

Military Promotion Should Depend Upon Ability

Spencer Williamson in Westminster Gazette

A great problem in the creation of a new army is the selection of leaders. There has been no lack of junior officers; almost every battalion has far more than its complement of subalterns, and the young men who have offered themselves are, broadly speaking, the pick of the country. But a million men make many armies, even if each army is the size of the original Expeditionary Force of six divisions. Each division requires, besides the general who commands it, a commander for each of its three brigades and for its group of batteries. Upon the knowledge, judgement, and energy of these superior officers will depend the good or bad working of the division in the field, and the failure of any one of them may wreck the whole body in battle, even if all the men have had a first-rate training and reveal a bravery that accords with the traditions of the army and of the race. The selection of general officers is, in time of peace, a delicate matter, because it is hedged in by a number of traditions. In ordinary times the officers of an army are professional; they intend to spend the best years of their life in the service. They expect to be promoted each in turn. This is everywhere the case within the sphere of the regiment, and as generals are selected from among those whom lapse of time has raised to the rank of colonel, a general officer is usually a middle-aged man. He will hardly attain to the command of a division or of an army corps before his hair has turned grey.

Promotion by survival has long been exchanged for some kind of selection. A nation at war requires victory, and, if it is wise, entrusts the command of its brigade and divisions only to those who are qualified for the work. The notion that length of service alone gave an officer a title to rank, to authority and to command has given place to the view that to entrust the lives and fortunes of the men of a brigade or a division to any man not specially qualified for such a command is criminal folly. Armies have adopted various methods of selection. The Prussian army in the nineteenth century introduced a system of training general officers by practising them at manoeuvres one against the other, and of dismissing into retirement those whom this test proved to be below the mark. Other armies have had different systems, but everywhere it is recognised that nothing is more vital than the selection of well-qualified generals. The great trouble is that, in peace, generals are apt to be too old. No man likes to be passed over in promotion, and an officer who experiences that that fate usually resigns—in some armies is even required to resign. That being the case, it would be a very expensive business to try to have a complete set of young generals, because it would be necessary to provide pensions for all officers above the standard age who, not being selected as generals, would wish to retire. Yet, other things being equal, an army led by young generals will beat an army led by old ones. Napoleon became a general at twenty-four, when he had been an officer for only nine years, of which less than four had been spent in doing military duty with his regiment. At twenty-seven he was Commander-in-Chief of an army, and most of his generals were in the prime of life. The oldest, Serrurier, was fifty-four, La Harpe, forty-two; Massena, forty, and Angereau, thirty-nine. Napoleon's great career of conquest ended in 1809, when he was forty, and in his first two great campaigns, those of 1805 and 1806, the average age of his principle generals was many years less than that of the generals in the armies opposed to him. The ideal of the French armies in the Napoleonic age was 'la carrière aux talents,' an admirable ideal for any army. The Government today, beyond doubt, recognises and welcomes the opportunity given it by the enormous increase of the army to give full scope to this maxim. The professional officers who were serving in the Regular Army before the war began are relatively so few in number that there is room to promote every one of them who has in any way proved his capacity. The list of second-lieutenants gazetted since August 4 includes all the best heads and hearts of the nation between the ages of twenty and thirty, and there were many men of great ability serving as Territorial officers before the war. The new officers and the Territorial officers are for the most part disinterested; the Army was not the profession of their choice. When the fighting is over most of those who survive will return to their chosen walks of life. Their present object is simply to be useful to the country,

to do all that they can, up to the sacrifice of their lives; to gain the victory for England. Accordingly, during the war, the Government will be able to lay aside many of the traditions, natural in peace, by which promotion is normally regulated to some extent with a view to the interests of the officers. In war the paramount interest is to push on the best men.

It used to be said that it was impossible to know whether one officer was better than another, and this was the stock argument of those who objected to any method of selection and to any departure from the tradition of seniority; but it was never true. The officers of a regiment know each other intimately; every one of them knows what each of them is worth as an officer. In peace there is a limit to this knowledge, because the element of danger is wanting, and an officer whose knowledge and skill are of the best may possibly be less fortunate in the matter of nerves and coolness than some of his less favored comrades. What is never in doubt is incompetence. All the officers and all the men perfectly well know who are the incapables. What cannot be fully known is exactly how good a good officer is. One who is recognised as capable sometimes on occasion far transcends the greatest expectations which were cherished concerning him. All this is true of peace conditions; it applies with much greater force to the conditions of war. Certain it is that in the armies now in the field there are thousands of young officers of first-rate capacity, and that the best interest of the army and of the country requires that as the war goes on and men's qualities are revealed no opportunity should be neglected for finding all possible scope for those who give proofs of their power.

