

Ex-Commissioner

Stuart Taylor Wood, CMG

by G. T. HANN, MBE

Departmental Secretary

COMM. S. T. Wood, CMG, at his own request retired from active duty at RCMP Headquarters, Ottawa, on Apr. 30, 1951 and handed over his command to Asst. Commr. L. H. Nicholson, MBE—former Director of Criminal Investigation—who is his successor. Typical of the former Commissioner he worked overtime—as he has done for years—on his last day of duty to give careful attention to his official mail and to say good-bye to those who had not had an opportunity of bidding him farewell earlier in the day when the officers of the Force at Headquarters and the senior Civil Servants on the one hand, and the non-commissioned officers and constables in the Ottawa area on the other, had met him for the purpose of wishing him God-speed and much happiness in his retirement, and on which occasions presentations were made to him.

Background, Tradition and Early Training

Stuart Taylor Wood was born at Napanee, Ont., on Oct. 17, 1889. His father, Asst. Commr. Zachary Taylor Wood, CMG—who had a most distinguished career in the Force—was a nephew of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. He was also a great grandson of Zachary Taylor, the 12th President of the United States. To bring Stuart's background into full prominence, it must also be remembered that his grandfather, Capt. John Taylor Wood commanded the *Tallahassee*, formerly the *Altanta* and took this cruiser out of Halifax Harbour by way of the "Eastern Passage" one dark night

in August 1864, while two Federal cruisers waited outside in vain for their prey. It is believed that neither before nor since that time has any large ship passed through this shallow water-way with its tortuous channel and many sand-bars.

The two Federal cruisers previously referred to were in the main ship channel on the western side of McNabb's Island and the daring feat of Captain Wood was accomplished only by the aid of an exceptionally high tide and the skilful navigation of Pilot "Jock" Fleming. One result of this was that the British Government hastily fortified the eastern shores of Halifax Harbour.

Captain Wood rendered other distinguished service to the Confederacy. He recruited the crew of the *Merrimac* and commanded the "After Division" of that ironclad in the famous fight with the *Monitor* at Hampton Roads. At the close of the war, Captain Wood, with a price upon his head, in company with Secretary Breckenridge and one other man, escaped from Florida to Cuba in an open boat. Breckenridge went to London, England; Captain Wood made his way to Halifax. Perhaps he was influenced in this decision by the kindly reception given to the *Tallahassee* in 1864. For years he engaged in the shipping business and died in Halifax in 1904.

With such antecedents it is not surprising that the father of the boy who was to become the Commissioner of Canada's noted police force should have had an outstanding and distinguished career. Soon after graduating from the