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OFFICER-MAN RELATIONS IN THE
CANADIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, 1914-1919

by

Isabella Diane Losinger, B.A., M.L.S.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of History
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
18 December 1990

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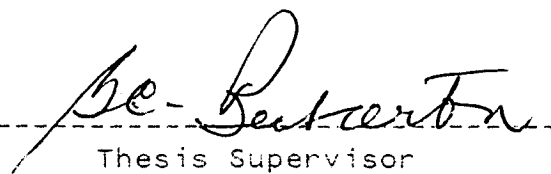
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EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, 1914-1919"

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Isabella D. Losinger, B.A. Honours, M.L.S.,

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts



Thesis Supervisor



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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with relations between officers and other ranks of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919. As such, it seeks to establish two points. First, as two separate and distinct groups, Canadian officers and men were acutely conscious of each other's role and status in the military hierarchy. This is substantiated by the numerous references made to each other in their private papers (i.e. correspondence and diaries) and published material (memoirs, autobiographies and battalion histories). Second, the perceptions and assumptions of these two groups, officers and men, led to the establishment of relations which were less than wholly 'democratic'. This finding contradicts one of the historiographical traditions regarding Canadian Great War soldiers, namely, that their 'colonial' background militated against the observance of formal and punctilious relations.

The first three chapters examine the nature of relations between other ranks and general officers, commanding officers, and junior/company officers. Chapter four examines the role of noncombatant officers, medical officers and chaplains, and their relations with the other ranks. Chapter five studies the position of officers in regards to their particular circumstances and privileges. The emphasis of this chapter lies in the differences between the commissioned and noncommissioned ranks in terms of accommodation, diet, equipment, leave and burial. It also deals with the impact on the other ranks of perceived and actual officers' prerogatives.

Three important sub-topics are treated in Chapter six: batmen, saluting and censorship. The first two are significant due to the conventional belief that Canadians resented being batmen and also disliked saluting because of their 'democratic' inclinations. The third item is of interest as a measure of the other ranks' trust and confidence in their officers.

Chapter seven presents an analysis of the voluminous private papers of a highly articulate soldier: Gunner W. R. Morison. It focuses on his perceptions of relations between the ranks and reinforces the discussions of the preceding chapters.

Finally, Chapter eight investigates what may be called the 'officer ethos' (i.e. a pro-officer bias); the chapter also examines the role and impact of class distinctions in the military hierarchy. Literary and historical published material supplement evidence from the archival collection to reinforce the notion of officer exclusivity.

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INTRODUCTION

Generals Die in Bed, a fictional account of a group of soldiers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), received instant international acclaim when it was first published in 1930. However, the former Commander of the Canadian Corps did not share in the literary praise lavished on the book and its author. Sir Arthur Currie was outraged and his professional pride offended: "I have never read, nor do I ever hope to read, a meaner, nastier or more foul book."¹ Apart from the novel's unkind portrayal of generals, what perhaps most affronted Currie was the suggestion that Canadian soldiers had had little respect or affection for their officers, and in some cases had resorted to murder to rid themselves of unpopular or overbearing superiors.²

Charles Yale Harrison, the author of Generals Die in Bed, served in the Royal Montreal Regiment as a machine gunner and was wounded at Amiens in 1918. His decision to write and publish a gritty, unorthodox war novel was perhaps an attempt to purge himself of harrowing memories. The book could also have been designed as an indictment of the CEF's officer cadre--an exposure of ineptitude, arrogance and general

¹Quoted in Daniel G. Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie: A Biography (Toronto: Methuen, 1985), p. 231.

²See for instance an episode in which an unsympathetic captain is shot in the back by an exasperated soldier during an attack. Charles Yale Harrison, Generals Die in Bed (Hamilton: Potlatch Publications, 1975 (c. 1930)), p. 199.

irresponsibility. However, were Harrison's experiences and perceptions as translated into the prose of his book representative of those of the average Canadian soldier? More specifically, was his condemnation of the commissioned ranks justified and shared by his fellow soldiers? Were Canadian officers regarded by their subordinates as leaders and confidantes, or were they perceived as unsympathetic, insensitive figures of authority?³ On the other side of the issue, how did Canadian officers regard their subordinates and what prejudices did they bring to bear on their relations with them?

The overwhelming majority of battalion and unit histories, such as Colonel J. A. Currie's "The Red Watch", convey the impression that Canadian officers and men coexisted, trained and campaigned in democratic fellowship. Colonel Currie's claim that officers had developed the "knack of getting along with them"⁴ was a typical expression of what was fondly considered to have been the officer-man relationship: one in which the officer cultivated the subtle art of commanding subordinates without offending the latter's democratic sensibilities. It was also a relationship in which the soldier, for his part, temporarily but willingly

³"We have learned who our enemies are--the lice, some of our officers and Death." Ibid., p. 43.

⁴Col. J. A. Currie, "The Red Watch", with the First Canadian Division in Flanders (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1916), p. 133.

surrendered his legendary independence and "free spirit" in the interests of combatting a common enemy.

The truth of the matter was in many respects very different. One has to turn to the correspondence, diaries and memoirs of Canadian soldiers (men and officers) to find a more balanced and defensible estimation of the officer-man relationship. These papers provide the ingredients of a fascinating and revealing academic exercise; broadly speaking, the commentary found in this material suggests that relations between officers and men were not quite as harmonious and "democratic" as has been hitherto presumed. One theme in particular emerges: that officers and men perceived each other as two separate groups, in a military as well as a social sense. Further, the two groups were exclusive and with very few exceptions did not freely associate with each other, physically, socially, or ideologically.

To date there has been no academic study dedicated to the officer-man relationship in the CEF.⁵ With the exception of Gary Sheffield, there has been little serious work done on

⁵This is not to neglect the pioneering work of historians such as Jean-Pierre Gagnon, who has presented a socio-military study of the "Van Doos" in his Le 22e bataillon (canadien-français) 1914-1919: etude socio-militaire (Presses de l'Universite Laval en collaboration avec le ministere de la Defense nationale et le Centre d'edition du gouvernement du Canada; Ottawa: Ministere des Approvisionnement et services, 1986).

this topic regarding the British Expeditionary Force;⁶ and the officer-man relationship in the Australian Imperial Force has been briefly examined in a few sources.⁷ In some respects, the neglect of this topic is deliberate. As John Connell has pointed out, historians and others writing about war have

⁶Gary David Sheffield, "The Effect of War Service on the 22nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers (Kensington) 1914-18, with Special Reference to Morale, Discipline, and the Officer/Man Relationship", unpublished MA dissertation, University of Leeds, 1984. See also his "The Effect of the Great War on Class Relations in Britain: The Career of Major Christopher Stone DSO MC", War & Society, VII, No. 1 (May 1989): 87-105, for an elaboration on one of the themes presented in Professor Sheffield's thesis. John Baynes should also be consulted, especially his Morale: A Study of Men and Courage (London: Cassell, 1967), ch. 7, and his article "The Officer-Other Rank Relationship in the British Army in the First World War", Quarterly Review (October 1966): 442-452. For pre-Great War studies of the British Army see Maj. C. M. St. G. Kirke, "Social Structures in the Peninsular War", RUSI Journal, CXXXIII, No. 2 (Summer 1988), "Case 2: Leadership", 69-70; Jeffrey Greenhut, "Sahib and Sepoy: An Inquiry into the Relationship between the British Officers and Native Soldiers of the British Indian Army", Military Affairs, XLVIII, No. 1 (January 1984): 15-18, and Philip Mason, A Matter of Honour (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 383-392.

⁷See especially Bill Gammage, The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974) and L. L. Robson, "The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914-1918: Some Statistical Evidence", Historical Studies, XV, No. 6 (October 1973): 737-749. See also D. A. Kent, "The ANZAC Book and the ANZAC Legend: C. E. W. Bean as Editor and Image-maker", Historical Studies, XXI, No. 84 (April 1985): 376-390. Material dealing with American Great War soldiers have not been located; however, pre-Great War studies provide interesting background material. See for instance Walter J. Fraser Jr., "Reflections of "Democracy" in Revolutionary South Carolina?: The Composition of Military Organizations and the Attitudes and Relationships of the Officers and Men, 1775-1780", The South Carolina Historical Magazine, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 3 (July 1977): 202-212, and Pete Maslowski, "A Study of Morale in Civil War Soldiers", Military Affairs, XXXIV, No. 4 (December 1970): 122-126.

tended to dwell on its "enormity":⁸ the individual soldier's thoughts, perceptions and attitudes have been subsumed by historians' peculiar fascination with strategy, battles and "great" leaders. There has been a lamentable reluctance and disinterest in returning to the primary source, the soldier.⁹ It is this individual who, for all the sophisticated weaponry at his commander's disposal, must still provide the brains, muscle and willingness to operate that equipment to its maximum advantage.

The Canadian issue has been aggravated by stereotypes and a perceived paucity of relevant primary material. Stereotypical images of men and officers fighting and dying together in democratic camaraderie ignore the inevitable tensions which sprang up between the commissioned and noncommissioned ranks. Likewise, images of men and officers at war with each other belie the many instances in which the two were mutually respected and esteemed. A further hindrance is the sterility of battalion and unit histories (and also many published memoirs). Deeds of gallantry, casualty figures, medals and honours, all enumerated with unflagging enthusiasm in regimental histories reinforce the blandness and predictability of perceived officer-man relations. A human

⁸John Connell, "Writing about Soldiers", The Royal United Service Institution Journal, CX, No. 639 (August 1965): 222.

⁹However, Lyn Macdonald in her recent books on various facets of the Great War makes extensive use of first-person testimony.

flavour is only obtained by examining primary (preferably unpublished) material, in which original and insightful gems may be found.¹⁰

This primary material has unfortunately not been exploited to its fullest extent. There is no shortage of material with which to address the topic at hand; the difficulty lies in balancing the testimony of officers and men. Allowance must be made for timidity and sensitivity: for instance, some men were seemingly reluctant to openly criticise or deride their officers, even after the war.¹¹ Various aspects of officer-man relations were too sensitive to commit to paper, homosexuality and murder the two most

¹⁰Who can resist a smile at Private O'Connor's assessment of officers' intellectual capacities: "Some of them, when brains were given out, were absent without leave." Quoted in National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 5, diary entry, 28 March 1916.

¹¹A good example of this was Thomas Brenton Smith's manuscript, in which the former NCO related two incidents involving a particular captain: in both cases the officer's name was erased from the typed manuscript and the word "officer" substituted by hand. NAC, Thomas Brenton Smith Papers, MG 30, E 31, typed MS, "Clearing: The Tale of the First Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919", pp. 43, 58. It is interesting how various facets of the Great War still arouse impassioned controversy. Lyn Macdonald raised the point in her foreword to *Somme* (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), p. xiv, but a practical example of this was the vigorous exchange of opinion in the correspondence pages of the RUSI Journal concerning "humping" (i.e. forced marching with full equipment) in the Great War and its comparison with "yomping" in the 1982 Falklands conflict (Vol. 127, No. 4 (December 1982), p. 78; Vol. 128, No. 1 (March 1983), pp. 79-81). The topic raised so much interest that the journal's editor devoted an entire section of its June 1983 issue to further discussion.

apparent of these.

In addition to examination of published memoirs, battalion/unit histories and literary works, the personal papers of some 133 Great War soldiers were selected for this project. Of this group, 86 were officers (65% of the sample), 35 (26%) men below the rank of sergeant, 8 (6%) NCOs, and 4 (3%) nursing sisters. These servicemen/women were from a variety of units and services, as the following list illustrates:

<u>Officers</u>	Infantry	31
	RFC, RNAS, RAF	15
	Artillery	8
	Staff	7
	Engineers	6
	CAMC, CAVC	5
	Imperial commissions	3
	Unspecified	3
	Forestry Corps	2
	Chaplains	2
	Misc. (YMCA, RCN, etc.)	4
<u>Men</u>	Infantry	31
	Artillery	4
	CAMC	2
	Engineers	1
	Forestry Corps	1
	RFC	1
	RCN	1
	RCD	1
	Machine Gun Depot	1

These personal papers comprised diaries, correspondence with family and friends, unpublished reminiscences of wartime experiences and miscellaneous items. With very few exceptions the soldiers were english-speaking, a reflection of the material donated to the National Archives of Canada and the Department of National Defence's History Directorate. It is

expected that additional french-language material would be found in the Archives nationales du Quebec.

The papers in the sample archival pool were examined with a number of specific questions in mind. For instance, what comments did officers make regarding the men in their charge (and vice versa); how did men evaluate their officers' professional, military and personal skills; what did men have to say regarding senior officers, chaplains and medical officers? In addition, what impact did letter censorship, saluting and the office of batmen have on men and officers? Finally, how was the question of "class" and social position addressed?

[N.B. The manuscript group number (MG) for the archival papers of individuals is only given once within a chapter--at the first reference to that person's papers.]

CHAPTER ONE

Generals

Private Cleary waited with his battalion for the arrival of the Chief of Staff. Hours passed. Finally, a convoy of vehicles arrived, an orderly opened a door, a "little gray-haired man" stepped out and walked towards the waiting men. As Private Cleary struggled valiantly to control the antics of an energetic louse, the general walked between the ranks of motionless men. After a few minutes, the inspection was over, the general departed and the men were marched back to their billets. As they marched, they chatted about the "little runt" who must have had a "hundred batmen to shine his leather", "fifty medals", and who would "never die in a lousy trench."¹

Charles Yale Harrison's general was anonymous--a literary device which was reasonably compatible with the written evidence left by Canadian soldiers. At first glance, it might seem surprising that so few soldiers commented on the generals in command of their brigades, divisions and corps.²

¹Charles Yale Harrison, Generals Die in Bed (Hamilton: Potlatch, 1975 (c. 1930)), pp. 139-141.

²For instance, out of 133 selected private papers of Great War Canadian soldiers at the National Archives of Canada and the Department of National Defence's History Directorate, only 26 (17 officers and 9 men) contained specific references to named generals. For the purposes of this chapter, I am following A. M. J. Hyatt's 'definition' of a General: "anyone at the rank of brigadier-general or above who served with the Canadian Forces during the War." "Canadian Generals of the First World War and the Popular view of Military Leadership", (continued...)

References were made mainly to a core group of officers, especially Byng, Currie and Hughes and, less frequently, Alderson, Macdonell, Steele and Turner. However, on further consideration, it was perhaps understandable that most soldiers would not have written directly about those who were so removed from their own sphere of daily activity, and who were usually seen only in the formal setting of reviews and inspections. As Private Hare put it, in referring to Hughes, "all we see of him is when we turn our heads around to the right at a march past."³

As the soldier's ditty "Hincky, dincky, parley vous" suggested, the generals were "entrenched" at a comfortable distance away from the front line, meaning that they were not in frequent view of the average combatant soldier.⁴ This did not, however, necessarily prevent some of them from visiting the lines on a regular basis. Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson maintained that Canadian brigadiers visited the "firing line"²(...continued)

Histoire sociale/Social History XII, No. 24 (November 1979), 419. Incidentally, Hyatt identified a total of 126 generals serving in the Canadian forces during 1914-1918, 84 of whom served in operational theatres. Ibid., p. 420.

³National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), William Archibald Hare Papers, MG 29, E 25, Pte. James Arthur Hare to William Archibald Hare, 30 July 1916.

⁴This of course has led to a strong and vitriolic criticism of their abilities to effectively "manage" the war. However, John Terraine has presented a very convincing vindication of this tendency to locate General Headquarters and Advanced General Headquarters well away from the fighting lines. See John Terraine, The Smoke and the Fire (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980), pp. 173-175.

once a day and Divisional generals about once a week.⁵ Lieutenant MacPherson, RCHA, was vastly impressed by one general's claim that he had visited the front on no less than 276 occasions.⁶ Of course, these brief visits did not allow soldiers to develop any type of rapport with them, but it would have afforded them at least a glimpse and, in some cases, a few words from the generals themselves. But glimpses and hasty conversations were sometimes sufficient to leave an indelible impression, even more so in the exceptional circumstances of war.⁷ (Then again, the all too familiar absence of the generals from the firing line would have left an equally enduring impression.)⁸

Impressions or no, soldiers were invariably hampered by restraints placed on their writing activities. Censorship of

⁵NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, MG 30, E 149, vol. 3, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 14 October 1915.

⁶NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, MG 30, E 23, vol. 5, file 2, diary entry, 15 September 1916. This was probably General Seely as MacPherson referred to him as "J. E. B.", the general's initials.

⁷For instance, a CFA subaltern was greeted by a "high general" in a fire-trench: "for all the rest of that day I went about with a smile upon my face and happiness within because such a high general had spoken to me." Arthur Hunt Chute, The Real Front (New York: Harper, 1918), p. 102.

⁸Attention should be drawn to Hyatt's article about Canadian generals: it dispels many of the faulty generalisations and myths about them. Perhaps the most startling point is that 29 generals (or 42% of those serving in operational theatres) were either killed, wounded or taken prisoner. See Table 8 in Hyatt, Histoire sociale/Social History XII, No. 24 (November 1979), 429.

correspondence severely curtailed a soldier's power of expression, and diary-keeping in the trenches was, in theory, illegal. Apart from the fact that the majority of "unofficial" remarks about specific generals are to be found in post-war published memoirs, some insight may still be afforded by letters and diaries.

The decision to appoint Lieutenant-General Alderson as commander of the First Canadian Division was, if one judges from the evidence of those who served under him, a fortuitous one. Described by a First Division officer as "progressive in his view" and "broadened by a world-wide experience",⁹ Alderson's much appreciated gift to his 'colonial' troops was the wet canteen. Valcartier had been a dry camp, a fact which had not endeared Sam Hughes to his men. Alderson's authorisation of wet canteens on Salisbury Plain not only helped to curb drunken rowdiness but also made him very popular with the lower ranks.¹⁰

Alderson's popularity was enhanced by his interaction with the Canadian troops on and off the parade square. For

⁹Chute, The Real Front, p. 17.

¹⁰NAC, Peter Anderson Papers, MG 30, E 318, typed copy of original MS, "In England", p. 2; NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, MG 30, E 8, file 1, typed diary entry, 19 December 1914. Lt.-Col. Creelman wrote that "not one in 100" refused the rum ration: "As far as I know there are only two teetotalers in the Brigade, and they are brothers." Ibid., 26 May 1916. It is therefore difficult to place much credence in Col. J. A. Currie's assertion that 80% of the First Division troops were total abstainers. Col. J. A. Currie, The Red Watch (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1916), p. 72.

instance, upon their arrival at Salisbury Plain, instead of holding a formal review Alderson had instructed the soldiers to gather around his car. Standing up in the car with one foot on the seat Alderson had then given a "friendly talk", saying how pleased he was to be their commander and how he would be "glad to meet any of them at anytime".¹¹ This was an effective method of introducing himself to the "boys" and in so doing he conveyed the image of an accessible and human officer.