For the troops training at home something has been done in the last six months to improve and accelerate the instruction of the young officers by the institution of schools for them at suitable stations in the different districts. Once the elementary instruction of an officer has been completed, there is only one school of command; it consists in constant manoeuvres, with two sides, either with troops on the ground or without troops either on the ground or on the map. In war there is always the enemy; there is always the opposition between his will and ours, between his plan and ours, between his wits and ours. The officer has to learn to use his own will and his own wits against those of the enemy; to make his own plan and to rely on his own judgement. That can be learned only by practice, and the only forms of practice known away from the actual battlefield, are those which I have enumerated. The old-fashioned idea was that a young officer had only learned to obey, and forty years ago officers were brought up from twenty to forty in the art of obedience. When they were forty-five and had to command they could not do it, for they had never learned. The great commanders early learned to command. Each of them had the good fortune, while still young, to be entrusted with authority. That is a condition upon which the Government is doubtless meditating. We do not know how long the war will last; we shall certainly, before it is over, require all the leadership that the nation can produce, and the Government will take care to look for capacity, wherever it can be found, while there is time.

Christ Church Rector Secures His D. D.

Rev. R. C. Blagrove, rector of Christ Church, received a message from Toronto last evening that his thesis had been accepted for the Doctor of Divinity degree. Eight years ago he had been awarded the B.D., and now the degree of D.D. comes as the crowning of his studies in the history of the early church. His thesis was on the subject "The Development of the Christian Ministry" in the first century and a half. It is a source of much pleasure to Christ Church parish to know that their rector has manifested such energy in the prosecution of his studies as warrant the degree, which is not "honorary," but is bestowed for exceptional merit. Rev. Dr. Blagrove has filled the pulpit of Christ Church for nearly ten years with distinction to himself and the fullest satisfaction of his congregation. The conferring of the degree will take place in the autumn. Citizens one and all will congratulate the learned and enthusiastic rector on this signal honor and on his scholarship.

Saw Major Bolster Fall on Battlefield

The Peterboro Examiner prints an interesting letter from Capt. C. H. Ackerman, No. 1 Company, 2nd Battalion, to his father who resides in the Electric City, in which reference is made to Major Bolster. Lieut. Garnet Greer, referred to, is a son of Dr. Greer, and a cousin of Mr. J. G. Nichols, town. We quote the following extracts from the letter:—

Major Bolster and Capt. Hooper, our first and second in command of the company, are both missing, but we hope they will both turn up prisoners, although Major Bolster was seen going down, and in less than five minutes the Germans were over the ground where he fell. Some of the fellows saw him go down; so did I, but it was just to wait for the fire to die down a little as it was very hot for us, as we had to cross an open space of about seventy-five yards exposed to machine gun and rifle fire. I got one bullet through my boot and another through my water bottle, but was not touched except with a very small piece of a shell that made a very small mark on my leg about the size of a pea.

Lieut. Garnet Greer did most wonderful work dressing the wounded in a barn right up in the firing line. He worked away until they started tearing it to pieces with shells, then he managed to get all the wounded out to safety. He and his 'sterling' stretcher-bearers deserve V.C.'s, every one.

Escaped Convict Recaptured

Three years ago Frederick Chipman, a convict in Kingston Penitentiary, made his escape from that institution, and notwithstanding the efforts made to capture him, he enjoyed his freedom until last week. Soon after his getaway Chipman was joined by his wife, and the two made their way to Detroit. There a small hut was built in a thick wood near Royal Oak, a few miles outside the limits, and there the couple lived in comparative comfort. Detective Sergeant William Reid, Windsor, assisted by two Detroit officers, visited the hut, and when they left Chipman was with them. He crossed the river voluntarily, and was taken back to Kingston at once to serve out his unexpired term.

