

2ND BATTALION C.E.F.

WAR was declared on August 4th 1914, and inside of a week Canada offered 30,000 men to the Empire's cause. This was accepted and in less than a month 40,000 were mobilized; in two months 32,000 men were in England. Among these were the 2nd Battalion, to which the 9th M. H. contributed one company, five officers and 226 men. The battalion was organized at Valcartier camp, and was commanded by Lt.-Col. David Watson, of Quebec, now Major-General. It was known as the Eastern Ontario Battalion, and was in the 1st Brigade of the first complete Canadian Division ever assembled. The brigade was commanded by Brigadier-General Mercer, who lost his life on June 3rd, 1916, while inspecting the 4th C. M. R. lines near Zillebek.

While in Valcartier camp every effort was made to render conditions adaptable for military purposes, and the period there was spent in drills, manoeuvres and musketry; the only ordeal which met with unanimous disapproval was inoculation. On the dark, wet night of Sept. 23-24, 1914, the infantry entrained for Quebec and embarked in a fleet of Atlantic liners, which assembled in Gaspé Basin, and were conveyed to England by British warships. Disembarked unexpectedly at Plymouth and Devonport, where command of the Division was taken over by Lieut.-Col. E. A. H. Alderson, C.B.

The 2nd Battalion were encamped on Salisbury Plain, where for four long months their patience and endurance were severely tested by cold, rain and mud, the like of which none had ever experienced. The battalion was inspected by Lord Roberts prior to his departure for France.

In the second week of February the first Canadian Division sailed from Avonmouth and disembarked at St. Nazaire, on the Bay of Biscay, entrained and proceeded to Ploegsteert, in that fateful area known later as the Ypres salient. On their first turn in the trenches or behind the barricades nothing serious occurred, and few casualties were borne, and it was during this period the battalion gained the experience which enabled them to hold their own with the best among so many heroic units. They were in the neighborhood of Neuve Chapelle during the operations in that vicinity, but were not engaged, and were afterwards withdrawn to rest billet. On April 22nd, 1915, the Canadian Division held a line of 5,000 yards on the right of the French, from a point about half a mile southwest of Poilcappelle, extending in a southwesterly direction to the Ypres-Roulers Railway, there connecting up with the British 28th Division. The left Canadian front was held by the 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade, the right by the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade, the 1st Brigade being in reserve. At 5 p.m. the Germans launched their gas attack and drove in the French a considerable distance, and the 2nd Battalion were thunderstruck by the appearance of French soldiers, largely Turcos and Zouaves, with distorted and twisted faces, vomiting and gasping for breath, retreating wildly before an enemy which they could not resist. Chaos resulted, but quickly steps were taken which produced a degree of order that enabled the 1st Brigade to go to the assistance of their comrades in the 3rd Brigade, which, through its left flank being in the air, had been forced to fall back, pivoting on a point held by the 13th Battalion (Royal Highlanders of Canada). Here the 2nd Battalion came up and supported the 16th and 10th near St. Julien. At midnight, April 22-23, these two battalions assaulted the wood in which four British guns were taken and succeeded in destroying them. At 7 a.m., April 23rd, 1915, the 2nd Battalion occupied a position about half a mile northeast of Fortuin, fighting bravely under their gallant Colonel. They were suffering seriously, but continued holding a line which was repelling the attacks of greatly superior forces.

On April 24th orders were received for the 2nd Battalion to retire, but Col. Watson being telephoned if he could hold on, and answering in the affirmative, same was cancelled, but finally it became imperative and the battalion was retired by companies, under the personal supervision of its Colonel, who in person went into the front line and gave his company commanders their orders. The losses during this operation were very heavy. The battalion was moved out of the firing line on the morning of the 26th, and were reinforced by a draft of five officers and 112 men, which represented about 25 per cent. of their losses. On the evening of the 28th, Col. Watson received orders to advance and dig a line of trenches to connect up the French right and the British left.

They moved out early in the evening and came under a hail of fire, which caused delay; finally they got under way and marched across the Ypres Canal bridge and reached a spot where only a few days before they had incurred serious losses. During that awful night march under all kinds of artillery fire they moved silently forward with the determination of men who were intent on doing all that was asked of them. Col. Watson led out two companies into the open to cover the other two companies, who did the digging. They dug as men never dug before, but fortunately the enemy's fire was inaccurate and losses here were slight. At 2 a.m. the work was finished. The battalion returned to Vlamertinghe, from whence with its brigade, they were withdrawn on the 4th of May to billets in Bailleul. Lieut. A. N. Klotz and Lieut. Leslie Gordon were killed during these operations and the battalion since has been reinforced from other sources. At the present time it is not known definitely if any of the old 9th M. H. boys are still with the unit, but we know that the material by which they are replaced will have to work hard to maintain the reputation earned in the eventful fight in which Canada saved the day.

OTHER UNITS.

5th Canadian Mounted Rifles.

The 9th M. H. provided one squadron for this regiment with an establishment of six officers and 135 men. The squadron was commanded by Major Walter Brown, with Lieut. T. D. Archibald, Lieut. Norman Gianelli, Lieut. Leslie Harling, Lieut. Riches and Lieut. Tudhope. The unit was subsequently trained as infantry. In the chance Lieut Tudhope was transferred to the Royal Canadian Dragoons. The 8th C.M.R. was incorporated and formed a portion of one of the C. M. R. battalions. Of the officers Lieut. Leslie Harling has since been killed and Lieut. Giannelli was wounded, came home on leave and has returned to duty.

The 9th M. H. also provided recruits for the following overseas units:

58th Batt.—60 men.

37th Batt.—50 men.

95th Batt.—95 men, under Major J. Morrow Oxley, of the 9th M. H.

REGIMENTAL PARADES.

The 9th Mississauga parade on Thursday evenings weekly in the Riding School, Armouries.

"Markers" is sounded at 7.55 p.m.

"Fall in" is sounded at 8.00 p.m.

"Officers" is sounded at 8.05 p.m.

Intending recruits should report at the Armouries at a quarter to eight on Monday and Thursday evenings.