Alderson applied the same informal method in the 'lecture room'. A young machine gun lieutenant was conducting a lecture in a relaxed atmosphere, having installed his men in a field and given them permission to lie down and smoke. Alderson approached with a group of staff officers and stopped to listen to the lecture. After some questions to the lieutenant, he then gave the men a "little talk" and departed, looking "well pleased".¹² There were two things notable about this incident: first, Alderson did not insist on the men preserving a decorous or "military" posture as they listened to the lecture and, second, he took the time to address the men himself--a measure of his personal interest in them.

Other Canadian soldiers remembered Alderson's inspections, his kindness and consideration, and his deep

¹¹NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, MG 30, C 64, vol. 16, Maj. Woodside to wife, 24 October 1914.

¹²NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, MG 30, E 400, Lt. Williams to mother, 13 July 1916.

emotion after the Canadian losses at Ypres in April 1915.¹³ One is left with the feeling that the few soldiers and officers who came into direct contact with Alderson went away with a positive impression--that he was an approachable general and genuinely concerned with his troops' well-being.

Alderson might have been liked by the majority of his soldiers (he did, after all, sympathise with their dislike of the Ross rifle),¹⁴ but he was perhaps not the most competent of generals. Byng's succession as GOC Canadian Corps was deemed a wise and popular choice. Historians unanimously agree that Byng was a worthy and appropriate commander for the Canadian force.¹⁵ This approbation, with one exception, was

¹³a) Sergeant Alldritt noted in his diary that there had been an inspection by General Alderson: "as usual he had a good line of stuff to hand out. This time he was a little smoother than usual." NAC, William Alexander Alldritt Papers, MG 30, E 1, diary entry, 8 April 1915. According to Sir Arthur Currie, Alderson sometimes kept the troops waiting on parade while he took a nap. Daniel Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie (Toronto: Methuen, 1985), p. 68. b) A lance corporal in the Canadian Cyclist Corps, after having delivered a message to 1st Division Headquarters, was ordered by Alderson to get some rest before returning to his unit, an act which was "very considerate of a busy and anxious General." W. D. Ellis, ed., Saga of the Cyclists in the Great War 1914-1918 (S.l.: Canadian Corps Cyclist Battalion Association, 1930), p. 9. c) Private Peat noticed the tears in Alderson's eyes during his address to the First Canadian Division in May 1915. Harold R. Peat, Private Peat (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1917), pp. 170-173.

¹⁴Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie, p. 68.

¹⁵For instance, see Canada in the Great World War, 6 vols. (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada, 1919), vol. III, pp. 256-257; Larry Worthington, Amid the Guns Below (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), p. 45; Lt.-Col. D. E. Macintyre, Canada at Vimy (Toronto: Peter Martin, 1967), pp. (continued...)

echoed by those soldiers who expressed an opinion about Byng as an officer and leader. Private (later Captain) Clements remembered that the men "liked him personally and had great respect for his military judgement."¹⁶ Lieutenant-Colonel MacPhail recorded in his diary Byng's informal but dramatic horseback appearance at a parade: jumping a ditch, the general came through a hedge "large, strong, lithe, with worn boots and frayed puttees."¹⁷

Byng's informality delighted Canadian soldiers, in particular his approach to their proverbial bugbear, saluting. On the one hand, Byng clearly enjoyed receiving the compliments due him, even going so far as to salute a man himself if he had not saluted him first.¹⁸ On the other hand, as Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson noticed, Byng could be remarkably casual about the whole business, especially in the lines:

A complimentary report from Byng as to the discipline in the trenches and the saluting of the men. Most of the job lot

¹⁵(...continued)
73-74; Jeffrey Williams, Byng of Vimy (London: Leo Cooper, 1983), pp. 128-131; John Swettenham, Canada and the First World War (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), p. 46.

¹⁶NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, MG 30, E 156, MS, "Merry Hell, The Way I Saw It", p. 238.

¹⁷Quoted in Williams, Byng of Vimy, pp. 128-129.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 131. However, Byng was also known to have been occasionally nonchalant about saluting: he supposedly had a habit of carrying his hand in his pocket and returning salutes only as far as his pocket would permit. Quoted in Swettenham, Canada and the First World War, p. 46.

soldiers he met took no notice of him. Some even saluted with cigarettes in the mouths. These are little things and an outward and visible [sic] sign of inward and spiritual good soldiering.¹⁹

An astute and experienced commander, Byng seems to have had the knack of interacting on a man-to-man basis with the soldiers he came into contact with. His respect for the common private and NCO was noted, as was his concern for needless expenditure of human life.²⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Macintyre, a lieutenant at the beginning of the war, observed a vivid example of Byng's esteem for the combatant soldier: in a cloth-table exercise a corporal was given an imaginary scenario in which all senior NCOs and officers had been killed and he, the corporal, had been left in command of a captured position:

Sir Julian walked over to the corporal ... said to him quietly, "Now, Corporal, you have taken your objective. You have done very well. ... Now take your time and then tell me what dispositions you have made for the night." I was proud of the way that young corporal told the general, promptly and in a clear voice, what he proposed to do. Byng listened attentively and then nodded his approval. "You seem to have thought of everything," he said. "Carry on." It was by such small incidents that Byng endeared

¹⁹NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 6, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 16 January 1917.

²⁰Macintyre, Canada at Vimy, pp. 73-74. See also George Coppard, a British machine gunner who met Byng on a tour of inspection. Byng stopped to sympathise with Coppard's attack of boils, saying that he had had the "beastly things" himself. With a Machine Gun to Cambrai (London: HMSO, 1969), p. 114.

himself to his troops.²¹

One must not, however, ignore dissenting opinions. In the case of Byng these were few indeed. This suggests two things: either Byng was as successful and popular a leader as the historians have maintained, or, such a strong ethos surrounded Byng that few negative comments have filtered through. For instance, it has always been assumed that the Canadians were proud of their nickname "The Byng Boys", acquired shortly after the arrival of Byng and adapted from the name of a popular London show. Not so, claimed ex-artilleryman Wilfred Kerr: "the epithet "Byng Boys" was a journalistic invention, and was always repudiated by the rank and file as savouring of servility and sycophancy."²² As for Byng himself, Kerr stated:

I must record it as my impression that Byng was a nonentity as far as the rank and file of the Corps were concerned; as was the case with all the higher officers, his personality meant as much to us as did that of the man in the moon. The only reference I ever heard made to him among the troops was a censure of his action in sanctioning the execution of a number of our men... At any rate, Byng's departure made no difference to the rank and file.²³

To some extent, Kerr was perhaps correct in saying that those

²¹NAC, Duncan Eberts Macintyre Papers, MG 30, E 241, vol. 2, typed MS, "Men of Valour", p. 77.

²²Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "Shrieks and Crashes" being Memories of Canada's Corps 1917 (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1929), p. 41.

²³Ibid., pp. 40-41.

in higher positions were virtually invisible to the average soldier. Nonetheless, this did not prevent men from acquiring impressions of these officers through stories and gossip.

Alderson and Byng having been Imperial generals, the appointment of a Canadian general was a newsworthy item. Canadians placed great hopes in General Arthur Currie when he assumed command of the Canadian Corps in June 1917. Because he was a Canadian it was no doubt felt by many soldiers that they would be able to relate better to him than they had with either Alderson or Byng. To some extent this proved to be a fallacy.

Leadership is not a popularity contest, and this is especially true and appropriate in war, during which time drastic decisions must be made and equally drastic orders carried out. While it seems that Currie was never an immensely popular leader he was nevertheless a commander who retained the respect of his men.²⁴ There were, of course,

²⁴A. M. J. Hyatt, General Sir Arthur Currie (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987), pp. [ix], 53. James H. Pedley recalled meeting Currie with Brigadier-General Griesbach in the trenches. Pedley, then a lieutenant, saluted Griesbach and was reprimanded for this "slight" to Currie: "Since then I have had cause to admire Sir Arthur Currie for qualities he possessed, necessary for the job that was his. But I could never like him, I know. ... There was something inhumanly arrogant to me in Currie, something which impressed me with a distaste that I shared with many others. "Guts-and-Gaiters" the boys called him. He lacked the winning personality that makes a man beloved as well as great." Only This: A War Retrospect (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927), pp. 56-57. Two biographers of Currie, Urquhart and Dancocks, argue more (continued...)

exceptions to this.

The soldiers' main criticism of Currie was the ebullient, verbose nature of his speeches and addresses. From all other evidence, F. A. McKenzie, correspondent with the Canadian forces in France, must have caught Currie on an uncharacteristic day when he recorded the following reaction to one of his addresses:

A table was brought out from a cottage near by, and the General stood on it, in view of all the soldiers. He spoke simply, sincerely, as soldier to soldier. ... Its very simplicity was its charm. He told the men exactly what they had to do. ... One needed only to look around the close-set ranks to see how the appeal went home. The soldiers could scarcely wait till the Divisional Commander gave the word before they broke into cheer after cheer.²⁵

Contrast this remark with the following by Gunner Morison who stood on parade on 30 November 1918, listening to his sergeant-major read an address from Currie:

Buddy reads us an address from Gen. Currie with regard to our proceeding into Germany. It is in his usual grandiose style, so much so that the S.M. says to the parade "I should take a snort of rum before reading this". The fellows laugh, call it B.S. or give mocking cheers when they hear his special flights of

²⁴(...continued)

in favour of Currie's mass popularity with his troops. Remarks to the effect that the men truly loved and admired Currie verge on the simplistic and can probably be dismissed (see F. A. McKenzie, Through the Hindenburg Line (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), p. 119).

²⁵McKenzie, Through the Hindenburg Line, pp. 124-125.

rhetoric.²⁶

Currie's main problem was his tendency to pomposity (perhaps due to shyness), compounded by an unfortunate physical appearance. The remark that Currie "always looked too heavy for his horse"²⁷ was politely put (in 1962!) but would no doubt have been more pithy coming from the lips of a soldier during the war. Gunner Morison and his mates were undeniably caustic in their impressions of him during the marchpast on the Bonn bridge in December 1918:

"Did you notice his Napoleonic attitude?" says Bomb. Borland. "What a silly look on his face" is Martin's comment & when I remark that he looked like some great prosperous butcher, "yes or bar-tender" he adds.²⁸

It was unfortunate that impressions were often created solely by appearance and tone, but in the case of private soldiers interacting with generals this was understandable. Although

²⁶NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 17, diary entry, 30 November 1918. James H. Pedley reported the same reaction amongst his troops upon reading them Currie's "famous" address of 27 March 1918 (for complete text of the address see Canada in the Great World War, vol. V, pp. 85-86): "... I paraded my scouts in the rain and read them (it was orders) that ludicrous bombastic sham-Napoleonic message of Currie's done in the most approved opera-bouffe style in which he told the troops that they were the saviours of civilization and prepared their minds for slaughter ... Lord, how the boys laughed, and sneered. "He won't die, not likely!" "Bloody old bomb-proofer, trust him for a safe billet!" " Only this, p. 206. See also Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie, p. 134.

²⁷Quoted in Hyatt, General Sir Arthur Currie, p. 23.

²⁸NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 17, diary entry, 13 December 1918.

Currie had a reputation among some of being a "fine fellow", a "very good head" and a "wonderful leader", his physical characteristics and personality placed him at a disadvantage.²⁹

Currie was respected for proposing certain "radical" ideas based on solid common sense. For instance, the provision of maps to NCOs was a new and original practise--one which acknowledged for the first time the role of the NCO as a junior commander.³⁰ (Then again, Currie might have had an ulterior motive, given the appalling map-reading skills of some Canadian officers.) Possession of maps, hitherto limited to officers, conveyed to every noncommissioned leader his importance as part of the battle machine, and no doubt helped establish a closer working and ideological relationship with his superior officers.

Currie's appreciation of the NCO's leadership potential did not extend to Corporal "Foghorn" MacDonald, who has the

²⁹NAC, Macfie Family Papers, MG 30, E 427, vol. 1, Pte. Donald Roy Macfie to sister, 22 March 1916; NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, MG 30, E 111, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 1 March 1918; quoted in James L. McWilliams and R. James Steel, The Suicide Battalion (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1978), p. 108. On one occasion Currie visited an artillery battery and talked with a gunner: "'And where do you come from?" his nibs enquired in that "young-feller-me-lad" tone, considered appropriate by officers in addressing the nonentities in the ranks." Hugh R. Kay, George Magee and F. A. MacLennan, Battery Action! The Story of the 43rd Battery, CFA (Toronto: Warwick Bros & Rutter [1919]), pp. 175-176.

³⁰Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie, p. 87. Gregory Clark remembers this as an important part of Currie's preparations for operations. Quoted in Hyatt, General Sir Arthur Currie, pp. 120-121.

distinction of being perhaps the only Canadian ranker to meet and dine with the "big brass" (Lipsett, Seely and Churchill among others). A well known mining expert, Corporal MacDonald once engaged in a vigorous exchange of words with Currie, concerning the placement of mines in France. MacDonald contended (to Currie's face) that he had forgotten more about mines than "Old Man Currie" would ever learn, and although Currie was "stud duck in this puddle", he should keep quiet about the disposition of mines.³¹

On the above occasion Corporal MacDonald had been incensed by Currie's suggestion that one of Seely's mines would drown his own men. Currie's concern with casualties was a feature of his command which should have endeared him to his soldiers.³² Unfortunately, one of the final episodes of the war, the Canadian capture of Mons, resulted in a controversy which tainted Currie's reputation as a casualty-conscious commander. An article published in the Port Hope

³¹Quoted in J. E. B. Seely, Adventure (London: William Heinemann, 1930), p. 235. F. McKelvey Bell wrote that "Foghorn" MacDonald was equally informal with colonels. The First Canadians in France (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), pp. 20-21. Major Villiers thought that while "Foghorn" was perhaps not a typical Canadian, he was certainly the most foul-mouthed man he had ever come across. He took especial delight in criticising the conduct of the war, GHQ and everyone/everything else. NAC, Paul Frederick Villiers Papers, MG 30, E 236, vol. 4, "Diary August 1914 -December 1915", p. 55.

³²Seely wrote that Currie had an "almost fanatical hatred of unnecessary casualties", and that he was the leader "who took the most care of the lives of his troops". J. E. B. Seely, Adventure, p. 226. See also Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie, p. 145.

Guide on 13 June 1926 accused Currie of having sacrificed Canadian lives in order to "glorify the Canadian Head Quarters Staff"; it also reported that Canadian soldiers had been prepared to fire on staff officers if they hadn't left the immediate area (in Mons).³³ Currie's vindication at the libel trial did not remove the suspicion of "glory mongering" but did satisfy Currie and his supporters that justice had been done. Unfortunately, the publicity surrounding the trial convinced many Canadian veterans that Currie had been little better than some of his predecessors.

Besides their Corps commanders, Canadian soldiers came into contact with a number of other generals. On the whole, it may be said that there were more favourable than negative impressions created as a result of men encountering individual generals. Of course, there was universal contempt (amongst all ranks) for the "pot bellied old muckers" who rode by foot-weary soldiers in cushioned cars,³⁴ and only marginally less scorn for the "Cook's Tourists" whose handbooks and Notes From the Front bore little resemblance to

³³Port Hope Guide, 13 June 1927, reproduced in Swettenham, To Seize the Victory (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), p. [15]. See also Will R. Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1968), pp. 220-221, in which he referred to a grief-stricken soldier threatening to shoot Currie or the "next higher-up" in revenge for his brother's needless death at Mons. Stanley Weintraub summarised this episode in A Stillness Heard Round the World (Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 209-211.

³⁴Quoted in Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), p. 280.

the reality of the trenches.³⁵ One soldier summed up the bulk of negative feeling about behind-the-lines generals by wishing the Germans would drop a few bombs on them.³⁶

Nonetheless, many soldiers realised that there were some generals who often risked the same hazards which the men in the trenches faced: there is a significant body of literature relating to generals who exposed themselves to artillery or machine gun fire whilst visiting the lines.³⁷ If a general survived this type of activity he was liable to engender a good deal of hero-worship in the men who had

³⁵Staff officers living many miles from the front designed wire meat safes, garbage burners and mud scrapers, and published various practical suggestions for the use of the front-line troops. Frederic C. Curry, From the St. Lawrence to the Yser (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), pp. 155-156.

³⁶"... sometimes I wish they throw a couple bombs here, I hate so [?] the Generals but I dont blame them, I hate everything now ... " [sic whole sentence]. NAC, MG 30, E 297, Frank [Francis-Xavier] Maheux Papers, Pte. Maheux to wife, 4 August 1915. Private Maheux, however, felt that he couldn't really blame the generals.

³⁷For instance, General Turner was referred to by one private as a "reg'lar soldier" because he braved a shelling to visit the men. Herbert W. McBride, The Emma Gees (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1918), p. 194. Turner, considered by some the "perfect gentleman" (see Ernest Butland, Is Life Worth Living? (Montreal: Printers Limited, 1918), pp. 81-82), impressed many of them with his willingness to frequently visit the trenches. Reginald H. Roy, ed., The Journal of Private Fraser (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1985), p. 75. For another example of this see Private Foster's reminiscences of General O'Brien visiting the lines during a shelling: "... believe me, sometimes they came close to him but he just seemed to look at them as they burst as if they were as harmless as a rotten apple." NAC, Arthur James Foster Papers, MG 30, E 417, "Private Foster's experience as a soldier", p. 37. The Newfoundlanders concurred with their Canadian counterparts on this point: see John Gallishaw, Trenching at Gallipoli (New York: Century, 1916), p. 133.

observed him. Their friendliness and courtesy to the soldiers they encountered on their visits was often remarked on; a "good morning" and a smile went a long way towards establishing a rapport with the men.³⁸ Of even greater consequence were the efforts of generals to obtain special privileges for particular soldiers, as did General Turner who on one occasion was impressed by the work of some scouts and tried to get them extra leave.³⁹ Equally appreciated were little courtesies such as compliments to an especially well turned-out honour guard.⁴⁰

One more general deserves individual attention. Sir Sam Hughes, Canada's Minister for War from 1911 to 1916, was perhaps one of the most contentious and talked about Canadian generals during the early part of the war.⁴¹ Lacking in

³⁸See Kerr, p. 121, regarding Major-General Watson; NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, "War Diary", 1 March 1916, regarding General Turner; NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, MG 30, E 65, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 4 March 1918, regarding General Steele; NAC, Ernest William Russell Papers, MG 30, E 220, "A Private Soldier's Views on the Great War, 1914-1918", pp. 17-18, regarding General Macdonell; and Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands, pp. 20-21, regarding Major-General Lipsett.

³⁹NAC, Johnson Lindsay Rowlett Parsons Papers, MG 30, E 117, vol. 3, diary entry, 20 November 1915.

⁴⁰NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, MG 30, E 389, revised diary entry, p. 196.

