

Dead in His Prime

All his life he was a victim of asthma. The first definite attack was in the autumn of 1894, and the following winter it recurred with persistence. For the next five years his letters abound in references to the malady. After coming to Montreal it subsided; but he always felt that the enemy was around the corner. He had frequent periods in bed; but he enjoyed the relief from work and the occasion they afforded for rest and reading.

In January, 1918, minutes begin to appear upon his official file which were of great interest to him, and to us. Colonel Birkett had relinquished command of the unit to resume his duties as Dean of the Medical Faculty of McGill University. He was succeeded by that veteran soldier, Colonel J. M. Elder, C.M.G. At the same time the command of No. 1 General Hospital fell vacant. Lieut.-Colonel McCrae was required for that post; but a higher honour was in store, namely the place of Consultant to the British Armies in the Field. All these events, and the final great event, are best recorded in the austere official correspondence which I am permitted to extract from the files:

From D.M.S. Canadian Contingents. (Major-General C. L. Foster, C.B.). To O.C. No. 3 General Hospital, B.E.F., 13th December, 1917: There is a probability of the command of No. 1 General Hospital becoming vacant.