

Editorial...

When the *Quarterly* came into being a little more than a dozen years ago there were but few original members of the Force alive, and during the intervening 12-odd years the number of those grand old troopers has dwindled as one by one they rode out into the great beyond on their last patrol.

End of Chapter One In the July issue of this magazine we recorded a sad deletion of their ranks in the death of (Reg. No. 28), ex-Inspr. Wm. Parker. Of the 1874 originals he was the fourth last of all ranks to go, the last to attain a commission.

Now all are gone. Reg. No. 247, ex-Sgt. Major F. A. Bagley, Reg. No. 52, ex-Sub-Cst. W. Grain and Reg. No. 50, ex-Staff Cst. J. B. Mitchell have followed the others in that order, in quick succession they broke camp and departed; the death of Colonel Mitchell, last of the Old Guard to leave, wrote finis to an important chapter of the Canadian West.

It is more than 71 years since the N.W.M.P. first ventured across uninhabited stretches of prairie in the face of unknown dangers. Men of vigour and courage with little incentive other than a spirit of adventure and enterprise they took advantage of the opportunities that were theirs. "Pioneers of the Plains" they have been labelled, but somehow the appellation seems inadequate. A few white men, it is true, most of them now centuries dead, preceded them across the prairies—the LaVerendrye brothers, Henry Kelsey and a smattering of other explorers, traders and missionaries; nevertheless the Bagleys and the Grains and the Mitchells were trail blazers and builders of empire in every sense of those words, sent ahead to make the land safe for the pioneers who followed. They knew the lonely palisades of Forts Calgary, Edmonton and Battleford and some of them witnessed the gradual transition from those palisades to the castellated sky-lines of modern cities, the conversion of Butler's Great Lone Land into a great land dotted with many communities laced together with ribbons of steel and highways. Yes, those early riders of the plains were more than pioneers. That is why we say that, in a way, they were discoverers.

All too easily can the achievements of the old North West Mounted Police fade from the mind and memory; unfortunately the average Canadian knows little of the real history of that band of 300 men who were responsible for the comparative freedom of the West from lawlessness in early settlement days.

The Force is proud to pay tribute to the courageous vanguard that laid its foundation and left the traditions on which, in part, its prestige still rests. But it is sad, too, that the Last Post has sounded for the originals of '74.

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In the death of Reg. No. 247, ex-Sgt. Major F. A. Bagley at Banff, Alta., the Force lost one of its outstanding personalities, one of its '74 originals, a man who had served it faithfully and long. Elsewhere in this issue we tell something of **Major Bagley** his career as a policeman, but on this page the *Quarterly* wishes to say a few words in more personal vein regarding him. Major Bagley had lived all of Mounted Police history and he knew the facts concerning it. Experience was his teacher and Bagley, though far from being a crank on the subject, resented those who in writing about the Force's early activities deliberately distorted the facts merely in an attempt to achieve a measure of drama or for their own convenience. A kind courtly gentleman who moved with the times, he possessed a wonderful knowledge of things past and present and invariably was willing to share the wisdom of his many years with us. It was a wisdom on which we could depend for time had left his memory unimpaired and seemingly had sharpened his senses and made him more alert.

His letters to us were shot through with flashes of philosophic humour. In a typical one, written not so many weeks ago, he expressed a thought to the editorial committee which provides, better than anything we say could, a key to his character:

"We old 'originals' are prone sometimes to believe that we are neglected or ignored by a generation that 'knew not Joseph' and his works . . . I am now in my 87th year and my interest and pride in the splendid fellows who are today carrying on, and even sometimes excelling the great traditions of the old Force, never slackens.