⁴¹For background on Hughes, see Charles F. Winter's complimentary biography Lieutenant-General the Hon. Sir Sam Hughes (Toronto: Macmillan, 1931), as well as Alan R. Capon's His Faults lie Gently (Lindsay, Ont.: Floyd W. Hall, 1969). Both these biographies are not sufficiently critical to provide real insight into a man who claimed he deserved two
(continued...)

social finesse and a strict teetotaler, Hughes (or 'Slam Bruise' as he was facetiously but astutely referred to by 'Professor A.C.S.')⁴² was popular with some troops and vehemently disliked by others. An early source of popularity for Hughes was his habit of reprimanding senior officers in front of their men.⁴³ As Major Villiers confided to his diary, this was the type of popularity which invariably appealed to some soldiers:

On various occasions we were summoned in a motor to a little dung hill on one side of the camp on top of which Sam Hughes would take his stand. He then proceeded to tell off some senior officer present before everyone ... The undisciplined tommy liked seeing his seniors getting told off and this was just the cheap sort of popularity that Hughes catered for.⁴⁴

Some men nonetheless liked Hughes, or at least found no grounds for complaint.⁴⁵

⁴¹(...continued)

Victoria Crosses for his activities during the South African War.

⁴²Professor A. C. S. [i.e. Alexander C. Stewart], The Discard (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1919), passim.

⁴³Swettenham quotes an example: a captain who was drilling his men was told to "Pipe up, you little b-----, or get out of the service." To Seize the Victory. p. 140.

⁴⁴NAC, Paul Frederick Villiers Papers, vol. 4, "Diary August 1914-December 1915", pp. 5-6. Even the conservative Canada in the Great War drew attention to this habit. See vol. II, p. 46.

⁴⁵"Old Sam seems to be fairly well liked by the troops ..." NAC, William Archibald Hare Papers, Pte. James Arthur Hare to William Archibald Hare, 30 July 1916. This did not stop one soldier from "pinning a medal of tobacco juice on
(continued...)

Those who frankly couldn't abide the man were numerous and it is reasonable to say mostly officers. A lieutenant who in December 1914 thought Hughes was a bit insane was still waiting in June 1916 for "our Canadian Kaiser" to approve his promotion.⁴⁶ A captain plaintively wished that Hughes had had "some of the charm and natural courtesy" of his brother, General John Hughes.⁴⁷ Others thought he was rude and pompous, and "played favorites blatantly".⁴⁸ This last point was perhaps one of the most telling indictments against Hughes--namely that he indiscriminately handed out commissions and promotions as the mood struck him. Relief when "Sam's rule" came to a close was obvious.⁴⁹

⁴⁵(...continued)

the heel of Old Sam's Strathcona boot without being detected" during an inspection. NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, "Merry Hell, The Way I Saw It", p. 63.

⁴⁶NAC, George Loranger Magann Papers, MG 30, E 352, Lt. Magann to mother, 2 December 1914 ("... it would do the Canadians good to know how poorly he is thought of by 'his' soldiers"); Ibid., Lt. Magann to mother, 25 June 1916. On the other hand, Hughes was known to expedite matters when his vanity had been appealed to: Private Fraser noted that a major who had cheered the loudest after one of Hughes' speeches was given the colonelcy of a battalion shortly thereafter. Roy, The Journal of Private Fraser, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁷NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, vol. 5, diary entry, 25 September 1916.

⁴⁸NAC, William Antrobus Griesbach Papers, MG 30, E 15, file 5, diary entry, 18 August 1916; NAC, Charles Gavan Power Papers, MG 27 III, B 19, vol. 1, typed memoirs of the war, p. 7.

⁴⁹"I understand that "Sam's" rule is about finished. This is great and we may now expect efficiency to be taken into account when promotions and appointments are being made."
(continued...)

Whether generals were remembered for their paternalism, their possession of the "right stuff" or their willingness to lend a hand filling sandbags,⁵⁰ the fact remains that many of them were not the nameless, faceless "bomb-proofers" that popular tradition suggests. Contrary to the widespread acceptance of the "donkey myth" Canadian soldiers were not overwhelmingly bitter about the generals who commanded them. In fact, they were remarkably unforthcoming and restrained in their references to these officers. Wilfred Kerr's protest against the generals who "sent us to appalling sacrifice" was one of the few explicit passages directly aimed against them.⁵¹ But the majority of those who reproached the generals for unprofessional and irresponsible conduct, such as the author of Unknown Soldiers by One of Them, did so in a circumspect manner.⁵² Finally, there was no better proof of

⁴⁹(...continued)

NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, diary entry, 6 May 1916. See also diary entry, 8 December 1916.

⁵⁰"Batty Mac" (General Macdonell) was perceived by one lieutenant as a father who hated to lose his children. NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, dairy entry, 31 December 1918, p. 148; General Lipsett, a "gentleman", was said to have the "real stuff"--a man who knew how to treat men and who set a good example to his officers. Quoted in McKenzie, Through the Hindenburg Line, pp. 8-9; General Lipsett also helped a soldier to fill sandbags, an event which the soldier evidently never forgot. Quoted in O. C. S. Wallace, ed., From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 168.

⁵¹Kerr, "Shrieks and Crashes", pp. 193-194.

⁵²The unidentified author of Unknown Soldiers by One of Them was a private in the First Division until receiving a
(continued...)

the average soldier's lack of interest or preoccupation with the generals than Gunner Morison: through nineteen diary books totalling some 2,130 pages there were barely three references made to generals.⁵³

⁵²(...continued)

commission. He thought that a soldier who had vomited during a general's inspection and who was then sent up the lines the same evening as punishment had been indirectly murdered: the soldier was killed as soon as he reached the lines. (Of course, the inspecting general might not necessarily have recommended the punishment; it could have come from the soldier's commanding officer.) Unknown Soldiers by One of Them (New York: Vantage, 1959), p. 87. It should be noted that this same author thought that Harrison had been "misinformed" when he wrote Generals Die in Bed. Ibid., p. 52.

⁵³See Chapter 7 for Gunner Morison.

CHAPTER TWO

Commanding Officers

There is a certain well-known incident involving a Canadian commanding officer and his men which historians and various soldier-authors are fond of recounting. Although there are many versions of the story, it basically concerned a Canadian officer who was apprehensive about a forthcoming inspection by some British VIPs:

At a parade, one bright November morning, when we were at Salisbury, a certain brigadier-general from Ontario, since killed in action, while reviewing the soldiers of a particular battalion, made a unique speech to the boys when he said: "Lads, the king and Lord Kitchener and all the big-bugs are coming down to review us to-day, and for once in your lives, men, I want to see you act like real soldiers. When they get here, for the love o' Mike, don't call me Bill ... [sic] and, for God's sake, don't chew tobacco in the ranks."¹

One aspect of this story involved discipline (tobacco chewing was certainly not an ideal parade-square activity), and another dealt with the rapport between the commanding officer

¹Harold R. Peat, Private Peat (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1917), pp. 21-22. This story was also recounted, with some variations, in Harry M. Wodson, Private Warwick: Musings of a Canuck in Khaki (Toronto: Sovereign Press, 1915), p. 59 and Alexander McClintock, Best O' Luck (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 14. The British troops were certainly familiar with it: see R. H. Mottram's "Stand To" in George A. Panichas, ed., Promise of Greatness: The War of 1914-1918 (New York: John Day Company, 1968), p. 210. The Australians sometimes claimed credit for the story: see Bill Gammage, The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974), p. 244.

and his men. This tale has, nonetheless, been repeatedly alluded to as a typical illustration of the relationship between Canadian officers and men.

However, was this story really an accurate reflection of the Canadian senior officer-man relationship? How many privates and NCOs knew their commanding officers on a first-name basis, and how many men actually addressed them as such? More significantly, how did soldiers regard their COs and what did they perceive to be their relationship with these officers? Finally, from the other side of the issue, what were commanding officers' impressions of the men in their battalions?

Most published memoirs of Canadian men and officers presented a virtually homogeneous image of commanding officers. This was naturally also the case in battalion and unit histories. The CO was invariably portrayed as the "idol of the men", a conscientious, considerate disciplinarian, who never asked his men to do what he himself could not do. He never failed to speak with his men singly or in groups, and was assiduous in his daily tour of the lines. He was equally enthusiastic in his participation and promotion of battalion sports activities; and thought nothing of driving thirty miles to obtain rum for his wet, foot-weary troops.² The CO usually had a nickname, such as "The Old Man" or "Old Stone

²Pte. Frank C. MacDonald, The Kaiser's Guest (S.l.: Country Life, 1918), p. 35. The CO then distributed the rum himself to each billet.

Face", which belied his approachability, courtesy and humanity. He was receptive to new ideas and encouraged his men to voice their opinions (via the proper channels). He distributed monetary awards to outstanding men,³ and was tireless in advancing the health and general well-being of his military "family".⁴

A good CO dominated his men through love, not fear,⁵ and would himself prove this by carrying wounded men to shelter or performing quick first aid operations.⁶ He personally examined his men's feet after long route marches, and sometimes countermanded orders from superior officers if he

³Claudius Corneloup, L'epopee du vingt-deuxieme (Montreal: "La Presse", 1919), p. 49.

⁴As in a civilian family, COs had their battalions photographed or drawings made of some of their men. Quoted in Maria Tippett, Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1984), p. 54. Lt.-Col. Agar Adamson, briefly commanding officer of the PPCLI, disapproved of this practice: "... my views are not shared by many Commanding Officers who are only too anxious to advertize [sic] themselves, and rehearsed all kinds of stunts when they heard they [photographers] were coming, such as reading maps, giving orders, receiving messages, pretending to be shot and carried off on stretchers." National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, MG 30, E 149, vol. 4, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 8 August 1916.

⁵Lt. Jack Munroe, Mopping Up! (New York: H. K. Fly Company, 1918), p. 210.

⁶Col. J. A. Currie, "The Red Watch", with the First Canadian Division in Flanders (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1916), p. 267.

felt his men's health to be jeopardised.⁷ A caring CO was casualty conscious and genuinely distressed at his battalion's losses. Nonetheless, the certainty of inevitable casualties did not impinge on his decisions and responsibilities as a military leader.

The commanding officer on occasion personally led his battalion into battle. He often did so with just a cane or a riding crop in his hand, as Lieutenant-Colonel Birchall of the 4th Battalion was reported to have done. In Birchall's case, his choice of "weapon" at the Second Battle of Ypres was hypothetical, as he was killed during that engagement.⁸ A dead CO was a powerful stimulant to dispirited and frightened troops: popular tradition maintains that battalions always fought extra hard to avenge a beloved CO's death. The loss of a respected CO plunged a battalion into mourning, and his death was a personal shock to every man.

A dead or wounded CO meant that the battalion would

⁷A colonel of the 6th CMR was court martialed for "disobeying an order and insolence to a superior officer" after refusing to order his men to parade with badly blistered feet. Quoted in Gordon Reid, ed., Poor Bloody Murder: Personal Memoirs of the First World War (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1980), pp. 27-28.

⁸It is interesting to compare two "true" accounts of Lt.-Col. Birchall's death. In Corporal Wackett's version, Birchall was killed instantly just as he started to lead his men forward. Cpl. E. Wackett, "Experiences with the First Western Ontario Regiment, Canadian Expeditionary Force", Waterloo Historical Society, 5th Annual Report (1917), 46. Private Peat's version, however, contended that Birchall received seven separate wounds before he finally succumbed on the parapet of a German trench. Peat, Private Peat, pp. 164-165.

certainly undergo changes in the future. Like a chameleon, the battalion transmogrified with every new CO, for it was he who gave it character and personality.⁹ His style of leadership might be different to that of his predecessor, his temper and patience of greater or lesser length, and his punishments more severe or more lenient. Equally important, his relationship with his men might be different to that of the preceding CO, but whatever the case, he invariably sought the collective good of the battalion.

There were virtually no negative remarks about commanding officers in the published memoirs and battalion histories.¹⁰ Of course the majority of these narratives were written by ex-officers or ex-other ranks: in the first case, these authors were normally governed by loyalty to a fellow officer, and in the second, many men encountered their COs infrequently and therefore wrote whatever they had learned

⁹See for instance James Pedley's description of the 4th Battalion and the impact on it of its various COs. Only This: A War Retrospect (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927), pp. 38-41.

¹⁰An exception to this was an anonymous poem published in the history of the 1st Pioneer Battalion about a "safety first" commanding officer:

Now regulations don't permit,
To tell the Colonel he's a twit,
But indirectly things are heard
And mouth to mouth they pass the word,
So that the Colonel surely knew
What they thought amongst the crew,
And what he learnt did but appear
To make him grumble, snoop and sneer.

Brief History of the Battalion, France & Flanders 1916-18 (S.l.: 1st Pioneer's Association, Calgary Branch, 1938), Peel Bibliography on Microfiche, No. 3605, s.p.

about them from quick impressions and battalion gossip. Furthermore, it was probably unwise to risk antagonising an ex-CO during peacetime (especially just after the war) by publishing critical or derogatory comments about his military service. Colonels normally wielded an appreciable amount of power during and after their command of a battalion, a fact which sometimes worked to an ex-soldier's advantage.¹¹

However, how faithful is the preceding discussion to the "reality" as it was presented in the correspondence and private papers of soldiers and officers? Were commanding officers as approachable and humane as they have been portrayed in the published material? How well did the average soldier relate to his CO (or did he at all) and what did he think of his conduct and leadership?

Shortly prior to his battalion's departure for France, Private Rigsby noted in his diary that the Colonel and his adjutant had said "a few words" to the men. Private Rigsby concluded that they were "both good heads after all",¹² a statement which conveyed relief and confidence: relief that the battalion had not been saddled with a poor commanding officer (as might hitherto have been thought to be the case)

¹¹The CO of an artillery unit told his men that after demobilisation, when they would be "tous la meme chose", they were not to hesitate to look him up if ever they needed help. Hugh R. Kay, George Magee, and F. A. MacLennan, Battery Action! The Story of the 43rd Battery CFA (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter Ltd., [1919]), 278.

¹²NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, MG 30, E 111, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 27 February 1918.

and confidence in his ability to lead them judiciously through the coming months. Also before reaching France, Privates O'Brien and Macfie were equally satisfied with their COs: the one was a "kindly gentleman" who had "spared no pains to make things pleasant" for his men, and the other had done "everything possible" for their welfare and comfort.¹³

In respect to their men's welfare in England, COs were also appealed to in cases of emergency or where it was felt that a soldier's "rights" had been violated. Private Howland wrote about the difficulties "George Martin" experienced in obtaining his leave pass at Salisbury Plain. His problems were only solved when he solicited his CO's help:

For three days, the moment parade was dismissed I made a bee line for the commanding officer and each time the sergeant major cut me off. The third day I was too quick for him. I told the C.O. that the Doctor had signed my pass a week ago and that it was being held back in the orderly room.

"Come with me," he said. In the orderly room he asked if Private Martin's leave vouchers are signed and in order, and when someone replied 'Yes, Sir' he said, 'See that he gets them immediately!'¹⁴

Once in France, the situation certainly changed. The CO's duties and responsibilities multiplied, and the time he could devote to an individual soldier's problems decreased

¹³NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, MG 30, E 389, typed diary entry, p. 1; NAC, Macfie Family Papers, MG 30, E 427, Pte. Arthur Gill Macfie to mother, 15 November 1916.

¹⁴NAC, Harry H. Howland Papers, MG 30, E 204, MS, "March With Me", pp. 17-18. It is strongly suspected that "George Martin" was actually Howland.

proportionally. What seemed of primary importance at Valcartier or Salisbury Plain was of far less significance in the lines, or even at a "rest camp". The administrative nightmare of a battalion on active service was only partially alleviated by a CO's cadre of officers: the final accountability was his alone.

In the lines, the men were heartened and encouraged by their CO's visits. Private West was happy to write that his commanding officer was indeed no "bomb proof" [sic]:

... all the men seem to like him. He is right on the job all the time. If even so small a bombardment takes place he is right up to inspect. He visits us once at least every night.¹⁵

Private Foster was equally impressed by his acting-CO's bravery during a heavy shelling:

... the acting Col. was standing right near where I was lying in a hole. He seemed to be taking notes of everything round about. ... this six inch Howitzer shell landed three and a half feet to my right. I was scared stiff, but the Colonel was still standing within 3 ft of the hole as unconcerned as if it was a snowball. ... When it hit on the ground it splashed the dirt all over us. The Colonel [sic] note-book was covered with the same. When I straightened up and looked at him, he said in a cool tone, with a slight English accent to it, "Extraordinary close, isn't it." ... I said "its [sic] too close for me sir. If he does that again I'm moving my billet." He just smiled at this and went on with

¹⁵NAC, Albert C. West Papers, MG 30, E 32, typed diary entry, 18 January 1918.

his work.¹⁶

During an engagement, whenever he could spare the time, a good CO was on hand to cheer the wounded and lend a hand. "Daddy Dyer", Sergeant Griffiths' CO, gave him a cigarette when he turned up wounded at a casualty clearing station. Having lit it for him and spoken briefly, the CO then sent the bandaged NCO on his way down the lines.¹⁷

Commanding officers were admired and respected for a variety of other reasons. For instance, Corporal West was impressed by his CO's regular attendance at Sunday church service.¹⁸ Although the service was not obligatory, West felt that the "good Colonel's" presence set a good example to the battalion and encouraged church attendance. A special dinner given by a CO to his men as a celebration of his CMG was considered an appropriate gesture:¹⁹ the men had to some measure contributed to the award by their service. A CO's support of battalion sports activities (with a few bets on his own men) was appreciated, especially if he promised (and

¹⁶NAC, Arthur James Foster Papers, MG 30, E 417, MS, "Private Foster's Experience as a Soldier", pp. 41-43.

¹⁷NAC, Aubrey Wyndham Griffiths Papers, MG 30, E 442, typed reminiscences, p. 14.

¹⁸NAC, Albert C. West Papers, typed diary entries, 4 February 1918 and 19 May 1918.

¹⁹NAC, Thomas Brenton Smith Papers, MG 30, E 31, typed MS, "Clearing: The Tale of the First Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919", p. 85.

delivered) various rewards for a winning team.²⁰ Finally, a CO who disposed of unpopular or unsuitable padres was the soldier's hero:

The following day being Sunday the Padre at the church parade preached quite a sermon on the evils of alcoholic beverages. By Monday night the Battalion was missing one Padre. Somehow the Colonel did not seem unduly disturbed, displaying a look of innocense [sic] not quite in keeping with his usual temper. In due course another padre turned up with less extreme views on several controversial subjects.²¹

A commanding officer had wide discretionary powers of punishment. He presided over "orderly rooms" and courts martial, and could accordingly order forfeiture of pay, reduction of rank, Field Punishment Number One or Two and imprisonment. COs were also obliged to tender opinions in cases where the death penalty had been recommended by a higher court. This last item weighed heavily on some COs' consciences, and the utmost was done by many of them to avoid approving the sentence. When the sentence could not by any manipulation of the regulations be reduced, the execution of the soldier by members of his own battalion had devastating results:

The day after the execution the colonel was reported sick. He was away for a few days and was sick again. The last we

²⁰NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, MG 30, E 156, typed MS, "Merry Hell, The Way I Saw It", p. 161. The "reward" in this case was a barrel of beer.