\$5,000 Blaze at Early Hour Today

(From Wednesday's Daily.) Five thousand dollars' damage at least was caused by fire at three thirty this morning when a number of barns and storehouses were destroyed or gutted on the west side of Front Street, just opposite Victoria Avenue.

The fire is believed to have originated in or near the premises occupied by Messrs Thompson Bros. Some military police detected smoke in the vicinity and upon discovery of the fire sent in the alarm.

The firemen responded rapidly and their fire fighting calls for the highest praise. Chief Brown and his men managed the fire with great skill and succeeded in restricting the conflagration to a few buildings. All were steel-clad. This fact and the excellence of the fire department alone prevented perhaps the destruction of several blocks for a heavy west wind was blowing.

The barn and store house of Thompson Bros. were destroyed with the contents, including hay, grain, three cutters, wagons, harness, and many other things. From these sheds the fire spread into the second storey building used by W. S. Smith of the Dominion Bedding Company and wrought over five hundred dollars' loss in mattresses, springs, carriages and other supplies. Mr. Smith carried only two hundred dollars on this company's stock. Other sheds west of these also caught fire and were saved with difficulty. Messrs. Huffman and Bunnett suffered considerable loss to their machinery and the rear of their building. Other damage was done by smoke.

Messrs. Huffman and Bunnett estimate their loss at about \$1,000 covered by insurance. Messrs Thompson Bros. could not estimate their loss. Their stock was insured. The premises occupied by Thompson Bros and The Dominion Bedding Company belong to the Forin Estate. The loss to buildings is considerable.

Local Soldiers Were Captured

Word has been received in this city that Corporal C. S. Ogilvie, an engineer of the Grand Trunk here formerly is a prisoner of war in Hanover. Corporal Ogilvie enlisted with the 5th Royal Highlanders, Montreal. George Williams of the Seventh Battalion is also a prisoner in Germany. He has setn word to his uncle John Carleton, Senate, Ottawa, to send the information to his mother.

THE SIGNALLER'S DAY

By "Action Front."

The gun detachment were curled up and dozing on the damp straw of their dug-out behind the gun when the mail arrived. The men had had an early turn-out that morning, had been busy serving or standing by the gun all day, and had been under heavy fire off and on for a dozen hours past. As a result they were fairly tired—the strain and excitement of being under fire are even more physically exhausting somehow than hard bodily labor—and might have been hard to rouse. But the magic words "The mail" woke them and they sat up and rubbed the sleep from their eyes and clustered eagerly round the Number One (sergeant in charge of the detachment) who was "dishing out" the letters. Thereafter a deep silence fell on the dug-out, the recipients of letters crowding with bent heads round the guttering candle, the disappointed ones watching them with envious eyes.

An exclamation of deep disgust from the Signaller brought no comment until the last letter was read, but then the Limber-Gunner remembered and remarked on it. "What was that you was rearin' up and snortin' over, Signals?" he asked, carefully retrieving a cigarette stump from behind his ear and lighting up. The Signaller snorted again. "Just 'ark at this," he said, unfolding his letter again. "I'll just read this bit, an' then I'll tell you the sort of merry dance I've 'ad today. This is from an uncle o' mine in London. 'E grouses a bit about the inconvenience o' the dark streets, an' then 'e goes on, 'Everyone at 'ome is wonderin' why you fellows don't get a move on an' do somethin'.' The official dispatches keeps on sayin' "no movement," or "nothin' to report," or "all quiet," till it looks as if you was all asleep. Why don't you get up an' go for em?" The Signaller paused and looked up. "See?" he said sarcastically. "Everyone at 'ome is wonderin', an' doesn't like this 'all quiet' business. I wish everyone at 'ome, including this uncle o' mine, 'ad been up in the trenches today."

