

E D I T O R I A L

Struck swiftly by death since the *Quarterly's* last appearance, Deputy Commr. Henri Albert Royal Gagnon, C.B.E., A.D.C., first and only deputy commissioner of the Force to die in office, was an undeniably capable officer

The Force Loses a Noble Son whose life was founded in and inseparable from the Force's many traditions. His father, the late Supt. Severe Gagnon, was an original officer of the N.W.M.P. and took part in the historic trek of 1874 across the plains to the Rockies; his mother, Emma, was a daughter of Hon. Joseph Royal, third lieutenant-governor of the Northwest Territories before the formation of the prairie provinces. Of such pioneer stock was he born at the Mounted Police barracks, Regina, on Feb. 20, 1893, when the foundations of civilized society still were being laid in that part of the West, and through childhood in this heart of the Force's activities was he cradled and reared. It is but small wonder then that he should at an early age decide to follow in the footsteps of his father, and that he carried out that resolve. Literally all his 54 years were spent in close touch with the Mounted Police; and his untimely death severs yet another and very strong link with the Force's beginnings, for he was the last "original son" of the Force—to use an appellation so often applied to a member whose father was one of the Force's original members.

His parents sent him in 1901 to Montreal where in due time he graduated from St. Mary's College, and soon afterwards, in 1911, he was commissioned a lieutenant with the Royal Canadian Regiment in Quebec City. With the outbreak of World War 1 he enlisted at once and went Overseas with the First Contingent of the C.E.F. Throughout that conflict he served with distinction attaining the rank of major and spending 18 months in Belgium and France where he was wounded. He was demobilized from the permanent force in October, 1919, shortly after his arrival back in this country with his bride the former Helen Johnson whom he married on August 19, two months before, at Gretna, Scotland.

It was on Feb. 1, 1920, that he realized a long-cherished hope by being appointed inspector in the newly-named R.C.M.P. In the next 27 years he was destined to serve in most parts of Canada. From "A" Division, Ottawa, Ont., his first post, he was transferred three years later to "E" Division (British Columbia) as paymaster and supply officer. In the autumn of 1927, he went to "G" Division (N.W.T.) and during the five years he spent there in the Great Bear Lake district he knew a freedom of spirit and movement which so appealed to him that he was to look back on those years as the happiest of his life.

From Northern duties Inspector Gagnon was moved to his old stamping grounds at Quebec City, as officer commanding the sub-division, and three years later, in the summer of 1935, he was appointed to the command of Montreal Sub-division. In this latter role his dynamic personality brought vigour and enthusiasm to many important assignments, not the least among them being the conspiracy prosecutions which sprang from newly-instituted R.C.M.P. drives against a rampant border-smuggling evil, and he assumed and met willingly obligations that might have daunted many.

His first promotion, that to superintendent, came the following year, and 13 months later he was appointed acting assistant commissioner and given leave of absence for one year while on loan to the municipal authorities of Quebec City for the purpose of re-organizing the local police department.

This over with, he returned to the R.C.M.P., assuming his substantive rank of superintendent, to head the Force's busy "C" Division (Quebec Province), in which capacity, being a fluent French and English bilinguist, he was an ideal representative for the Force during the opening four years of the war. Then, in 1943, with the rank of assistant commissioner and as Officer Commanding "F" Division (Saskatchewan), he was transferred to Regina, Sask.—the community of his birth which had been commanded by his father in the "gay '90's".

After two years there he was moved back to Ottawa and appointed Director of Criminal Investigation. In this position, which gave him ultimate responsibility for all major Federal investigations across the nation, the war now approaching its final stages imposed heavy obligations upon him. Most memorable among the duties of national importance that fell to his lot as D.C.I. was his supervision of the lengthy and sensational espionage