²¹Ibid., p. 162.

heard of him was that [he] had died in England from an unknown cause. It was gossip among the men that the "shot at dawn" affair was too much for him.²²

With the exception of the above reference, none of the archival material contained any mention of this aspect of the CO's responsibility.

Disparaging comments written by other ranks about their commanding officers in letters or diaries were rare (Gunner Morison excepted). A major source of resentment was, understandably, inspections. COs inevitably found fault with their men's clothing, equipment and weapons during their many inspections:

Col. inspected the guns this A.M. He was still dissatisfied ... He inspected us at 10.30 & of course he raved about the clothes; clothes which have seen 15 months service.²³

Criticism and dissatisfaction of commanding officers sometimes bordered on the absurd. Gunner Morison's ire was raised "almost to the point of showing it" when, during one

²²NAC, George V. Bell Papers, MG 30, E 113, typed MS, "Back to Blighty", p. 85. See also R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure (Toronto: Ryerson, 1936), pp. 192-193, for the case of a CO who was anxious for his medical officer to find some physical explanation for a soldier's desertion. A thorough examination of the "deserter" yielded nothing, so the disappointed CO sent the soldier to work in a labour battalion down the lines. This required considerable "straining" of the regulations, as the man should have been court martialled and possibly shot.

²³NAC, Roy Family Papers, MG 30, E 47, Gnr. Archibald Carlyle Roy, book 14, diary entry, 25 November 1918. See also a similar remark on 23 November 1918.

inspection, his CO criticised the match of Morison's horses.²⁴

On another occasion, the CO inspected the men at their grooming:

The old boy is on hand though and we all turn in on grooming while he stands round trying to keep an intelligent look on his idiotic face. He butts in on one fellow with directions of how to groom and ends with ordering all the fellows to take off their coats.²⁵

Other points of contention in regards to commanding officers was the need to dig shelters and dugouts for them, the relative ease with which they progressed through the ranks from lieutenant to colonel, and the privileges they exercised even under the most trying circumstances.²⁶

²⁴NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 15, diary entry, 21 May 1918.

²⁵Ibid., book 12, diary entry, 3 September 1917. Morison was also annoyed that his CO never passed on to the men the compliments he had received from British generals. Ibid., book 15, diary entry, 18 May 1918. The only inspection Morison alluded to in a positive tone was one during which the colonel dropped by while he was building a fireplace in his hut: "While at it someone behind me addresses me "Gunner". I turn around and see the colonel on a turn of inspection. ... "What are you doing? Who is with you? Are you warm enough?" He looks in and I apologise for the untidiness as due to the building operations." Ibid., book 4, diary entry, 15 December 1915.

²⁶NAC, Claude C. Craig Papers, MG 30, E 351, diary entry, 3 April 1918; NAC, Macfie Family Papers, Pte. Donald Roy Macfie to father, 3 January 1916; NAC, Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, MG 30, E 379, typed MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 32: one evening, the CO of the 49th Battalion joined Morris and his fellow stretcher bearers in a shelter, dining with them on bully beef and bread. The CO of the 58th Battalion then came in and wanted to evict the exhausted stretcher bearers to give himself more room. The 49th's CO interceded on their behalf and insisted they stay.

(continued...)

Gunner Morison, unlike the majority of his fellow soldiers, mentioned his commanding officer on several occasions. "Mother Brown" was so christened for the mild manner in which he conducted his enquiries into various soldiers' misdemeanours.²⁷ He was usually mentioned in regards to inspections and other miscellaneous matters (i.e. saluting), and at Christmas:

He [the C.O.] is given the usual cheers mingled with inebriated sneers and then walks up between the tables. To show his intimacy with the men he asks us in his orderly officer manner, as we are wallowing by the table, if the pudding is good. Keith answers its [sic] alright.²⁸

Morison was clearly unimpressed by his CO's leadership and interpersonal skills. He was not vitriolic in his criticism but his remarks showed an impatience with the colonel's

²⁶(...continued)

However, what really rankled with the hungry men was that the 58th CO then had his batman set up a table, chair and primus stove and proceeded to have a steak cooked for him.

²⁷NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 6, diary entry, 17 April 1916. Colonel Brown's nickname was an improvement over that of Colonel Harrison--"Jingleballs" or "the man with the golden testicles". Ibid., book 5, diary entry, 12 April 1916 and book 10, diary entry, 15 March 1917.

²⁸Ibid., book 13, diary entry, 25 December 1917. See also the diary entry on the following Christmas: the sergeant-major asked the men to give the CO "heartly cheers", no matter what they thought of him. They agreed to do so and greeted the colonel's speech with the "required cheers". Ibid., book 18, diary entry, 25 December 1918. On the general subject of commanding officers and Christmas dinners, see Unknown Soldiers by One of Them (New York: Vantage Press, 1959), p. 34, in which the author wrote that those who made laudatory speeches praising the CO were made NCOs "as soon as decency would permit".

manner and conduct.

Officers were surprisingly more reticent about their commanding officers than the other ranks. However, it is interesting that some of their remarks dealt with a CO's relations with his men. Captain Savage noted on Christmas day that his CO had visited the men's mess and had feebly uttered "conventional platitudes" to the "not so merry men".²⁹ The same CO was castigated for being "so damn weak morally", as he seemed incapable of properly dealing with a group of farriers who refused to work.³⁰ Lieutenant Sinclair was equally contemptuous of his commanding officer, who also seemed to cater to the men, at the expense of his officers:

He had under him the very best material possible in such officers as ... and yet, even in those early days he showed signs of a disinclination to back up the disciplinary measures of his subordinates. He was one of the type of civilian soldier who is simply worshipped by the poorer element among the ranks, but to serve under whom, for an officer, is sheer misery.³¹

However, what may be said of the commanding officers

²⁹NAC, Alfred Savage Papers, MG 30, E 472, diary entry, 25 December 1918.

³⁰Ibid., diary entries, 1 November and 2 November 1918.

³¹NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 432, typed diary entry, p. 5. The CO referred to by Sinclair was Col. J. A. Currie, author of "The Red Watch". It is really questionable whether the "poorer element among the ranks" worshipped him, as on p. 44 Col. Currie described his attempts at suppressing gambling and swearing: on several occasions he had had men paraded before him for using foul language (a prerogative of the CO only!).

themselves? How did they perceive their role as battalion leaders, and what did they have to say about the hundreds of men in their command? According to their letters and diaries, what type of relationship (if any) did they have with their men?

If one selects at random the papers of seven officers who were at one time commanding officers of their battalions,³² one can immediately observe a difference in their thoughts and priorities. What they chose to record in their diaries and correspondence give the researcher an idea of the events and observations they considered most important to their command. They also help to establish what these officers thought about their men.

Lieutenant-Colonel Peck's entries in his diary were brief and factual: "visited trenches", "weather fine", casualties, illness, reliefs, etc. These bald entries no doubt concealed a great deal of activity, but in themselves did not present a clear picture of a CO "in action", nor did they indicate what relationship Peck shared with his men. Two COs of the same battalion, the Leckie brothers, who each

³²NAC, Brig.-Gen. William Antrobus Griesbach Papers, MG 30, E 15, (49th Battalion); NAC, Lt.-Col. John Edwards Leckie Papers, MG 30, E 83, (16th Battalion "Canadian Scottish"); NAC, Brig.-Gen. Robert Gilmour Edwards Leckie Papers, MG 30, E 84, (16th Battalion "Canadian Scottish"); NAC, Lt.-Col. Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, MG 30, E 241, (28th Battalion); NAC, Brig.-Gen. Victor Wentworth Odlum Papers, MG 30, E 300, (7th Battalion); NAC, Lt.-Col. Cyrus Wesley Peck, MG 30, E 134, (16th Battalion "Canadian Scottish"); NAC, Lt.-Col. John Weightman Warden Papers, MG 30, E 192, (102nd Battalion "North British Columbians").

preceded Peck, presented a similar situation. However, Lt.-Col. Robert Leckie, first CO of the 16th Battalion, retained in his files a letter from his batman who had been wounded and evacuated to England. Private Bywell had written to inform his CO of his circumstances and to hope that Leckie's kit was secure, and that Leckie would have a "safe return in the end".³³ Leckie's brother, Lt.-Col. John Edwards Leckie, succeeded him upon his promotion: unlike his brother and Lt.-Col. Peck, John Leckie did seem to have given his men some thought. In a letter to his sister he reported that he had given some puzzles which she had sent to him to the men in the trenches, and that he had promised a cigar to every man who completed one.³⁴

It would be hard to determine what type of relationship these three COs of the 16th Battalion shared with their men. Because they did not commit to paper their thoughts and emotions, one can not assume that they cared little for their men. Indeed, Lt.-Col. John Leckie's attempts to provide his men with a challenge (the puzzles) and an incentive (the cigars) suggests that he sympathised greatly with their long hours of tedium in the trenches.

On the other hand, some COs were far more frank and forthcoming. Lt.-Col. John Warden, CO of the 102nd Battalion

³³NAC, Robert Gilmour Edwards Leckie Papers, Pte. C. Bywell to Lt.-Col. Leckie, 24 May 1915.

³⁴NAC, John Edwards Leckie Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Leckie to Margaret, 26 January 1916.

before his voluntary secondment to the Dunsterforce (Mesopotamia) in January 1918, was delightfully uninhibited in his diary. In between execrating Generals Odlum and Watson as "political wire pullers" and cursing a British captain and his "clique of camouflaged gentlemen", Warden recorded his thoughts on leaving his battalion:

Left my Batt. & France for England, 8 a.m. this is the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life; I have the best Batt. in France, there never were men truer, braver, more loyal, more capable, more loved by C.O. the finest fighters, it just about broke my heart, I could not say goodbye to a single one. God, how I loved them, they called themselves "Wardens Warriors" & the rest of the British Army called us, "The Death or Glory Boys" & no Batt. was more entitled to the name. I wish them the best of good luck.³⁵

Warden had been a captain in the 7th Battalion, was wounded at Ypres in April 1915, and subsequently returned to Canada to raise the 102nd Battalion. The published history of the battalion, by a former sergeant of the unit, confirmed the popularity of Warden as CO and reproduced his farewell message.³⁶ Apart from this, Warden's devastating honesty in his diary (as regards other matters) suggests that his feeling for his men had indeed been warm and sincere.

³⁵NAC, John Weightman Warden Papers, diary entry, 10 January 1918.

³⁶L. McLeod Gould, From B.C. to Baisieux being the Narrative History of the 102nd Canadian Infantry Battalion (Victoria, B.C.: Thos. R. Cusack, 1919), p. 77. See also pp. 7-9 and p. 74 for related entries to Warden.

The remaining three COs, Lieutenant-Colonel MacIntyre of the 28th Battalion, Brigadier-General Odlum of the 7th and Brigadier-General Griesbach of the 49th, were much more prolific in their correspondence and diaries. Lt.-Col. MacIntyre had served with the 28th Battalion since its inception, first as a lieutenant and then working his way up through the commissioned ranks. By the time the war ended, he was commanding officer of the battalion, with a wealth of junior and senior officer experience behind him. It was fortunate that he had had this experience as his battalion, like many another homesick Canadian unit, was impatient to return home after the Armistice. The 28th, however, was part of the occupation army in Germany, and therefore had to wait until the end of May 1919 to return to Canada.

Lt.-Col. MacIntyre spared no efforts in making Christmas 1918 an enjoyable one for his men. A week before Christmas he had sent an officer and two men to France, with instructions to "go from place to place till they got a supply of nuts, raisins, oranges, etc." which could be added to the roast beef, maple sugar and beer already obtained for the men's Christmas dinner.³⁷ MacIntyre also purchased two hundred tickets for a show at a Bonn theatre and had them distributed to whoever was interested. In the New Year, however, the men became increasingly restless. For this

³⁷NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, diary entry, 24 December 1918.

reason, MacIntyre organised numerous sports events as well as various outings, such as a boat trip for some four hundred men and officers.³⁸ He also procured a hall which could seat two hundred men:

We will use the place for educational work in the mornings, recreation room in the afternoon and concerts, dances, boxing, etc. at night. Have to keep the men interested and amused or they get "fed up".³⁹

Unfortunately, a busy programme of sports, dances and boxing tournaments could not quell the men's impatience. Back in England by the beginning of May, trouble was definitely brewing in the battalion, inevitably fuelled by cancelled sailings and poor food:

Sure enough there was a disturbance in the lines about 9.30 P.M. A few men got pretty noisy and the rest stood around to see what would happen. I went down and asked them to leave the canteen and go to their huts, which they did. There was a lot of fuss over nothing and no violence or fighting, but I am sorry anything happened at all as the men's behaviour has been excellent up to now. However, they are being kept here too long.⁴⁰

The fact that MacIntyre had no apparent difficulty in controlling his men suggests that they respected his judgement and trusted him to do his utmost to expedite their departure. By all accounts, the men were indeed fortunate to

³⁸Ibid., diary entry, 15 January 1919.

³⁹Ibid., diary entry, 13 February 1919.

⁴⁰Ibid., diary entry, 14 May 1919.

have had a commanding officer who took such pains to keep them occupied during their sojourn in Germany. The respect and confidence was mutual: MacIntyre was confident that his men would not cause much trouble if they were treated decently.

Brig.-Gen. Victor Odlum's extensive correspondence was sprinkled throughout with letters from privates, corporals, and anxious family members who wrote to him in his capacity as CO (Lieutenant-Colonel) of the 7th Battalion. What was particularly interesting about Odlum's correspondence was the human element in many of the letters. One hospitalised corporal wrote to say "hello" and managed to insert "Dear Sir" five times in his seventeen-line letter.⁴¹ A letter from another corporal expressed the wish to "once more" shake hands with Odlum, as he had done "on the sad day when leaving the line."⁴²

The papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Odlum perhaps best illustrate the multitudinous tasks which beset a commanding officer--tasks which were sometimes delicate and often tragic. A letter from a distressed mother who asked that Odlum investigate the "disappearance" of her son, Private

⁴¹NAC, Victor Wentworth Odlum Papers, vol. 16, unidentified corporal to Lt.-Col. Odlum, 29 August 1915.

⁴²"... may these few lines reach you in the best of health, god bless you till we meet again ..." Ibid., vol. 18, Cpl. J. Vinson to Lt.-Col. Odlum, 18 March 1916. A letter was received from another wounded corporal, thanking Odlum for a ten-pound (sterling) cheque. Ibid., vol. 20, Corporal Scully to Lt.-Col. Odlum, 15 June 1917.

McKinnon, no doubt caused Odlum some thought before sending a reply: as the soldier had been reported "missing" on 24 April 1915 (Second Battles of Ypres) there was little hope that he would ever be found. In this instance Odlum sent Mrs. McKinnon's letter to his wife, Tess, asking her to "please call on this woman" and explain the situation.⁴³ (A sympathetic and dedicated wife was a definite asset to a commanding officer, a subject which merits an academic study of its own.)

Odlum's civilian occupation had been a fire insurance broker. This job could scarcely have prepared him to deal with the administrative and personnel problems of running a battalion. It certainly did not prepare him for letters received from women whom his soldiers had wittingly or unwittingly impregnated. Miss Gilbert's appeal to Odlum for some financial support from the father of her unborn child necessitated a delicate investigation of the activities of Number 442211 Pte. Jack Thompson. Odlum promptly dispatched three pounds sterling to Miss Gilbert of Paddington, and docked the sum from Private Thompson's pay, as well as an additional five francs every pay day.⁴⁴

⁴³Ibid., vol. 16, Mrs. Peter McKinnon to Lt.-Col. Odlum, n.d. [April-June 1915].

⁴⁴Ibid., vol. 18, Miss N. Gilbert to Lt.-Col. Odlum, 28 March 1916. Miss Gilbert's letter was literate and well-worded, indicating a reasonable level of education. She wished only to have Private Thompson cover the expenses of her "illness" and the time during which she could not work.
(continued...)

This type of correspondence illustrates Odlum's necessity to interact on a fairly intimate basis with his men (or at least with some of them). The letters received from convalescent other ranks indicated the close attachment many of them felt for their CO, an affection which must have been reciprocated or the letters would not have been sent in the first place. Odlum was perhaps more sensitive to the other ranks than other COs, as his own brother, Howard Odlum, had served in the ranks as a corporal before being killed in action.

Lieutenant-Colonel Griesbach, one-time commanding officer of the 49th battalion, was another CO who seems to have been interested in his men's welfare. Despite rumours circulated by his "enemies" to the effect that he refused to visit a home where private soldiers had also been invited,⁴⁵ Griesbach expressed concern for his men on many occasions. He had once bought beer for the whole battalion, and defended the men when they were criticised by General Lipsett for

⁴⁴(...continued)

Once the child was old enough to be left she would be able to return to work and no further financial assistance from Private Thompson would be required. Miss Gilbert was not naive: she promised to return Thompson's amorous letters once he had acted "honourably" and paid for the period of her confinement.

⁴⁵NAC, William Antrobus Griesbach Papers, Lt.-Col. Griesbach to R. N. Frith, 15 May 1915.

being idle.⁴⁶ He noted in his diaries whenever the men were wet, exhausted, had poor or crowded billets, and when they were "all in" and "suffering". He also had a sense of humour: a direct hit on his dugout having separated him from his staff officers he instantly "promoted" the first three men he could find. A lance-corporal thus became his "second-in-command", and two privates his "adjutant" and "intelligence officer". He was obviously sufficiently impressed with their performance as "officers" to note their names and battalion numbers in his diary.⁴⁷

Griesbach was promoted to Brigadier-General at the end of 1917 and thereafter assumed command of the 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade. In this capacity he continued to champion the men in his command, whenever he felt it necessary. On one occasion shortly after the Armistice, when supplies had been delayed, he threatened to resign if the men were ordered to march without rations.⁴⁸ (In addition, he had once carried his drunk chauffeur the best part of five miles after the driver had "ditched" his car.⁴⁹)

⁴⁶Ibid., Brig.-Gen. A. C. Macdonell to General Lipsett, 12 December 1916. Macdonell probably wrote the letter at Griesbach's insistence.

⁴⁷Ibid., typed diary entry, 16 September 1916.

⁴⁸Ibid., typed diary entries, 29 November and 30 November 1918. He had also defended them against allegations of looting. See memo from Griesbach to 1st Canadian Division H.Q., 28 June 1918.

⁴⁹Ibid., typed diary entry, 5 February 1919.

In his role as commanding officer, Griesbach's concern for his men was limited to their physical well-being. One has the impression that this concern was motivated more by military expediency than by humanitarian reasons. This feeling is reinforced by Griesbach's refusal to support equality of veterans' pensions after the war.⁵⁰ A solicitude for one's battalion's welfare did not necessarily imply that all ranks were considered to be of equal importance.

