

The Western Scot

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4th, 1915

TRANSFERS

In no way can a man discourage his Company Commander or show disloyalty to his Battalion Commander better than by the all too prevalent habit of transferring to any new unit that is formed. Few men realize the trouble and care that has been expended upon them by their officers to bring them to a certain state of efficiency, and no more direct insult can be given to an officer than to have a man ask for a transfer to another unit.

There are, of course, some cases in which men have a very legitimate excuse for transferring—chances of promotion, friends or relatives in the new unit—but even they should think twice before leaving the Battalion with which they originally enlisted. Men who have no inducements of this kind can only be looked upon as being in the game for the living it provides, and as the lowest type of all men—he who wears the uniform to escape criticism and who has no intention of ever fighting for King and Country.

In many cases, in fact, in most cases, men who have transferred from this Battalion have found that they are very much worse off than if they had stayed where they were, but, sensibly, they are not permitted to come back. Both in this Battalion and in the new unit they find that there is no possible place for the shirker.

THE DRAFT DRAFTED

The long looked-for settlement of what was to become of our draft of 250 men, has finally been decided upon.

We are to keep these well trained men with us, and the whole Battalion, officers, N.C.O.'s and men, welcome our comrades back, and feel indeed that we are greatly strengthened by the absorption of what has been known as No. 5 Company. These men were the first to volunteer in a hurry-up call to the front, and much as we were loth to lose them, the order to furnish a draft was promptly complied with and the men have been ready and prepared to leave at a day's notice. As we all know, it is a severe test for a soldier to be kept in this state of uncertainty, for months, and naturally enough the men of the Draft have considered themselves a separate unit, in expectation of being absorbed into some other unit abroad.

A most happy solution to the breaking up of the Draft and its distribution to the various companies in the Battalion has been arranged. Fortunately each company has been allowed to remain under strength in anticipation of this event, and each company has unanimously agreed to rearrange platoons in such a manner as to leave vacant almost a whole platoon for the reception of the platoons from the Draft. In this way the men of the Draft will practically remain together, and the close friendships formed during the past few months will remain undisturbed.

While we realize the disappointment experienced by our friends of No. 5 Company, we must acknowledge that the Battalion as a whole is being benefited, and our efficiency increased to such an extent that it will undoubtedly expedite our early departure for the front.

NOTES

The Chaplain of the 50th Regiment, Gordon Highlanders, has favored the "Western Scot" with the following extracts from the diary of one of his sons, who is with the 16th Battalion, Canadian Scottish, at the front:

"I heard that Capt. J. H. MacGregor, of the Victoria Gordons, was killed. I'll wager that 'Mac' did not go under without putting up a good fight. He was a brave soldier, and a MacGregor every inch. Our troops suffered heavily in that terrible struggle."

"The first few months I was here in Flanders, our reply to the German fire was, for want of ammunition, very weak. Now, however, the tables have turned. We send over to the Germans half a hundred good, smart shells for every twenty they send to us. It is difficult for those in Canada to imagine the pleasure and confidence it gives the Canadian troops to hear the shells from our guns whistling overhead bound for the German lines in payment with interest for the missiles they sent us a few months ago."

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"We have been in the trenches ten days, and shall be probably for five or ten days more, before we go into billet, a few miles behind the trenches. It will be delightful to get a bath and clean clothes after being in dirty trenches for two or three weeks. Occasionally the Germans break the monotony of our burrows by sending us a gratuity of highly explosive bombshells. As we do not believe in taking something for nothing, we return the compliment in good measure."

"After eighteen days and nights in the trenches, hut encampment seems like a bit of Paradise. It is great luxury to have a floor on which to sleep, a cook to prepare our meals, with country lanes and green fields in which to roam at our sweet will. In the trenches, whether by day or by night, asleep or awake, there is a constraint which in time becomes very wearing on mind and body and health."

"The German snipers are wonderful shots, and unprincipled in their deluding deviltry. The man who says they are not good shots is talking through his hat. A couple of days ago one of our snipers looked over our transverse parapet, and although only about five inches of his head was exposed, and too, for less than two minutes, he fell dead with a bullet through his head, and by a German sniper, 450 yards away. Our snipers are picked men, and equally sure shots with those of the enemy. It is a game of 'tit for tat.' In our civilization and mode of warfare we are, after all, not far removed from the savage Indian of America."

"Judging from home news, Col. Ross is making good the confidence which Major-General Sir Sam Hughes seems to have in him, and is rapidly building up a strong battalion of fine men in the 67th Regiment, Western Scots. I would like to see the Scots in the firing line, for I am sure the men from the Kootenays, Fort George, and Prince Rupert, many of whom I know well, would make the feathers fly, and the Germans march on the double with their heels towards the men from the west."

"Capt. Muirhead came over to France a couple of days ago in command of No. 1 Company, 'the old Gordons.' A more gallant lot of men never landed in France than the Gordons of Victoria. There are only twenty-seven of them now not out of action; still the twenty are there to the last man when it comes to action."