"Have a lively time?" asked Number One. "We had some warmish spells back here. They had the range to a dot, and plastered us enthusiastic with six an' eight-inch Johnsons an' H. E. shrapnel. We'd three wounded an' lucky to get off so light. "Lively time's the right word for my performance," said the Signaller. "Nothin' of the 'all quiet' touch in my little lot today. It started when we were goin' up at daybreak—me an' the other telephonist w' the Forward Officer. You know that openin' stretch of road that takes you up to the openin' o' the communication trenches? Well, we're just nicely out in the middle o' that when Fitz comes a shell an' Bang just over our 'eads, an' the shrapnel rips down on the road, just behind us. Then Bang-Bang they come along in a regular string down the road. They couldn't see us, an' I suppose they were just shooting on the map in the hopes o' catching any reliefs o' the infantry on the road. Most o' the shells was percussion, after the first go, an' they was slam-bangin' down in the road an' the fields alongside an' fling dirt and gravel in showers over us. "Come on, see the Forward Officer; 'this locality is lookin' un-healthy,' an' we picked up our feet an' an' for it. Why we wasn't all killed about ten times each I'll never understand; but we wasn't, an' we got to the end o' the communication trench an' dyed into it as thankful as any rabbit that ever reached 'is burrow with a terrier at 'is tail. After we got a bit o' breath back we ploughed along the trench—it was about ankle deep in bits—to the Infantry Headquarters, an' the F.O. goes inside. After a bit 'e comes out an' tells me to come on w' him up to the Observation Post. This was about eight ac emma (a.m.) an' just gettin'

light enough to see. You know what that Observin' Post of ours is. The F.O. 'as a fond de-looshun that the Germans can't see you when you leave the support trench an' dodge up the wreckage of that hedge to the old house; but I 'ave my opinions about it. Anyway I've never been up yet without a most-an-natural lot o' bullets chippin' twigs off the hedge an' smackin' into the ditch. But we got into the house all right an' I unslinged my Telephone-Portable—D. Mark III, an' connects up with the Battery while the F.O. crawls up into the top storey. 'E hadn't been there three minutes when smack. . . . I hears two bullets hit the tiles or the walls. The F.O. comes down again in about ten minutes an' has a talk to the Major at the Battery. He reports fairly quiet except some Germ Pip-Squeak shells droppin' out on our right, an' a good deal o' sniping rifle fire between the trenches in front of us. As a general thing I've no serious objection to the trenches shipin' each other, if only the Germans 'ud aim more careful. But mostly they aims shockin', an' anything that comes high for our trench just has the right elevation for our post. There's a broken window on the ground floor too, lookin' out of the room, we uses straight at the Boshies, an' the F.O. wouldn't have me block this up at no price. "Concealment," ses 'e, 'is better than protection. An' if they see that window sandbagged up it's a straight tip to them this is a Post of some sort, an' a hearty invitation to them to plunk a shell or two in on us. Maybe 'e was right, but you can't well conceal a whole house or even the four walls o' one, so I should 'ave voted for the protection myself. Anyhow, 'e said I could build a barricade at the foot o' the stairs, where I'd hear him call 'is orders down. An' I'd be behind some cover. This notion was carried by a bullet comin in the window an' puttin' a hole in the eye o' a life-size enlargement photo of an old lady in a poke bonnet hangin' on the wall opposite. The row of the splinterin' glass made me think a Jack Johnson had arrived, an' I didn't waste time gettin' to work on my barricade. I got a armchair an' the half of a sofa an' a broken-legged table, an' made that the foundation; an' up against the outside of them I stacked a lot o' table linen an' books an' loose bricks an' bottles an' somebody's Sunday clothes an' a fender an' fire-irons an' anything else I thought any good to turn a bullet. I finished up by prisin' up a bestruthless from the fire-place an' proppin' it up against the back o' the armchair an' sittin' down most luxurious in the chair an' lighting a cigarette. That's a long way the most comfortable chair I've ever sat in—deep, soft, springy seat an' padded arms an' covered in red velvet—an' I was just thinkin' what a treat it was when I hears the rifle fire out in front beginnin' to brisk up, and the Forward Officer calls down to me to warn the Battery to stand by because o' some excitement in the trenches. "Major says would you like him to give them a few rounds, sir," I shouts up, an' the F.O. says, "Yes—three rounds gun-fire, on the lines the guns are laid." So off goes your three rounds an' I could hear your shells whoopin' along over our heads. "Number One gun add twenty-five yards," calls down the F.O., an' then gives some more corrections an' calls for one round battery fire. By this time the rifle fire out in front was pretty thick and the bullets was hiss-in' an' whinin' past us an' crackin' through the walls. Another one came through the window an' perforated the old lady's poke bonnet, but none o' them was comin' near me, an' I was just about happily concludin' I wasn't in the direct line of fire an' was well covered from strays. So I was snugglin' down in my big easy chair with the D. Mark Three on my knee, puffin' my pipe an' repeatin' the F.O.'s orders as pleasant as you