In many respects, the archival documents supported the published material about commanding officers. Negative comments by the other ranks were rare, and these were largely confined to issues which most soldiers would have griped about anyway (i.e. inspections). It is certain that very few (if any) soldiers called their CO by his first name: no examples of this were found in any of the documents.⁵¹ One is left with the impression of a civilian boss-employee

⁵⁰Ibid., clipping from unidentified newspaper, 9 August 1919: "It goes without saying that General Griesbach, being a soldier of two wars, would desire to hold the goodwill of his fellow soldiers of this last war if it were possible, but he isn't worrying overmuch about it ... As to pensions, he approves of the higher ranks having an advantage over the lower ranks." See also Griesbach's typed diary entries regarding this issue, 18 April and 27 April 1919.

⁵¹(With the exception of Brig.-Gen. Odlum's brother, Cpl. Howard Odlum, who addressed him as "Dear Victor" in his correspondence.) Also, no examples were found of COs referring to men by their first names. It must have been relatively rare for COs to address even their officers by their Christian names, as Lt. George Magann noted in his diary that the PPCLI's commanding officer was "apparently well liked by all his officers" and that "he calls them all by their Christian names." NAC, George Loranger Magann Papers, MG 30, E 352, vol. 1, diary entry, 15 January 1916.

relationship. The commanding officer as "boss" had the power to reward and punish. In many cases, he maintained friendly, cordial relations with his men but, understandably, avoided intimacy. He normally looked after their interests as best as circumstances allowed, to varying degrees of satisfaction.⁵² As regards his "employees", the men, they were usually sufficiently removed from frequent immediate contact with their CO to have relatively little to say about him. Of course, wartime censorship meant that a soldier was obliged to exercise discretion in his correspondence, and this no doubt accounted for a lack of CO-related details in private papers.

⁵²Lt.-Col. Agar Adamson, briefly CO of the PPCLI, set aside twenty-five pounds (sterling) a month to pay for extra rations, "Tommy cookers", vegetables, etc. for the men. Hamilton Gault, the founder of the regiment and its ~~first~~^{second} commanding officer, had spent substantial amounts of his own money to purchase food, give funds to impecunious men going on leave, settle officers' private affairs which they didn't want their families to know about, etc. NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 9, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 6 June 1918.

CHAPTER THREE

Junior/Company Officers

Soldiers were in frequent contact with their junior and company officers. It is therefore understandable that many of their comments about officers concerned this group. The nature of their comments may be divided into two broad areas, professional and personal. Professional remarks concerned officers as military leaders, and dealt with items such as training, competence and knowledge, leadership skills and responsibility. Personal comments dealt with officers as fellow men, and included such elements as social interaction, sports activities, popularity or unpopularity of specific individuals, and physical violence.

These two groups of observations together provide a reasonably clear image of how the average Canadian soldier perceived his junior officers and what type of relationship he enjoyed with them. Nonetheless, the issue also has to be studied from the opposite perspective--that of the officer. Platoon and company officers made many comments in their correspondence, diaries and memoirs regarding the men in their command: these remarks for the most part were far more substantial than those normally associated with officers' observations about private soldiers.

A junior officer with previous military experience was, in the early stages of the war, a rare animal indeed. As the war progressed the situation was somewhat alleviated by the

granting of commissions to deserving rankers. What this meant, however, was that in many cases young officers had little notion of what exactly constituted their professional duties. This shortcoming was all too apparent to many men in the ranks.

Private Macfie, 1st Battalion, was initially not impressed with his "poor bunch of officers": an inability to keep order amongst the restless men and a lack of military knowledge led him to conclude that his officers were virtually useless. Their lack of professionalism was evident in their continual playing around "like a lot of kids" and their clumsy, overhanded attempts at discipline:

There is only one officer that left Parry Sound with us that is going over seas ... The men don't like him at all, [sic] he is too young to be ordering old soldiers around. He tapped one on the shoulder with his sword, last Sunday and the fellow transferred [sic] the next day.¹

Ignorance and misconceptions regarding discipline invariably resulted in many inexperienced officers issuing unjustifiable commands. For instance, the captain of Private Rigsby's company ordered his men to replace their leather buttons with brass ones, an action considered by Rigsby and his comrades

¹National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Macfie Family Papers, MG 30, E 427, vol. 1, Pte. Donald Roy Macfie to Jessie, 22 September 1914. See also Ibid., Pte. Macfie to father, 26 September 1914 and Ibid., Pte. Macfie to brother, 13 December 1914.

as a ploy to provide them with more work.² A lack of responsibility and judgement in enforcing discipline prompted more than one soldier to deplore an officer's "thoughtless tactics" and "arrogant stupidity".³

Whether new or experienced, many officers lacked basic military skills. One of the most seminal of skills, map reading, seems to have eluded a large number of officers. Their penchant for losing their way and leading their men astray was remarked upon by various soldiers.⁴ For instance, one of Private Lacey's officers lost his sense of direction during a route march and led his men miles out of their scheduled route.⁵ Another soldier's officers were equally inept: one "did not know W from E on service maps" and another, "Daddy Fair", "kept up his reputation of losing his

²"Such rubbish! He claims that the leather ones will dissolve when wet! As a matter of fact, it is only a little more swank. He wants everybody shined up." NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, MG 30, E 111, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 8 March 1918.

³See NAC, William C. Morgan Papers, MG 30, E 488, diary entry, 5 June 1917; Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), pp. 73-74. Morgan was incensed at an officer's lack of understanding when men fell out during a route march in hot weather: the officer castigated them for "God dammed [sic] yellow bellied troops". Bird's situation was even worse: a new officer insisted on the men "forming fours" during a heavy bombardment. A man was killed by a shell as the platoon tried to obey.

⁴"... our kind and brave officers are no more capable of using a map than the average cow..." Thomas Dinesen, Merry Hell! A Dane with the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, s.d.), p. 228.

⁵NAC, F. Lacey Papers, MG 30, E 438, diary entry, 7 August 1916.

way" during a "very trying march".⁶ Finally, Private Sinclair was somewhat dubious of his officer's orienteering skills:

On Friday afternoon we had a route march ... of about 8 miles. I kenna whether our Major got mixed up on his route, but after 4 miles he turned us back and we simply retraced our steps to our various billets.⁷

While accurate map reading skills were a necessary acquisition for all junior officers, those in the specialty arms such as the engineers and artillery required additional knowledge. It was this supplementary expertise which led many soldiers to evaluate their officers' worth both as professionals as well as military leaders. Like many educated soldiers, Lance-Corporal Clarke, a Queen's University graduate in the Canadian Engineers, speculated on

⁶NAC, William Clement Morgan Papers, MG 30, E 488, diary entries, 4 May 1918 and 24 November 1918. However, in all fairness to Canadian officers, service maps could be difficult to interpret. Major Villiers commiserated with officers on this point: he claimed that the maps had to be held upside down in order to be read properly. "These maps did more to muddle young officers, and old ones too, than anything else." NAC, Paul Frederick Villiers Papers, MG 30, E 236, vol. 4, typed diary entry, May 1915, p. 41.

⁷NAC, Alexander Gibson Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 237, typed diary transcript, 22 February 1915. Pte. Sinclair and his mates were surprisingly restrained. Other soldiers were more vocal: "Captain X" of the 16th Battalion misled his company during an attack and also had the misfortune to get his men lost when leading them back to billets. "The men were furious and as they wandered around in circles in the darkness a voice could be heard shouting, "You can't lead us in the attack", and after a pause a shout would come from a different part of the company, "And you can't lead us home." H. M. Urquhart, The History of the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish) Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War, 1914-1919 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), pp. 332-333.

the assets of his new officer:

So the lieutcy. of our section was left vacant, & the appointee proved to be Weatherbe. According to rumor he is a clever engineer, but a difficult man to get along with. We all hope the latter part of it may prove incorrect.⁸

Unfortunately, as suggested by subsequent entries in Clarke's diary, Lieutenant Weatherbe, although a kind man, was obstinate in the practice of his profession:

Progress is very unsatisfactory there for it [a trench] caves in as fast as we can dig it out, & yet nobody can persuade Mr. Weatherbe that it is necessary to level the walls.⁹

Lance-Corporal Clarke resolved his professional differences with officers such as Weatherbe by becoming one himself. (It is worthwhile noting that after receiving his commission Clarke's former criticisms of the military system were greatly subdued.)

Other soldiers did not escape so easily, and were obliged to suffer their officers' lack of expertise. Gunner Morison was a representative example of this. His frank, astute comments in his diaries revealed the professional ineptitude of his artillery officers whose lectures on explosives and other matters "made about as much impression

⁸NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, MG 30, E 155. vol. 1, book I, diary entry, 14 September 1915.

⁹Ibid., vol. 1, book I, diary entry, 29 October 1915.

as snow upon the deserts [sic] dusty face."¹⁰ One particular officer persistently displayed his ignorance of the artillery guns he was supposed to be explaining by repeatedly getting "all balled up".¹¹ Apart from having seen his officers reprimanded by Headquarters staff for inefficiency on the firing range,¹² Morison also witnessed a classic case of an officer trying to cover up his mistakes, in this instance a bungled "shoot":

He [the officer] fired with No. 4 gun, the furthest away from the battery and since, it is said, got hell for it from the Major. Parky tells us further than when the order came he wanted Sgt. Donnelly to cut the wires so that he could claim they broke & he couldn't get the orders. Jim refused.¹³

(Gunner Morison, as will be seen in Chapter Seven, had little sympathy for his officers, and their frequent displays of incompetence only strengthened his disdain.)

A lack of experience and knowledge did not necessarily prevent officers from assuming responsibility for their men's welfare. Many soldiers remarked on their officers' efforts to get better billets, extra leave or additional equipment for them: one man was particularly grateful for a "resperator" which his officer gave him to replace the one he

¹⁰NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 1, diary entry, 5 May 1915. See also book 1, diary entry, 6 May 1915.

¹¹Ibid., book 1, diary entries, 9 and 14 June 1915.

¹²Ibid., book 2, diary entry, 17 August 1915.

¹³ibid., book 6, diary entry, 3 May 1916.

had had stolen.¹⁴ An officer's professional interest in his troops also extended in many cases to their stomachs and nicotine habits. Corporal Will Bird's platoon was extremely fortunate to have acquired an officer who was "connected" with one of the largest stores in Montreal. The officer ensured that every man received a "very fine parcel from his establishment" as well as liberal supplies of Players cigarettes for those who eschewed the army issue.¹⁵ Other officers rendered similar services: one "considerately advanced" his men three shillings each from his own money until the Paymaster arrived to pay them; and another paid for cablegrams to be sent to the families of wounded and killed men.¹⁶

The essential responsibility of an infantry officer to his men concerned neither their billets nor their stomachs. Leading his men into battle, or in Great War parlance, leading them "over the bags", was after all the officer's

¹⁴(The officer's gesture was surprisingly generous as the gas mask he gave the man had been the officer's own.) NAC, William Clement Morgan Papers, diary entry, 14 June 1917.

¹⁵The generous officer also gave broke men ten francs "without a question". Will R. Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, Limited, 1968), p. 144. Bird's platoon valued this officer so greatly that they planned to stash "Granny" away in a safe spot during any "tough fighting": "one man was to stay with him and try to protect him from harm. We did not want any other officer." Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁶K. Weatherbe, From the Rideau to the Rhine (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1928), p. 21; NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book II, diary entries, 26 February and 26 April 1916.

main reason for existence. Senior NCOs might have been responsible for training the men, but it was the officer who personally led his men into direct confrontation with the enemy. And, as Henry Gole so aptly put it, these officers also died well.¹⁷

Private West was one of the few soldiers to comment in his diary on his officer's leadership during an attack on 28 August 1918:

At 12 o'clock we "went over" led by Lieut. K. D. Miller, and well he led us. ... I must say I was thrilled. There at our head with a stick for a cane stumped K.D. He seemed to pay so little heed to the shooting.¹⁸

Post-attack disillusion set in very quickly in this case: the first individual to get criticised was, of course, the same officer who had so gallantly led Private West and his chums:

All of us were tired, hungry and peevish and complained much of K.D.'s leadership. As however he had been a brick all the 28th we were not too severe on him.¹⁹

Private West's officer survived the attack of August 28th, but many did not. Officers had a disproportionately higher

¹⁷Henry G. Gole, "The Great War: A Literary Perspective", Parameters (Summer 1987): 95.

¹⁸NAC, Albert C. West Papers, MG 30, E 32, typed diary transcript, 28 August 1918. West was awarded the Military Medal for his role as a despatch courier in this attack.

¹⁹However, "K.D." redeemed himself by having the men lie down while he located the kitchens. He later guided them to the kitchens where they were given rum and a hot breakfast. Ibid., typed diary transcript, 29 August 1918.

fatality rate than men, a ratio which was somewhat decreased by some officers adopting the same garb as noncommissioned soldiers. Reactions of men to their officers' death in action varied greatly, but the majority were, understandably, indifferent. In some instances, a dead officer had been highly valued by his men, as was the case with Captain Ryerson, killed at Ypres, April 1915: a letter of condolence was sent to his father signed by four NCOs and 29 privates.²⁰ In other situations, a soldier's dislike of a particular officer was not affected by his death: a mate of Private Victor Wheeler confessed that he was "not one bit sorry [a] Lieutenant was napooed."²¹

In terms of quality and quantity, soldiers' comments about their personal interaction with junior and company officers exceeded those dealing with their professional relationship. These remarks dealt with friendships, social interaction, personal popularity (or unpopularity) of specific officers, sports activities, and other miscellaneous items. Taken as a whole, the predominant sentiment of the commentary reinforced the notion that, barring exceptional circumstances, officers and men constituted two exclusive groups.

²⁰George Stanley Ryerson, Looking Backward (Toronto: Ryerson, 1924), p. 219.

²¹Victor W. Wheeler, The 50th Battalion in No Man's Land (Calgary: Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, 1980), p. 118.

There were only two circumstances in which officers and men could "legally" interact with each other on a personal and equal level. The first was "Toc H", or Talbot House, operated since 1915 by the British Chaplaincy Service. This facility allowed officers and men to mingle together freely, but its primary purpose was to provide an informal social setting in which male family members of different ranks could meet without fear of official harassment. As a sign in the club read, "Abandon rank all ye who enter here."²² The second circumstance was the Masonic Lodge. Three Canadian officers mentioned either having attended a Lodge meeting in England, or commented on some masonic connection. The two officers who had attended Lodge meetings specified that the masons present had been officers, NCOs and men: as Lieutenant-Colonel Woodside wrote, "Masonry regards the man more than his rank outside of the craft."²³ In certain circumstances, masonry clearly drew men and officers closer together.²⁴

²²Norman Miles Guiou, Transfusion: A Canadian Surgeon's Story in War and in Peace (Yarmouth, N.S.: Stoneycroft, 1985), p. 99.

²³NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, MG 30, C 64, vol. 16, Lt.-Col. Woodside to wife, 5 July 1915. Col. A. J. E. Kirkpatrick was the second officer who mentioned a group of mixed ranks attending a lodge meeting in London. NAC, A. J. E. Kirkpatrick Papers, MG 30, E 318, (3rd Battalion CEF Papers), vol. 23, file 179, typed diary extracts, 25 November 1914, p. 27 of typed MS, "The First Thirty Thousand".

²⁴For instance, Lieutenant Ponton's men presented him with a masonic ring, "a real beauty", after one morning parade on ship. Some of the men were from "the best families in Ottawa", a fact which perhaps explains why Ponton spent part
(continued...)

None of the noncommissioned soldiers in the archival pool mentioned Talbot House or masonry. They did, however, refer to a third area in which men and officers met in a non-military setting. Sports and games, such as baseball, rugger, football (i.e. 'soccer'), cricket, tug-of-war, etc., were often welcome distractions from the boredom and sporadic horrors of war. Commissioned and noncommissioned ranks usually played on separate teams: there are numerous entries in soldiers' and officers' diaries referring to men's teams playing against officers' teams in various sports. However, there were also many occasions on which officers played on men's teams (usually in the capacity of pitchers and catchers in the case of baseball), a situation which led at least one soldier to claim that his team had won because of the officer playing on the opposing team.²⁵

Sports represented an excellent opportunity for all ranks to mix together in an environment free of military etiquette and restraint. It reminded both groups that most of them were, after all, civilians; officers and men would theoretically be returning to an "equal" status as soon as the war was over. It was also a form of education, especially for officers such as Lieutenant Huntley MacPherson

²⁴(...continued)
of his evenings with them in the lower decks of the ship. NAC, William Nisbet Ponton Papers, MG 30, E 96, vol. 2, Lt. Ponton to mother, 2 October 1914.

²⁵NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 7, diary entry, 6 August 1916.

who apparently held traditional views of the private soldier being somewhat less honourable and decent than the rest of society:

We played Strathconas at rugger this evening It was a fine hard and fast game. ... It is remarkable how clean these games are, when one remembers even college teams at home who are presumably all gentlemen & how rough & things [sic] are done sometimes, while these Tommies will play a clean hard game.²⁶

Off the playing field, men and officers mixed much less freely, if at all. However, the much vaunted episodes of privates and junior officers dining together (particularly in England) did have some truth to them. But in virtually all cases, these concerned officers and men who had known each other before the war and who therefore had a common social background. The semi-literate Private Chandler who was constantly being brought up "befor [sic] the Col." and who frequently served a "sentant" in the "gard tent"²⁷ had absolutely no possibility of ever dining or walking out with

²⁶NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, MG 30, E 23, book III, diary entry, 27 April 1916. MacPherson was a regular football player: on one occasion he admitted that he had nearly "died of exhaustion" after a strenuous game with the men. Ibid., book III, 15 March 1916. Gunner Morison commented that officers and men had mixed "O.K." during a ball game. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 1, diary entry, 29 March 1915.

²⁷pte. Albert Chandler was an archetypical example of the "shit-disturber". He was brought up before his captain or CO on no less than six occasions during a four-month period. NAC, Albert Chandler Papers, MG 30, E 226, undated diary entries. The surprising point about Chandler is that he bothered to keep a brief diary from September 1914 to February 1915.

any of his officers.

Gunner Morison's brother and cousin were both officers, one in the Canadian Dental Corps and the other in the CAMC. (Although university educated himself, Morison and another brother, Keith, enlisted in the artillery as privates.) While in France and Belgium, Morison had occasion to visit both of his officer-relations. His cousin was at 9th Field Ambulance when Morison dropped by and the two retired to the privacy of Captain Morison's tent for a long chat. However, when he visited his dentist-brother, Gunner Morison found himself in a somewhat different position:

Quite a swell hotel. Lots of officers about & a porter, with a uniform more weighted with gold braid than a field marshall, hears my inquiry for Dr. J. B. Morison of the Canadian Dental Corps and brings Jim from the dining room. ... Quite a lot of officers in the dining room and private soldiers are rather out of place. A very good dinner.²⁸

Although the hotel dining room was not off-limits to the noncommissioned ranks, there was no doubt that Gunner Morison was one of the few (perhaps the only) privates present that evening.

