

# L I T E R A R Y . . .

## LEST WE FORGET . . AN OUTSIDE VIEW . .

### - A Remembrance Day Story

By LEW MILLER, HALIFAX

The wavering flame of the candle cast light upon the weary face of the young officer who sat upon a ration box and, with another box standing on its end for a desk, wrote slowly and carefully.

Dear Mrs. Graham:—By the time you receive this letter you will have been informed of the sad fate of —

"No—That won't do," he muttered to himself. He tore the sheet from the pad, crumpled it into a ball and, threw it on the dirt floor, where several other attempts lay.

"Dear Mrs. Graham," he began again. "Pouring Sir."

A sleeping soldier who had been lying near the officer's feet began to groan and mutter. The lieutenant gazed at him for a moment. "Poor kid. — Poor kid", he said, and then he reached down and gently shook him.

The soldier rolled quickly and started to rise. "What's the matter? —What's the matter?" He was frightened.

"It's all right, Clark," the officer said calmly. "You were only talking a bit.—Go on back to sleep.

The soldier grinned sheepishly and after rearranging his pack to make a more comfortable headrest, he settled back on the floor.

The officer looked at what he had written; "Dear Mrs. Graham:—" The "crump" of a mortar bomb shook the house, and dust fell from the rough timbers that formed the ceiling of the cellar. The young soldier sat up. His wide eyes stared at the officer. The officer smiled reassuringly and the soldier settled back again. Another "Crump". The officer ducked involuntarily. The soldier sat up again. The shadow of the officer fluttered eerily on the stone wall.

"That was close," said Clark. The officer grinned again. "A miss is as good—"

"—as a mile," Clark interrupted and concluded. He tried to smile, and then he began to cry. The explosions shook the house at frequent intervals.

"Ah, come now, (Clark. I know it's been a bit rough, —but we've come through all right. Just calm down now. — It won't be long before we go out for a rest." He firmly held the soldier's arm, endeavouring to reassure the man whilst hiding his own fears and doubts. "Pull yourself together now."

The cellar door was opened and a sudden current of air swept the flame from the candle.

"Mr. Rowles" a voice called. Are you awake, Sir?"

"Is that you, Sarg?"

"Yes, Sir.—Thought you might like a spot of tea, Sir."

"Wait till I get this candle lit." A match was scraped against the ration box. "Damned matches are a bit damp." In the darkness a bright, bluish trail showed where it had been struck. On the second attempt it burst into flame and the officer transferred the flame to the candle. The candle flame, small at first, grew steadily and then remained at a constant size. He blew out the match and flicked the useless stick into a murky corner.

The sergeant approached with two mugs of tea. "Here you are, Sir." He looked at Clark and then said, "Here, Clark, I brought this for you." The lieutenant knew that the sergeant had lied, for it had been their custom to have their nightly "spot of tea" together.

The sergeant took off his helmet and unbuttoned the neck of his glistening rain cape. The officer asked, "Still raining pretty hard?"

Strictly speaking, it is no concern of mine what the average outsider thinks, or would think about Dalhousie, in passing through the place. It may be of interest to some, however, to hear a few of the comments of one unfortunate who took the campus unawares, so to speak, at a time when no campus should admit outsiders—on Tuesday morning.

he departed from the cellar into the rain, he shouted, "I'll be back later."

The "crumping" of the shells and mortar bombs increased in intensity. Dust fell steadily from the ceiling and occasionally little bits of mortar fell out of the wall.

Lieutenant Rowles stared at his letter pad for a few moments and then he lowered his forehead to his hands, his elbows and forearms making a triangular support with the ration box.

"A good man". Yes, Lucky had been one of his best men; always at the right place when he was needed, fearless, happy, thoughtful and lucky; or he had been until that last night.

He couldn't forget that last night. Lucky and he on a reconnaissance patrol, their approach to the canal, the flare bursting overhead, the German orders being shouted, their dash across a field, the fluent rattle of the Spandaus, and then Lucky faltering and gasping for breath. He remembered aiding Lucky to the shelter of an irrigation ditch, and he would never forget how warm and sticky Luck's blood had been, nor would he forget his expression of surprise. That fatal flare had shown him everything. He had watched helplessly, listening to Lucky's choking struggle for breath and he was numbed when the struggling ceased.

He remembered how frightened he had been when he ran from the place, his mouth dry, his heart pounding. He ran straight, like an animal before a forest fire. He didn't look back. He ran without thinking. He ran until he gained the protection of a corpse and he flung himself on the damp ground, panting for breath and sobbing from relief and fear and loss.

He was aroused from his reverie when the cellar door was suddenly thrust open and the candle was again extinguished.

"Sir", the Sergeant was excited. "Sir", he repeated. "There's a Runner here from Company. Jerry's started a big push on our right. We're to stand to and be ready for anything."

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and tried to change the subject.

"Any further word of us going out for a rest, Sir?"

The lieutenant smiled. "Yes, thank God. The "Old Man" said morning. The Runner just came a little while ago.—I guess you'd better tell the men. I'll give further orders when I get them from Company."

"I'll tell them right now, Sir. They'll be glad to hear it." The sergeant was pleased. He turned and walked toward the cellar door.

The officer cupped his hands around the candle flame. "Thanks for the tea, Sarg."

"Oh that's all right, Sir." As

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lifted up his voice and wept, and asked for the Arts Building. I decided he needed a talking to.

"My dear chap," I said, "I've been trying to spare you that ordeal, but if you insist we'll go to the Engineers' Building."

He refused my kind offer and threatened to report me to the President. This speeded up the old reactions, and we posted in haste to the Arts Building, and climbed the flight of stairs which led to the brazen gates of the great emporium of knowledge which dominates the lives of some twelve hundred students. Before the door I turned and warned him, but he was, like C. Smith, adamant. The doors swung open, and we entered.

A motley group were standing in the Hall of the building, chatting and trying to look as though they were not smoking. A glaring bulletin board was covered with lurid signs of one kind or another, especially the latter. Incidentally he went closer and peered at one monstrosity, and found himself looking at a picture of a quite unabashed young lady, to which was attached the legend: Do you want your body burned by the atomic bomb? Come to the C.C.U.F. or else . . ." Apparently that chap Kilroy had been around, too.

There was a tug at my sleeve—the fool wanted to know what the C.C.U.F. was. I began to explain about Russia and things when a fellow called Seabiscuit interrupted:

"I'm an expert on them, sir. Studied 'em for years; almost got caught once, too. That was when they organized a dope ring, and I was disguised as a professor—they were afraid to do anything."

"But what are they?"

"Get last weeks issue of The Gazette. Wrote a monograph on the beasts myself."

Before the idiot could look at any more notices or listen to any fools like Seabiscuit, I steered him into The Gazette office. The approach was difficult; dogs were

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