please when CRACK a bullet comes with an almighty smack through the back o' the armchair, bare inches off my ear. Comfort or no comfort, thinks I, this is where I resign the chair, an' I slides out an' squats well down on the wet floor. It's surprisin' too the amount o' wet an ordinary carpet can hold, an' the chap that designed the pattern o' this one might 'ave worked in some water lilies an' duckweed instead o' red roses an' pink leaves if he'd known 'ow it would come to be used. This 'ouse 'as been rather a swagger one, judgin' by the style o' the furniture, but one end an' the roof 'avin' gone West with the shellin', the whole show ain't what it might be. An' when the mis-sus as it belongs to returns, to 'er 'aggy 'ome there's goin' to be some fervent remarks passed about the Germans an' the war generally. But to get on w' the drill—the row in the trenches got hotter an' hotter, an' our house might 'ave been a high-power magnet for bullets, the way they was comin' in, through that open window special. The old lady lost another eye an' half an' ear, an' 'er Sunday gown an' a big gold brooch was shot to ribbons. A bullet cut the cord at last, an' the old girl came down bump bump. But I'd been watchin' 'er so long I felt she oughtn't to be disgraced lyin' three on 'er face before the German fire. So I crawled out an' propped 'er up against the wall with 'er face to the window. I 'ope she'd be glad to know 'er photo went down with flyin' poke-bonnet."

Farewell Gifts to Soldier of the 39th

At Bethel on Monday evening, May 31st a farewell function in honor of Stanley Murdock of the 39th battalion was given in the Methodist Church. Mr. J. F. Ketcheson occupied the chair and welcomed the large gathering of friends who had come together representing classes in Bethel community. An address was read by Mr. Harrison Phillips and Mr. Peter Robeson made the following presentations on behalf of the community, a wrist watch, a steamer rug, a money belt, besides two pairs of socks the gift of Plainfield Institute. Patriotic songs were sung by the members of the Bible Class and recitations were delivered by Miss V. Reane. The evening was brought to a close by a rousing send-off for Mr. Murdock.

The address was as follows: Mr. Stanley Murdock.

We your classmates in the young men's Bible Class and members of the Sunday School feel that we cannot allow the occasion of your departure for the front to pass without some tangible expression of the esteem in which you are held by us, and of our appreciation of your loyalty to your King and country in taking up arms to defend the freedom and liberty of Britain and British subjects. It is no easy task you are undertaking, and the fact that you know that you will have to face hardships indescribable and possible death or imprisonment, stirs our heart with pride that one of our number is sufficiently brave and fearless to do his duty regardless of results. Lord Nelson said to his men "England expects every man will do his duty." That same call has come to us and our brave Canadian boys are showing the world the kind of stuff they are made of and making for themselves a name that will live in the annals of history as long as the world lasts. So, Stanley, while we do not want to lose you, yet we think you ought to go and in going we ask that you take with you this wrist watch as a small token of appreciation and esteem and as often as you look at it remember that we who are left behind are thinking of you and that our constant prayer will be that our kind Heavenly Father may watch over you and preserve you from all evil and if it is His will bring you safe home where a right royal welcome will await you from the many warm friends you are leaving behind."

Bright Students Get Certificates

The universities have announced the results of the examinations in the Faculty of Education. This Faculty gives the highest professional training for teachers provided in Canada, and on the results of these examinations the Department of Education awards certificates as First Class Public School Teachers and High School Assistant Teachers. Among the successful candidates we find the names of Miss Helen Simpkins and H. Vernon Clarke who have been awarded First Class Certificates. These bright students are to be congratulated upon their success.

Mr. and Mrs. John McGee and Mrs. S. Nolan went down to Belleville on Tuesday to bid farewell to Capt. Darius Green, who will soon leave for the front.—Stirling Leader.

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39th Soldier Was Married
At the rectory of St. Thomas' Anglican church, Private Thomas Story of Lindsay a member of the 39th battalion C.E.F. was united in marriage to Miss Lillian Broom, also of Lindsay, at eight o'clock last evening by the Rev. Canon Beamish. They were attended by Mr. and Mrs. Marshall York.

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