Apart from his brother and cousin, Gunner Morison did not "socialise" with any of his officers. Other soldiers did, but only in those cases where pre-war friendships were involved. Lance-Corporal Clarke was an example of one such

²⁸NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 2, diary entry, 13 July 1915.

case:

... after a good clean up at the hotel, hunted up Maurice Fisher (Capt. E. M. Fisher of the Fort Garry Horse) at the Buff barracks. He welcomed us very cordially & proceeded to show us around the city. ... Maurice gave us tea up in his rooms ...²⁹

Private Albert West also spent some off-duty time with an officer whom he had known before the war, noting that when the two were alone the officer was "jolly as ever", but that when on parade his character underwent a conspicuous change.³⁰ Gunner Frank Hazlewood met some pre-war acquaintances--all officers--and had no apparent difficulty in arranging visits with them, and even riding with one of them.³¹ On the other hand, some relationships were temporarily suspended when one of two friends received a commission; as Private Roy Macfie lamented:

I have none of my old pals now at all,
Sgt Murpy [sic] is Leut. Murphy now, and

²⁹NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book I, diary entry, 16 May 1915. While in England Clarke frequently visited a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Clarke (no relation). On one occasion a major also came to visit at the same time as L/Cpl Clarke: fortunately the major "did not make the difference in rank at all embarrassing." Ibid., vol. 1, book II, 11 July 1915.

³⁰NAC, Albert C. West Papers, typed diary transcripts, 15-21 November 1917. West, however, was not comfortable with officers he did not know socially (from before the war) as in a later entry he wrote that he had "always as little to do so possible with officers and never spoke unless spoken to ..." Ibid., typed diary transcripts, 8 October 1918.

³¹NAC, Frank Nesbit Moorehouse Hazlewood Papers, MG 30, E 170, Gnr. Hazlewood to parents, 8 February 1917; to brother Roy, 24 August 1917; to brother Harry, 12 February 1918.

that cuts me out as long as the war lasts
 ...³²

It would be inaccurate to conclude that friendship always took precedence over rank. A man had to be careful lest he antagonise his fellow soldiers by appearing to be too "chummy" with a person who, after all, had complete authority over them. This applied also to men who for one reason or the other championed a particular officer. For instance, Private Wilfred Kerr admitted that his support of an officer, a pre-war acquaintance, had "incurred some impatience" on the part of his comrades.³³

Despite the fact that some social distance was usually maintained between officers and men, except in certain cases, soldiers were not hesitant to pronounce (in their diaries and correspondence only!) that a particular lieutenant or captain

³²NAC, Macfie Family Papers, vol. 1, Pte. Donald Roy Macfie to sister Muriel, 14 April 1917. Pte. Macfie was able to renew his friendship with Lt. Murphy after the war. When Macfie married in 1920, Murphy presented him with a cream and sugar set as a wedding present. Personal communication John Macfie (son of Donald Roy Macfie) to author, 21 February 1990.

³³Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "Shrieks and Crashes" being Memories of Canada's Corps 1917 (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1929), p. 184. Kerr was wise to keep his admiration for his CO quiet: "... I thought to myself that he [the CO] could well stand comparison to the Iron Duke; but this opinion I kept secret lest I appear to express admiration of an officer, a sentiment which was quite unworthy of a Canadian and would have lost my standing in the eyes of my comrades." Ibid., p. 64. It was equally ill-advised for a man to be in a position where he was admired by an officer. For instance, Pte. John Johnson's total abstinence from cigarettes and the daily rum ration earned him his officer's approval, but "the boys do not like me any more for it." NAC, John Merritt Johnson Papers, MG 30, E 429, Pte. Johnson to parents, 20 February 1917.

was "a dandy officer", "very nice", "a prince" or "a very fine fellow". It also did not prevent them from conducting the odd business transaction with them, as Private Frank Maheux planned to do:

... tell me what the price of Beaver this winter, I have a officer here, he is crazy to get a few pounds of Beaver for is wife.³⁴ [sic whole entry]

To a great extent the lack of social intimacy also enabled men to poke fun at their officers, some evidently more good natured than others.

Men were amused at any sign of an officer's discomfiture, such as when their tents blew down, or when they had to struggle to control a recalcitrant horse.³⁵ What was considered even more amusing was an officer's reaction to enemy action and his attempts to evade machine-gun and artillery fire. Private Ernest Black remembered howling with laughter as he and a mate watched two officers dodging shrapnel bursts.³⁶ This was harmless mirth, especially considering that there was nothing Private Black or his

³⁴NAC, Frank [Francis-Xavier] Maheux Papers, MG 30, E 297, Pte. Maheux to wife, 20 February 1916.

³⁵NAC, Peter Anderson Papers, MG 30, E 318, typed MS, p. 2; NAC, Archibald Carlyle Roy Papers, MG 30, E 47, book 3, diary entry, 28 August 1917.

³⁶Ernest G. Black, I Want One Volunteer (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), p. 76. See also Reginald H. Roy, ed., The Journal of Private Fraser (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985), p. 36; and NAC, Albert C. West Papers: "Say, it did not take the officers long to wind up the work when Fritzzie [sic] "opened up". I was amused at some of their looks." Typed diary transcript, 28 March 1918.

comrade could have done to help.

What was less innocent, however, was the fun that men derived from playing practical tricks on their officers. One such case involved a new, very nervous officer whose jittery condition was the source of his platoon's amusement. On patrol with his men in a dark subterranean passage, the officer thought as he turned a corner that he had seen a German soldier in the glare of his flashlight. He immediately threw a Mills bomb at the German, hastily retreated, and waited for the smoke to clear. Once it had done so, he advanced to investigate and found, instead of a body, only broken glass and a mirror frame. As Corporal Will Bird put it, "he was a long time forgiving the platoon."³⁷

The nervous lieutenant might well have done himself some damage, although in his case this was not the intention. One officer who did suffer injuries as a result of a "trick" was an engineer supervising men digging six-foot-deep cable trenches. This was a despised job, all the more so because the officer would verify the depth himself with a pole which had the six-foot level marked on it (in luminous paint, as the digging was always done at night). One soldier, incensed at his officer's inference that he was a "slacker" sunk an unusually deep well and indicated to him that he had reached the required depth. The officer "snorted contempt, made a

³⁷Will R. Bird, The Communication Trench (Amherst, N.S.: The author, 1933), pp. 25-26.

lunge at the centre part and went down with a great crash": the pole broke, and the officer sustained serious injuries.³⁸

Again, the intention in this case might not have been to physically injure the officer, only to "teach him a lesson". The issue of men deliberately harming or killing their officers is one fraught with difficulties.³⁹ A sensitive and delicate question, it is virtually impossible to determine how often fatal incidents occurred. In the confusion of a bombardment or an attack, it was easy to commit an intentional homicide: no one conducted autopsies to determine if fallen officers had died from German or Canadian bullets. Naturally, men and officers were loath to discuss

³⁸Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands, pp. 77-78. The same cable trenches were dug in the British Army: see Lyn Macdonald, They Called it Passchendaele (London: Michael Joseph, 1978), p. 32, for a description of how soldiers tricked officers by digging four-foot trenches instead of the required six-foot holes.

³⁹The Great War was not the first nor the last major armed conflict in which officers were killed by their own men. Anthony Kellett states that in the American War of Independence officers of both armies were killed by their own men. Combat Motivation: The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle (Boston: Kluwer Nijhoff Publishing, 1982), p. 109. In the Vietnam War, the problem reached epidemic proportions: see Thomas C. Bond, "Fragging: A Study", Army, XXVII, No. 4 (April 1977): 45-47. (This article was also published in The American Journal of Psychiatry, 133, (1976): 1328-1331.) Richard Holmes provides some interesting details in his Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle (New York: Free Press, 1985), pp. 329-331. Finally, see "Killing Officers", pp. 323-324, in Barry Broadfoot's Six War Years 1939-1945 (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1974): "I know it happened in the Canadian Army, and when it was done we didn't miss either. We got the son of a bitch cold. I personally know of two cases, and I was just in one company of one battalion of one division, and both guys deserved it and they got it." Ibid., p. 323.

this in their diaries and memoirs, although it has emerged in some novels.⁴⁰

Corporal Will Bird is one of the very few Canadian soldiers to admit to nearly killing an officer. On one occasion Bird was assigned to help an officer tape out a location for a company to dig in. It was night, there was intermittent shelling, and the officer was very nervous. His fear finally got the better of him and he took to his heels, leaving Bird alone in the dark, with the company scheduled to arrive shortly:

... before I realized what I was doing I snatched up my rifle and took aim. Before I could press the trigger a quiet voice said: "I would not do that if I were you. It will be on your conscience." It was Captain Arthur. He had come up alone, without a batman, probably because he was unsure of the officer. We stretched the tape as though it were our regular chore, and just had it in place when the first men arrived. I waited for a further reprimand but none came.⁴¹

That officers were shot at by their own men can not be

⁴⁰One of which was Canadian: Charles Yale Harrison's Generals Die in Bed (Hamilton: Potlatch Publications, 1975 (c. 1930)). This theme emerges in D. H. Lawrence's short story "The Prussian Officer", The Complete Short Stories, vol. 1 (Markham, Ont.: Penguin, 1987), pp. 95-116; and John Dos Passos' Three Soldiers (New York: Modern Library, 1964 (c. 1932)).

⁴¹Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands, p. 88. A friend of Bird's threw a German "egg bomb" at a rum-fortified officer who was toting a gun which he had salvaged from a latrine. No harm was done to the officer, and considering his inebriated state he probably remembered nothing of the incident. Ibid., p. 164.

disputed, but the problem lies in determining how often this happened. (Of course, the odd incident occurred when a man ran amok, as did one soldier of the 102nd Battalion who, after a lengthy inspection, "shot the first officer he could see.")⁴² Most ex-soldiers claimed that it was very rare for officers to have died in this fashion;⁴³ others had heard many rumours but had never actually witnessed an incident themselves. This was particularly the case when veterans were interviewed many years after the war:

I heard rumours, of course, that some of the troops shot some of the leaders, the captains, for reasons best known to themselves. That was a rumour that I heard. I don't know how true it was. ... Yes, I did hear that several times. ... I can't imagine myself shooting an officer. And I did know the reason why ... [sic] I presume they were being bullied by these particular smart-alecs, young sub-alterns.[sic]⁴⁴

The front lines naturally were an ideal setting for a

⁴²L. McLeod Gould, From B.C. to Baisieux being the Narrative History of the 102nd Canadian Infantry Battalion (Victoria, B.C.: Thos. R. Cusack, 1919), p. 60. The narrator mentioned that the soldier was an "alien by birth"--this presumably helped explain the incident!

⁴³Black, I Want One Volunteer, p. 166.

⁴⁴NAC, War and Canadian Society, MG 28, I 246, transcripts of taped interviews, No. D-27, "Rumours About Soldiers Shooting Officers". See also interview with C. Evans: "I've heard of some cases where officers were shot in the back ... [sic] but I've never seen anything of it." Ibid., unnumbered interview. It is significant that these two interviews were not included in the book published from the War and Canadian Society Project, edited by Daphne Read, The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1976).

"reckoning".⁴⁵ There was also the possibility of seeking revenge on a "well-hated officer" in peacetime, but as Captain Manion wrote, "in the immensity of our country few of these meetings ever took place."⁴⁶ The passage of time and the return to civilian life dulled most animosity: the desire for vengeance no doubt lost its urgency in the search for jobs and homes.

There were very few references to this issue found in the archival material. Only one remark specifically addressed the question of shooting an officer in order to "get even":

Anything can happen in a front line trench. ... It goes to show ... how easy it is to pay off old scores. Bullying officers and N.C.Os run a risk in the line, especially during a battle.⁴⁷

The other references mostly dealt with post-armistice rumours about officers having been shot or physically assaulted.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919 (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), p. 52. See also a quote from a soldier who had served in a British regiment in Sidney Allinson's The Bantams: The Untold Story of World War I (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1982), p. 237: "But the officer or N.C.O. who was a real bastard to us never tried his Vernon (nastiness) twice, as many a one was shot in the back."

⁴⁶R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure (Toronto: Ryerson, 1936), pp. 158-159.

⁴⁷NAC, Harry H. Howland Papers, MG 30, E 204, MS, "March With Me", pp. 42-43.

⁴⁸See for instance NAC, Archibald Carlyle Roy Papers, book 14, diary entry, 24 November 1918. It is interesting
(continued...)

Gunner Morison, whose nineteen diaries contain a great number of mostly unfavourable observations about officers, mentioned on only one occasion the issue of subordinates shooting their superiors (and this was a reference to the British Peninsular campaign).⁴⁹ Morison was not an infantry soldier, but nonetheless, as a gunner, he came into frequent contact with soldiers in all arms of the CEF. Had he heard any gossip he would certainly have noted it in his diary.

Although the great majority of men would never have considered murdering their officers, they were not hesitant to voice their discontent or displeasure with a particular officer. For instance, in a letter to his father, Private Claude Craig remarked that his new officer knew nothing about

⁴⁸(...continued)

how often French-Canadian soldiers were cited in rumours about troop misbehaviour and violence. The best example of this was Pte. Craig, who wrote in December 1915 that three soldiers of the 41st Battalion, "all French Canadians and there never was a rougher Bn ever mobilized" [sic] had been shot for mistreating a fourteen-year-old girl at Liphook. (An officer who took part in the attack was sentenced to fourteen years in gaol.) "Two days ago a platoon commander (captain) murdered his sergeant by cutting off his head. ... the first week they were here they mobbed their sergeant major who died of his wounds." NAC, Claude C. Craig Papers, MG 30, E 351, Pte. Craig to father, 10 December 1915. Some of the reported assaults on officers occurred well before the Armistice: Lou Elliott, a sailor on board RMS Laurentic with the First Division, reported an officer having been struck by a soldier. NAC, Lou Elliott Papers, MG 30, E 246, Elliott to Mr. & Mrs. Askew, 26 September-17 October 1914, p. 11.

⁴⁹Morison remarked on a published account by a Welsh soldier who had served under Wellington and Moore; the book claimed that Wellington had been shot at more frequently by British than French troops. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 13, diary entry, 2 November 1917.

drill and signalling, wore glasses and also lisped: in short, a "Nut with a capital N".⁵⁰ Private Morgan also despaired of two of his officers: one showed no consideration for his men and insisted on standing on ceremony all the time, and the other had refused to give the men a break during the last ten kilometres of a thirty-eight-kilometre march (due to one man having "abused" him).⁵¹

Corporal William O'Brien's dislike of one of his officers, Major Geary, was apparent on no less than five occasions in his diary. These were spread over a four month period and ended when the Major was evacuated to hospital. The corporal first mentioned Major Geary in connection with a trip to an observation post:

I don't know how he came to pick me as he hates me to beat Hell. When he gets tight however he does the most inexplicable things. As a soldier he knows his work, but as a man or a friend, he is simply impossible.⁵²

Ten days later, O'Brien wrote that the Major had sent him and a mate to pick up some spare parts which they had forgotten on an earlier trip: "Heavens! how I despise that Major."

⁵⁰NAC, Claude C. Craig Papers, Pte. Craig to father, 30 January 1916.

⁵¹NAC, William C. Morgan Papers, diary entries, 23 July 1917 and 27 March 1918.

⁵²NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, MG 30, E 389, revised diary entry, 26 July 1916, p. 191. It should be noted that these revised diary entries pertaining to Major Geary did not appear in O'Brien's original diary. The revisions were done during the 1930s.

A short time later, O'Brien mentioned that he had no chance of advancing in his unit due to the influence of the Major. (He would like to have applied for a commission but with the Major around he stood little chance.) Further, the only thing that exceeded Major Geary's dislike of O'Brien was his own for the Major.⁵³ A fourth diary entry two weeks later again concerned being sent to retrieve forgotten items. The fifth and last entry consisted of only two sentences:

Major Geary sent to hospital today. No tears shed.⁵⁴

Corporal O'Brien obviously kept a silent tongue in his head when dealing with Major Geary, and therefore escaped punishment. This was not the case with other soldiers who verbally or otherwise expressed their opinions, an action which usually but not always resulted in retribution. A soldier who scribbled an offensive remark on his officers' latrine was dealt swift justice:

⁵³Ibid., 10 August 1916, p. 193. O'Brien was commissioned late in the war.

⁵⁴Ibid., 14 November 1916, p. 210. Cpl. O'Brien was an astute soldier, who understood how the army really operated: "It seems that every private, N.C.O. and officer is afraid of the rank higher up. It's the most obviously artificial game in the world. I don't like this "boot-licking" business. I suppose I would have got along a lot further had I been minded to pussy-foot to some of the higher-ups. Oh well." Ibid., 17 August 1916, pp. 196-197. However, he was on familiar terms with many officers, mentioning various "soirees" and visits with lieutenants, majors and colonels. This indicates that O'Brien was probably an educated, socially well-placed man. He did not enjoy manual labour; although a corporal he still was called upon to dig cable trenches (at night): "So yours truly had to spit on his hands and dig and pray for the dawn." Ibid., 18 July 1916, p. 190.

I laugh this morning. All the officers have a closet for themselves, one soldier went there this morning and wrote on the door - - - All officers with short horns stand close to the trough--for that they got him he got 5 day's C.B. [sic whole paragraph]⁵⁵

It must be noted that in the archival material there were more hostile references to overbearing NCOs than there were to officers. This is understandable as NCOs were usually the buffer between the private soldier and the officer. The position of an RSM was especially delicate: as F. A. MacLennan noted, "to keep in right with the officers he's got to be in wrong with the men and if he were in right with the men he'd lose his job."⁵⁶ In some cases, a man's RSM compared very unfavourably with his officers, and on more than one occasion he was physically assaulted by miserable and frustrated troops.⁵⁷ Some sergeants fared no better. Lou

⁵⁵NAC, Frank [Francis-Xavier] Maheux Papers, Pte. Maheux to wife, 11 April 1915.

⁵⁶F. A. MacLennan in Hugh R. Kay, George Magee and F. A. MacLennan, Battery Action! The Story of the 43rd Battery CFA (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter Ltd., [1919]), p. 290.

⁵⁷"R. C. [Royal Canadian Dragoon] officers are very nice to us but the R. C. R.S.M. is a snappy, slouchy looking guy." NAC, F. Lacey Papers, book 1, 15 July 1916. Cpl. Bird wrote about a BSM who was grabbed and forced to swallow a bottle of whisky by an angry soldier. The offender was only given three days CB for the assault, as his officers "did not like the manner in which the B.S.M. carried on." Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands, p. 76. Some RSMs were also guilty of interfering with men's careers: Pte. Drew-Brook found out through another NCO that his sergeant-major had torn up his two applications for transfer to the RFC. NAC, George Victor Drew-Brook Papers, MG 30, E 478, MS, "Journal of Memories", p. 55. Needless to say, the position of RSM was an honourable one,
(continued...)

