank H. Ryder, (Sergt. 10th Batt.); Lieut. Frederick W. C. Wetmore, (Cpl. 4th C. M. R.); Lieut. Andrew J. Baldwin, (Pte. 5th Batt.); Lieut. J. Albert Humphrey, (Lieut. C. F. A.); and Lieut. H. Arthur Seeley, (Sergt. 8th Batt.). Captain J. Douglas Black, (Lieut. 71st Regt.), had been appointed Quartermaster, and Captain William S. Godfrey, (C. Q. M. S.), promoted Chaplain. Regimental Sergeant Major Edenirum Bayers, (66th Princess Louise Fusiliers), and Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant James Dymond, (R. C. R.), had also been appointed to their respective ranks.

Sep. 30. Captain J. P. McPeake held first pay parade.

OCTOBER, 1916

- 4th. Sergt. Irving D. Appleby promoted C. S. M.
- 7th. R. Q. M. S. Charles E. Blair, (13th Batt.); Sergt. Percy F. Godenrath, (16th Batt.); Lieut. H. H. MacLean, (52nd Batt.); Lieut. Herbert S. Everett, (4th C. M. R.); and Lieut. E. Alban Sturdee, (25th Batt.), arrived from France, reported, and were commissioned in the battalion.
- 9th. Clachan Fair opened in the Armouries.
- 12th. First Battalion route march with pipes and drums.
- 14th. Battalion parade for issue Highland uniform.
- 16th. St. Mary's placed "out of bounds" to troops.
- 22nd. First church parade. Protestants to Parish Church and Catholics to St. Dunstan's.
- 24th. Inoculation parade to M. O.'s office.
- 25th. Strength of Battalion 234. Officers' mess formally opened.
- 28th. Inoculation parade.
- 31st. Western recruiting campaign authorized. Major C. G. Geggie, M. O., and Lieut. Frank Ryder to Calgary, Alberta; Lieut. H. Arthur Seeley and Lieut. A. C. Baldwin to Regina, Sask; Captain Percy F. Godenrath to British Columbia; Major Frank Eason to Toronto, and Major D. Allan Laurie to Quebec. Lt. Col. Guthrie accompanied party to Ottawa to arrange Ontario campaign. Captain C. R. Mersereau