Elliott, a sailor, remarked on two separate incidents on board RMS Laurentic. One sergeant was waylaid at night by a "few choice members" who did him a great deal of damage. Another NCO who was thought to have fallen accidentally overboard was in fact found to have been thrown overboard.⁵⁸ However, these incidents were probably isolated. The majority of men, faced with a hard-driving, inconsiderate sergeant, simply suffered in silence.⁵⁹

It has already been shown how voluble various soldiers were in discussing their junior officers in diaries and letters. However, can the same be done for the officers themselves? How frequently did they discuss their men and in what context? Did they mention the same things as did the private soldiers, or was the emphasis different?

It must first be stated that the bulk of the officers' commentary from the archival pool can not be divided into professional and personal groups. Very few officers made

⁵⁷(...continued)

and when the individual used his authority responsibly he was a valuable asset to his CO.

⁵⁸The unfortunate NCO was sliced up by the ship's propellers and brought back on board dead. NAC, Lou Elliott Papers, Elliott to Mr. & Mrs. Askew, 26 September-17 October 1914, pp. 13, 17.

⁵⁹See for instance Private Lacey, who unfortunately beat a sergeant at a chess game. The NCO apparently never forgot the defeat, and forced Lacey to sign in his paybook for some items he had never received; he then had Lacey brought before his officer for this offence. As the disillusioned Pte. Lacey put it, "I'll never trust an N.C.O. again in any matter whatsoever. ... I am quite helpless to protect myself." NAC, F. Lacey Papers, book 3, diary entry, 15 July 1917.

direct mention of their men's expertise and competence as soldiers. Most officers had little to say about their men's military potential; an exception was Lieutenant Magann who complained of the quality of the men in the CEF (especially the 5th Royal Highlanders of Montreal), categorising them as "wharf rats, drunkards & ruffians of the lowest type."⁶⁰ Officers were seemingly far more interested in other facets of their relations with their men.

As Viscount Slim once wrote, a good platoon commander knows and loves his men as well as their own mothers do.⁶¹ While it can not be concluded that all Canadian officers were good platoon and company commanders by this definition, many nonetheless accepted the weighty responsibility of being a "father" to a group of men for an indeterminate period of time. This was particularly the case in units recruited within a single locale, where the relatives of enlisted men were acquainted with the officers. Major Peter Anderson was in this position; at the train station prior to embarking for Valcartier he was besieged by anxious relatives:

Fathers, mothers, wives, sisters and brothers were there. Some said, "You look after my Jimmy, Billy, Jack, etc. won't you?" I replied, "Certainly, that

⁶⁰"I mean every word I say. ... Many of the Toronto ones [i.e. battalions] are not much better." NAC, George Loranger Magann Papers, MG 30, E 352, vol. 2, Lt. Magann to mother, 16 November 1914.

⁶¹Field Marshal the Viscount Slim, Defeat into Victory (New York: David McKay, 1961), p. 3.

is what I am here for."⁶²

The role of surrogate father was one which some officers took seriously. Lieutenant Herrick Duggan was pleased to inform his father of his acquisition of a platoon:

I am now the proud owner of 35 absolutely green men & a corporal and it's my duty to play father to them till the war is over. They're good material--I drilled them yesterday for seven hours on end and it had a marked effect. We work every day ... and we make occasional rounds to see that the men are comfy.⁶³

With the "ownership" of a platoon came the concomitant responsibilities. The same officer who so proudly informed his father of his new platoon a few months later expressed his fatigue at constantly having to safeguard the men from harm. In addition to his work as a military engineer, he also had to do "all the thinking for them."⁶⁴ To some officers the men were little better than children, having no

⁶²NAC, Peter Anderson Papers, typed MS, p. 1. Anderson owned a brickyard in Edmonton and many of the men in his company were his own employees from the yard. Lieut.-Col. P. Anderson, I That's Me: Escape from German Prison Camp and Other Adventures (S.l.: s.n., [1920]), Peel Bibliography on Microfiche, No. 2691, p. 14. In England, Anderson's battalion was broken up to provide reinforcements to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions, a "shattering blow" for him as he had promised to look after the men: Anderson was indeed distressed to "see them parcelled off like slaves in a slave market." NAC, Peter Anderson Papers, typed MS, p. [4].

⁶³NAC, Herrick Steven on Duggan Papers, MG 30, E 303, Lt. Duggan to father, 17 January 1915. Duggan was a Canadian officer who received a commission in the Royal Engineers. Subsequent letters reveal Duggan's growing fondness for his men and the establishment of a mutual trust.

⁶⁴"You've no idea how much men belong to an officer ..."
Ibid., Lt. Duggan to sister Peg, 25 August 1915.

notion of cleanliness, punctuality or taking care of themselves and their property. And, as Major Woodside put it, they required "a good spanking many times" for them to acquire the necessary virtues.⁶⁵ On the other hand, at least one officer was impressed with the manner in which his men managed to maintain a basic living standard: in a tone of quasi-incredulity, Lieutenant Harry Baldwin wrote that they were "so very decent in their order and cleanliness."⁶⁶

Other responsibilities included visiting sick and wounded men in hospital (especially in England), looking after the men's interests in civil and military courts, and generally ensuring their basic comfort. These duties often extended beyond the strictly necessary, such as passing on to the men newspapers and other printed material received from home. Officers often turned over to their "boys" any surplus goods sent out by family and friends: these especially included socks, an invaluable commodity in the trenches. The men in Lieutenant Ian Sinclair's company were particularly fortunate: his father had sent over enough socks to give every man in the company a pair.⁶⁷ Lieutenant Baldwin

⁶⁵NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, vol. 16, Maj. Woodside to wife, 1 January 1915.

⁶⁶"I think on the whole they are more orderly (in a rough way) than women are." NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, MG 30, E 65, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 17 February 1918.

⁶⁷NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 432, typed diary entry, 21 December 1914. As a company usually numbered some 200 men it is assumed that Sinclair's father was well-off.

requested that socks be forwarded to him at his new battalion, as they were to be "my first gift to the dear men who are to be my charge."⁶⁸

Lieutenant Baldwin's "dear men" and Lieutenant Burdett-Burgess's "poor dears" were extreme examples of the vocabulary used by officers when referring to their men. Following from the officer/father analogy, it is not surprising that the vast majority of officers referred to their men as "the boys" in their letters and diaries. The use of this term reflected the paternalistic nature of the officer's position and no doubt reinforced the officer's own estimation of his importance.

This feeling of importance was further strengthened by the officer's power to discipline his men whenever the need arose. Many officers mentioned the punishments meted out to their men, mostly for drunkenness and minor misdemeanours, but none went so far as to question the rationale for awarding such punishment. Major Harold Hellmuth was the only officer to examine his own attitude towards discipline and punishment, and was also the only one to confess that he "really had no discipline in the sense of military."⁶⁹

⁶⁸NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 28 April 1918.

⁶⁹NAC, Harold Isidore Hellmuth Papers, MG 30, E 109, typed MS, "Retrospection and Two War Diaries", Microfilm reel M-827, p. 16. Hellmuth, a third-generation Canadian, was with the Canadian Forestry Corps. He was apparently from a wealthy family as he mentions his family having a car and servants.
(continued...)

Perhaps because he was not an infantry officer Hellmuth felt that his approach to discipline, a comparatively lenient one, was most appropriate to his particular situation:

I thought of the way I sometimes talked to my men when holding Orderly-room. How sometimes I pictured that man standing in front of me was myself. He had committed a crime; he had misbehaved--so had I, and so I talked partly to myself as well as to him, and I noticed they listened, and no matter what was my punishment they never complained or called me names.⁷⁰

No officer ever mentioned having been subjected to verbal or physical abuse from his men. This does not mean that it never happened; however, it does suggest that it was not the type of activity an officer would have wished to admit had happened to him or to a brother officer. There was a much greater satisfaction (and thrill) in believing that one's military leadership and personal qualities had made one popular with "the boys" and earned their hearty approval:

The men's [Christmas] dinner at noon was a huge success. It was held by companies and the men of our lot asked Stan and me

⁶⁹(...continued)

His commission was obtained at the expense of lunch with Sir Sam Hughes at the Rideau Club.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 184. Hellmuth once went eight weeks without having to hold an orderly room. He was reported to his CO by a visiting "pompous Canadian Colonel", a butcher in civilian life, for having the "most undisciplined crew" the colonel had ever seen. This was prompted by having come across Hellmuth and a private, both in shirt sleeves, trying to start some old machinery. Ibid., p. 18. Hellmuth showed his good common sense by asking his unit's chaplain not to hold church service on Sundays: it was a "bad day" as his "bunch" used Sunday to get cleaned up and indulge in a little romance with the "village maidens". Ibid., p. 11.

to dine with them, which we did and enjoyed ourselves immensely. ... We drank everybody's health that we could think of and at last, just when I thought I could get safely away, I had to get up and give them a song ...⁷¹

There was equal satisfaction in believing that one's men were ready and willing to follow without question, and that one could exert a subtle influence over them.⁷²

On the surface it would seem that officers' remarks about their men were of less interest and significance than those made by soldiers about their commissioned superiors. This is not strictly accurate, as junior and company officers did indeed make many interesting and insightful comments. While the men had more specific things to write about, especially since officers were figures of authority and under the constant scrutiny of their men, officers were limited in the scope of their commentary. Like the men, they mentioned sporting activities and, much less frequently, they remarked on having met a pre-war acquaintance who was serving in the ranks. However, they had comparatively little to say about the men's military abilities and their behaviour in battle.

⁷¹NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, typed diary entry, 1 January 1915.

⁷²See for instance Maj. Anderson's account of how he "shamed" a group of his men, who were grumbling at moving a 150-pound sack of oats. NAC, Peter Anderson Papers, typed MS, pp. 2-3. Some officers managed to do more than just influence their men. Maj. Woodside seems to have converted a bugler into a total abstainer from liquor, tobacco, and as a letter infers, from women as well. NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, vol. 16, Maj. Woodside to wife, 15 February 1915.

Many commented on the miserable conditions the men were forced to live in, as well as the incidents of casualties and fatalities. However, in the later stages of the war, as reinforcements diluted the original cast of a battalion, officers often did not know their men by name or by sight.

A study of the relations between junior officers and men would be incomplete without a brief discussion of physical contact between the two groups. Historians have been reluctant to speculate about homosexual relations in the military in general, but the double taboo of officer/man love has certainly not been broached in any academic work. Nonetheless, this has not prevented numerous authors (especially American and British) from introducing this topic into their military fiction as a central or peripheral theme.⁷³ However, none of these novels or short stories deal specifically with the First World War, or with the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

⁷³For instance, D. H. Lawrence's "The Prussian Officer", The Complete Short Stories (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987 (c. 1922)); Carson McCullers' Reflections in a Golden Eye (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941); Loren Wahl's The Invisible Glass (New York: Greenberg, 1950); John Osborne's A Patriot for Me (London: Faber & Faber, 1966); and James Purdy's Eustace Chisholm and the Works (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967). All these novels feature an officer who has fallen in love with a private soldier. In three of the five novels the officer commits suicide. Lonnie Coleman's "The Theban Warriors" in Ship's Company (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1955) features two homosexual sailors, one of the few military novels to do so. For an overview of this topic see Roger Austen, "But for Fate and Ban: Homosexual Villains and Victims in the Military", College English, 36, No. 3 (November 1974), 352-359.

The one exception to the above is Timothy Findley's The Wars.⁷⁴ Although not the primary theme of the novel, the rape of a Canadian lieutenant by some unidentified soldiers (men or officers) introduced a subject which authors (including historians) writing about the First World War have totally shunned. Rats, mud and lice have been the standard bill of fare in nearly all Great War novels, and references to sexual activity largely confined to heterosexual encounters with prostitutes. Correspondence and diaries (as well as published memoirs) kept during the war itself also maintained discretion in regards to homosexual relations. Only one explicit reference was found: William Ogilvie in Umty-Iddy-Umty recounted a protest by his fellow signallers against a homosexual corporal who had been propositioning some of the men.⁷⁵

It is a far more delicate matter to extrapolate from soldiers' private papers and memoirs and to thereby estimate the degree to which officers and men engaged in some form of physical contact. Unfortunately, no definitive answer will ever be found to this question. The main problem lies in separating the purely sentimental from the possibly erotic.

⁷⁴Timothy Findley, The Wars (Markham, Ont.: Penguin, 1978).

⁷⁵The corporal was eventually transferred, after the men destroyed a great deal of crockery by pelting it at the partition that separated the corporal's sleeping quarters from their own. William G. Ogilvie, Umty-Iddy-Umty: The Story of a Canadian Signaller in the First World War (Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills Press, 1982), p. 18.

The following extract from Canon Scott's The Great War as I Saw It is a representative sample of an officer's physical contact with a soldier for purely "humanitarian" reasons:

An officer met me one day and told me how his company had had to hold on in a trench, hour after hour, under terrific bombardment. He was sitting in his dugout ... when a young lad came in and asked if he might stay with him. The boy was only eighteen years of age and his nerve had utterly gone. He came into the dugout, and, like a child clinging to his mother clasped the officer with his arms. The latter could not be angry with the lad. There was nothing to do at that point but to hold on and wait, so, as he said to me, "I looked at the boy and thought of his mother, and just leaned down and gave him a kiss."⁷⁶

A similar incident was related by Captain Chute, in referring to a bereaved soldier:

When Driver Holmes's father was killed it was Cyril Hallam [an officer] who comforted the lad. Hallam was walking through the horse-lines late at night when he heard some one sobbing. ... he found the bereaved youngster, sobbing out his sorrow against the neck of his faithful horse. ... there in the darkness of the horse-lines Hallam's arm had stolen around the sobbing frame and Driver Holmes had discovered that his officer was also his big brother.⁷⁷

It is questionable whether or not these incidents were commonplace in the CEF. One suspects that they were not, although it is difficult to determine exactly what might have

⁷⁶Canon Frederick George Scott, The Great War as I Saw It (Toronto: F. D. Goodchild Company, 1922), p. 139.

⁷⁷Arthur Hunt Chute, The Real Front (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918), pp. 185-186.

happened in the stressful and exceptional circumstances of war.

Private Harold Peat remembered one of his captains as a "real and genuine fellow" who, after a long route march, would "kneel down on the muddy floor and bathe our feet."⁷⁸ While it is somewhat doubtful that any Canadian officer actually washed his men's blistered feet, the implications of such an activity bespoke a latent sensuality. (This could have been wishful thinking on Peat's part, perhaps reflecting a desire for physical contact between him and an officer.) On the other hand, although there was no explicit physical contact between Lieutenant James Pedley and his men, the following remark about Pedley's men at a bathing parade suggested that he had perhaps harboured some "unprofessional" considerations regarding them:

Then we had handed our men over to the bath wardens, seen them turned loose, naked and wound-scarred, in the huge steamy shower-chamber where a hundred could be cleansed at one time. Fine bodies they had too; clean-muscled arms and legs you would not have suspected under the ill-fitting khaki. Brown, hard limbs that bespoke strength. In the bath you saw the company transfigured, ennobled.⁷⁹

However, in the absence of any further details, Lieutenant Pedley's comment could be simply construed as an

⁷⁸Harold R. Peat, Private Peat (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1917), p. 24.

⁷⁹James H. Pedley, Only This: A War Retrospect (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927), p. 90.

officer's acknowledgement that many private soldiers, like officers, had well-proportioned and fit bodies. For officers not accustomed to viewing their men's naked limbs, the observation of these soldiers at their ablutions or in swimming holes would have established the fact that rank did not hold a monopoly on comely bodies.

Pedley's brief scrutiny of his naked men had strong physical suggestions. In a less overt manner, Lieutenant Harry Baldwin's observation of his men at their religious devotions suggested similar implications:

I have just come from confession in the
R.C. hut where I love to watch my
soldiers finding that peace and grace
...

One suspects that Lieutenant Baldwin's regard did not fall on any one soldier in particular: given his strong Catholic background he would probably not have admitted to a homosexual attraction. On the other hand, his anticipation of life in the trenches as a means of getting closer to his men perhaps implied a subconscious desire for contact:

How happy I shall be - there [sic] one
may be intimate - yea, fatherly and
brotherly, with one's men.⁸¹

How far one may reasonably speculate about this issue before it degenerates into academic inanity is questionable.

⁸⁰NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 6 April 1918. In a later letter, Baldwin wrote that his men liked having a Catholic officer. Ibid., 26 May 1918.

⁸¹Ibid., Lt. Baldwin to mother, 28 April 1918.

It is an area of study which will never be conclusively researched as its delicacy precluded it from being mentioned or discussed in soldiers' private papers and memoirs. It contains, however, fascinating possibilities of speculation and conjecture for the serious investigator. This issue as well as many others are still absent from the many excellent studies of men in battle which have recently been published.

CHAPTER FOUR

Medical Officers and Chaplains

Sergeant McClintock, 87th Battalion, remembered his battalion surgeon as an enthusiastic dispenser of "number nines" and whale oil.¹ Private Maheux thought much the same about his unit's medical officer except in his case the remedy was castor oil; as Private Maheux gloomily informed his wife,

... first chance I'll have I'll see the Doctor, but the doctor anything wrong with you, it makes no matter if it was sore eyes, he allways give Castor Oil.²[sic whole sentence]

Of course, not all medical officers limited their prophylaxes to whale or castor oil: during the course of the war, the majority were to be called upon to perform an unprecedented variety of medical and surgical tasks. But what is of interest to this study, however, is how the average soldier perceived his medical officer and how well the two interacted.

In 1885, during the North-West Rebellion, a group of Grenadiers went on an impromptu hunger strike to protest their bland diet. Their young medical officer "cured" the strike quickly, ingenuously and a trifle treacherously by giving each of the men two "pills" and, as a bonus for the

¹Alexander McClintock, Best o' Luck (Toronto: McClelland, Godchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 107.

²National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Frank [Francis-Xavier] Maheux Papers, MG 30, E 297, Pte. Maheux to wife, July 1916.

ringleaders, emetics as well.³ This unsympathetic treatment could not have failed but to identify the medical officer as one of "them": a professional medical man who would help the soldier in times of dire need, but who otherwise was to be found firmly entrenched, physically and ideologically, in the officers' camp.

Private Rooke, serving with the Strathcona Horse and later the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles during the South African War, received an equally unsympathetic response when he reported to his medical officer suffering from rheumatism: he was refused permission to go on the sick list and was told to report back to duty. It was only after Private Rooke's officer insisted, by means of a written note, that he be put on the sick list that the medical officer finally acquiesced. Private Rooke did not mention whether or not his rheumatism improved: having allowed him to go on the sick list, the medical officer then made him walk one and a half miles to the hospital every day for a week for treatment.⁴

Sixteen years later, in a Canadian military camp, Private Foster reported sick with a high temperature. The medical officer examined him and told him there was nothing wrong. He returned back to duty, drilling in the heat of

³George Sterling Ryerson, Looking Backward (Toronto: Ryerson, 1924), p. 83.

⁴NAC, Robert Percy Rooke Papers, MG 30, E 357, MS, "A Record from Memory and a Few Notes of my Two Trips to South Africa during the War of 1899-1902 ...", n. p.

100-degree June weather. Private Foster reported sick on three consecutive mornings until the medical officer finally admitted that he had measles.⁵ Had the medical officer been incompetent, sadistic, or alcoholic (or all three)? Another example, this time recorded by an officer who was concerned about the quality of medical care his men were receiving:

We have had a big rut without looking for it today, with the doctor, about some of our men who are sick. The doctor spends his time drinking whiskey, and when a man goes down there sick, he laughs and says he's shamming. Of course we got fed up on that kind of treatment and ... I went up there with a man whom the Dr had examined this morning and pronounced fit for drill, who fainted when he came out on parade. Believe me we had some rut, and incidentally I told him that a man who spent as much of his time guzzling booze wasn't competent to diagnose a case anyway ...⁶

Most soldiers who criticised their medical officers did so on one or more of three grounds: alcoholism, intentional ignorance (i.e. suspicion of malingering), or superiority. Gunner Morison recorded on at least two occasions that a medical officer had been found drunk: one doctor was arrested after he had hurled a tin of bully beef at a corporal whilst in a drunken fury. The medical officer might just have gotten away with it had stretcher bearers not

⁵NAC, Arthur James Foster Papers, MG 30, E 417, handwritten MS, "Private Foster's Experience as a Soldier", p. 2.

⁶NAC, Thomas Dalton Johnston Papers, MG 30, E 132, Lt. Johnston to Geraldine, 1 April 1915.

brought in some wounded men at the very same time.⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson found his medical officer drunk after only one week's service with the battalion, and sent him down the lines fervently hoping (in vain) that he would be shot on the way.⁸ Tipsy medical officers were not always found on land: a Canadian aviator on his way to the Mediterranean dreaded the mandatory inoculations as the ship's doctor was "very often half seas over with whisky" [sic].⁹ It would seem that alcoholism was indeed a genuine problem, as both officers and private soldiers frequently remarked on it.¹⁰

⁷NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 6, diary entry, 6 June 1916. See also book 18, 8 January 1919.

⁸"He should be shot, but will probably only be sent to a comfortable Hospital at the Base." NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, MG 30, E 149, vol. 7, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 24 April 1917.

⁹NAC, Kenneth P. Kirkwood Papers, MG 27, III E 3, typed MS, "From Toronto to Taranto", p. 186. It should be noted that the author apparently did not intend this passage pertaining to the ship's doctor to be part of a published work, as he has inscribed "omit K. P. K." around the paragraph.

¹⁰It was, of course, easier for officers to mention this than private soldiers. Col. Herbert Bruce raised the thorny issue in his investigation of the CAMC in late 1916. The "Babtie Board of Inquiry" issued its report on 21 December 1916 as a response to Bruce's conclusions and indignantly rejected any suggestion of substance abuse: "As to the allegations of unfitness among officers selected for commissions in the Canadian Army Medical Corps, from over-age, addiction to alcohol and other drugs, etc., this Board deprecates such unqualified statements." Quoted in Herbert A. Bruce, Politics and the Canadian Army Medical Corps (Toronto: William Briggs, 1919), p. 183. Private Morris, a stretcher bearer with the 10th Field Ambulance, remembers a
(continued...)

If the medical officer was not found to be drunk when the soldier sought his help, then he might well have been sober but on the lookout for "malingering". This was the second major criticism levelled at the medical staff--that they were all too ready to accuse a man of trying to evade his duty. Of course, the medical officer might have been genuinely incompetent: Colonel Bruce found that some men passed by doctors as fit for active service were anything but fit.¹¹ However, it was more the case that the doctor suspected the soldier of trying to get out of work or danger. For instance, Private Rigsby reported sick with a sore ankle before a route march:

... of course the M.O. wouldn't believe that I wanted anything except to get out of the march. However, he "kindly" volunteered the information that doubtless I wasn't built for infantry marching!¹²

In all fairness to medical officers, it was at times difficult to determine whether or not a soldier was "swinging

¹⁰(...continued)

drunken medical officer telling a sergeant-cook that he had "fucked up the whole war" because he and his fellow cooks had slept in. NAC, Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, MG 30, E 379, typed MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 10.

¹¹For instance, Bruce found that those men arriving in England and subsequently marked as unfit for active service suffered from tuberculosis, chronic asthma, partial paralysis, atrophied muscles (as a result of infantile paralysis), severe bunions, etc. Politics and the Canadian Army Medical Corps, pp. 44-46.

¹²NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, MG 30, E 111, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 11 March 1918.

the lead". However, the soldier whose own officer informed the medical officer that he suspected him of "cold feet" must have felt that the doctor was part of a conspiracy against him.¹³ Perhaps for this reason many soldiers suffered in silence until, unable to bear their pain any further, they finally reported sick.

A third criticism concerned medical officers' sense of superiority, their humanity (or lack of it) and their poor interpersonal skills, especially when dealing with the other ranks. Many soldiers felt that because of their status as private soldiers or junior NCOs they would receive less than considerate or competent attention.¹⁴ For instance, one private complained that a doctor presiding on a medical board had treated the men like dogs; and another felt that he could not return to his medical officer as he had previously been received by him in a very brutal manner.¹⁵

¹³"While sitting in my tent I was visited by officers on various missions, some to get dressings ... others to tell me that such and such a man was afflicted with that grievous malady, "cold feet", and if he should visit me on pretension of illness, to bear this fact in mind." R. J. Manion, A Surgeon in Arms (New York: D. Appleton, 1918), p. 19. Manion freely admitted that officers were also guilty of malingering. Ibid., pp. 105-106, 120-121.

¹⁴A soldier in the 157th Battalion remarked that a mate who fell from his bunk and cut his head badly did not receive any medical attention as the doctor "refused to look at him." NAC, Ernest Nelson Papers, MG 30, E 459, diary entry, 15 October 1916.

¹⁵Ibid., diary entry, 31 December 1917; A. J. Lapointe, Souvenirs d'un soldat du Quebec 22eme Bataillon 1917-18, 4eme edition (S.l.: Les editions du castor, [1944]), pp. 98-99.
(continued...)

This was not an isolated case as Corporal Bird, 85th Battalion, also refused to visit his medical officer because he was a "gruff man who had little use for the "other ranks"."¹⁶ An exasperated (and worried) Private Howard refused to allow his battalion's medical officer to continue treating his badly infected arm: having watched the doctor slap boracic acid on it every Saturday for some time, Private Howard decided to seek help from a civilian doctor. He did so at his own expense, after first obtaining permission from his OC, and secured almost instant relief. The medical officer was furious when he saw the unfamiliar bandage on Private Howard's arm and started to pull it off, at which point Howard told him to leave it alone. Needless to say, Howard was put under arrest and charged.¹⁷ These incidents serve to illustrate the qualms many men had about seeking help from their medical officers. They also show how poorly

¹⁵(...continued)

Lapointe was so reluctant to see his detested medical officer that he had a fellow soldier bandage a minor wound. Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁶Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), p. 45.

¹⁷Gordon Howard, Memoirs of a Citizen Soldier, 1914-1945 ([Regina: s.n., 1970]), pp. 4-5. Private Howard was "admonished", the only entry on his conduct sheet throughout his long military service. To avoid consulting the medical officer some soldiers may have used "unofficial" means: for instance, Lieutenant Williams in a letter to his father wrote that he was "consulted to a great extent by ailing brother officers and sometimes men." NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, MG 30, E 400, Lt. Williams to father, 15 March 1917. (Williams had had one year of medical training before enlisting.)

many men related to the one officer who was, after all, a vital aid to their personal survival.

On the other hand, many soldiers found their medical officers to be approachable, competent and brave. Private Dinesen, a potential Victoria Cross winner, was grateful to his battalion doctor for giving him and his confreres the best possible advice before they set out to explore the streets of Montreal:

"And when you are going to such a house, boys, do take care and choose a clean and decent place here in the western part of the town and pay a dollar or two--what can you expect to get for fifty cents down among the dirty French girls!"¹⁸

A few medical officers were considered "human" and "white men"; some were remembered for their kindness in giving refreshment to hungry and thirsty soldiers; and yet others were commended for their courage in recovering wounded men from the battlefield.¹⁹ A sense of humour as well as a capacity for compassion and understanding went a long way

¹⁸Thomas Dinesen, Merry Hell! A Dane with the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, s.d.), p. 52. Private Dinesen continues: "... there is a very strict standing-order that every man who has deviated from the path of virtue must present himself before the doctor early the next morning in order to be disinfected." Ibid., pp. 52-53.

¹⁹NAC, Albert C. West Papers, MG 30, E 32, typed diary entry, 15 June 1918; NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, MG 30, E 155, vol. 1, book II, diary entry, 8 April 1916; NAC, Arthur James Foster Papers, MS, "Private Foster's Experience as a Soldier", p. 29.

towards establishing a good rapport with the men.²⁰ Finally, military doctors could also be wonderfully sympathetic: Corporal Black was received by a medical officer who summed up Black's problem in a jiffy:

"I know just what you need," he said. He reached into his hip pocket, brought out a large silver flask filled with Scotch whisky and then prescribed. "Take all of that you can drink without choking."²¹

The position of the medical officer was to some extent similar to that of the chaplain: a soldier whose primary responsibility had little or nothing to do with the officer's uniform he wore. However, because he was an officer, the doctor had to have at least the rudiments of a military training: this certainly led to problems as the medical man, an erstwhile civilian respected by society as a member of the professional middle class, found it difficult to accept the

²⁰One medical officer prescribed a "week at the seaside" to a war-weary soldier: this doctor was "very popular with all ranks" and enjoyed "pulling their legs". NAC, A. J. E. Kirkpatrick Papers, MG 30, E 318, (3rd Battalion CEF Papers), vol. 23, file 179, typed diary extract, 1 March 1915, p. 42 of typed MS, "The First Thirty Thousand". A private who complained to his medical officer of "sweating blood" whilst on a march was told to keep on marching: the "blood" was really "red wine" and the sweating was helping to purge the soldier's body of all his consumed liquor. Herbert Rae, Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), p. 124. Another medical officer used to carry a private's puppy on his saddle during long marches, and he also promised its owner to look after it whenever the battalion went into action. George G. Naismith, On the Fringe of the Great Fight (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 184.

²¹Ernest G. Black, I Want One Volunteer (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), p. 127. It should be noted that in this case the medical officer was not the regular one and as such was perhaps more liberal with his "prescription" than others.

irritating vagaries of military indoctrination.²² His brief military training did not prepare him for some of the unanticipated events which might crop up during his active service. A bemused soldier realised just how ill equipped the military doctors were during a surprise encounter with General Nivelles and his staff. The doctor, a major, was obviously at a loss:

Our major lost his cool, danced a little jig, turned to Sgt. Capper striding behind and said "What do I do sergeant, what do I do." Sgt. Capper, a one time regular soldier, replied, "Give him Eyes Right, sir." In a still audible voice, he added "Jesus H Christ." He couldn't understand how anyone would [sic] know so little.²³

However, a scanty military training did not prevent the medical officer from exercising (and enjoying) the prerogatives of his military rank. Saluting was rigorously observed by at least one doctor serving in Salonika, and many others quickly came to appreciate the advantages of an energetic and enterprising orderly.²⁴

²²See for instance Charles Huxtable, From the Somme to Singapore (Tunbridge Wells: Costello, 1988), p. 17, for an incident in which a Canadian doctor walked out on a lecture given by a British sergeant-major. The NCO could do nothing but plead (politely) for the doctor to return. See also R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure (Toronto: Ryerson, 1936), pp. 157-158, 160, for related incidents.

²³NAC, Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 23.

²⁴J. J. Mackenzie, formerly Professor of Pathology at the University of Toronto, was dumbfounded on one occasion when a young man in overalls did not give him and his companion the
(continued...)

Thus far the discussion has been mainly limited to battalion medical officers. However, apart from those personnel assigned to each combatant unit, the Canadian Army Medical Corps maintained hospitals, field ambulances and casualty clearing stations.²⁵ In some cases, the medical departments of universities (i.e. Dalhousie, Laval, McGill, Queen's and Toronto) had set up and staffed entire hospitals: senior medical students served as ward interns, with the rank of sergeant, and junior students became orderlies.²⁶ The question which is of interest here is how officers and men of the CAMC related to each other. Was there any difference between their situation and that of the battalion medical officer and combatant soldier?

Private Pearson enlisted in the CAMC as a stretcher

²⁴(...continued)

customary salute. Number 4 Canadian Hospital, The Letters of Professor J. J. Mackenzie from the Salonika Front (Toronto: Macmillan, 1933), p. 118; Captain Davis, medical officer of the 5th Battalion, commented in his "Private War Diary" on the culinary expertise of his orderly: "... he is some cook I can tell you. Had soup, meat and potatoes and white wine! Some provider." NAC, G. M. Davis Papers, MG 30, E 11, diary entry, 3 July 1915. See also Ibid., 7 September 1915, for a similar remark. From the private's viewpoint see Private Lacey who was sent ostensibly to serve as a medical officer's groom but also worked as his batman. He recorded in his diary his activities on two days: cleaning shoes, belt, tunic, room, making beds, and cleaning the doctor's loaded revolver (a military offence). NAC, F. Lacey Papers, MG 30, E 438, diary entries, 22 February and 23 February 1918.

²⁵Sir Charles Lucas, ed., The Empire at War, vol. II (Oxford: Oxford University, 1923), pp. 156-157.

²⁶Norman Miles Guiou, Transfusion (Yarmouth, N.S.: Stoneycroft, 1985), pp. 5-6.

bearer in 1915. It was on the voyage to Salonika that he began to "hate class distinction more than ever": hove to in the harbour of Malta for three days, the officers were allowed on shore to visit the island, but the men were obliged to remain on board ship.²⁷ Trouble flared again when the men were ordered to report naked for a "hosing parade": as the baths were reserved for officers and NCOs the men were to be washed down by hoses on the ship's deck.²⁸ Pearson found this treatment humiliating and discriminatory, and accordingly refused to comply, with the result that he and other dissenters were paraded before the ship's CO and warned of the consequences of disobeying orders whilst on "active service". Private Pearson was, after all, an educated man (at least one year at the University of Toronto before enlisting) and thus had many of the qualities and values of his officers. It would have seemed patently unfair that they should enjoy advantages that he was not privy to. Private Pearson's resentment can therefore be traced to the fact that his background and education suited him to be an officer rather than a private soldier.²⁹

²⁷Lester B. Pearson, Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, 3 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1973), vol. 1, p. 22.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 22-23.

²⁹Pearson didn't remain a soldier long: he transferred to the RFC after having trained for a commission in the infantry. The process was greatly expedited on account of the friendship between Pearson's father and Sam Hughes. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

"R. A. L." enlisted in the CAMC at virtually the same time as Pearson, also as a stretcher bearer. He first found himself an orderly in No. 3 Canadian General Hospital at Boulogne, and eventually served as a stretcher bearer with a battalion in the lines. His letters home to his wife during his service at the Hospital reveal no rancour or envy of CAMC officers and their privileges. Although he was sensitive to social inequities, especially in Britain, and critical of "people with money and no brains" R. A. L. was silent on the subject of his superiors.³⁰ Obviously this silence did not stem from ignorance or lack of education as his letters were very literate, nor did it arise from lack of political and social awareness.³¹ It is reasonable to assume that R. A. L. found little or nothing in his officers' special circumstances to cause him concern.

Sergeant Smith in his manuscript "Clearing" provided a detailed, anecdotal account of his experiences with the First Canadian Casualty Clearing Station from September 1914 to

³⁰Anna Chapin Ray, ed., Letters of a Canadian stretcher bearer (by R. A. L.) (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918), pp. 20, 137. R. A. L. did have something to say about the combatant officers he served under: see p. 187 for a letter about officers and men sharing a bath parade, and pp. 216-217, a letter in which he confided his opinion about officers in the lines ("they share their cigarettes [sic] and water and your funk hole with you") as compared with the same officers out of the lines ("he's a tin god again").

³¹Whilst at the Base Hospital, R. A. L. was issued with green (uncensored) envelopes twice a month, so he would have been at liberty to express specific opinions without fear of punishment. Ibid., p. 37.

1919. His reminiscences afford some interesting insight into the activities and personalities of a non-combatant unit and have the added attraction of not having been written by an officer. Sergeant Smith recalled the separate dining facilities and accommodation on board the ship (a feature common to all Canadian units crossing the Atlantic), the officers' messing provided by Harrods (the men's by the Army Service Corps), and the innumerable route marches in England:

Most of the marches were carried out under the leadership of an officer. Many of these were quite informal. One officer, when the route permitted, not only would stand the unit "easy" beside a public house, but would stand them a beer as well. Nor were the orders always as formal as those laid down in the manual. "It looks like rain", said one officer, on a route march to Pond Farm Camp. "I guess you'd better turn around".³²

Smith also recalled the reluctance of his commanding officer to punish a soldier who had "fallen from grace" by having "tarried to worship at the shrine of Bacchus or Venus", as well as the CO's efforts to correct a deficiency in his men's education by organising dance classes for them.³³

³²NAC, Thomas Brenton Smith Papers, MG 30, E 32, typed MS, "Clearing: The Tale of the First Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919", pp. 29, 31, 37, 38. On the basis of other memoirs and reminiscences it would seem that not many Canadian officers "stood" their troops a beer.

³³Ibid., pp. 39, 53. Needless to say the dancing lessons were not popular and were soon abandoned. The issue arose when Mrs. Astor (wife of William Waldorf Astor) invited all ranks to a dance party at her estate in Buckinghamshire. It
(continued...)

The tone of Sergeant Smith's memoirs was affectionate, courteous and uncritical. This does not mean to say that he avoided direct remarks on the relationship between officers and men--a relationship which appears to have been founded on mutual respect and understanding. For instance, a CAMC private who had just been commissioned a lieutenant decided to stay with the CCS:

The other ranks especially were delighted to learn that he was remaining with the unit. Not only was "Doc" an extremely good fellow, but an excessive amount of kitchen fatigue, performed by him in the capacity of a private, had established a bond of sympathy between him and the men that no stars could weaken.³⁴

At a higher level, the senior officers also seem to have held their men's respect: the departure of a well-liked CO was regretted, but his replacement was welcomed as he "had the faculty of mixing with the men in a way that won their regard without in any way impairing discipline."³⁵ The one sour note

³³(...continued)

was assumed that the officers could dance as the lessons were arranged only for the NCOs and men.

³⁴Ibid., p. 45. This officer had degrees from Edinburgh and other universities. Another graduate of Edinburgh and Liverpool was not so fortunate in securing a commission: having applied for one in the CAMC in November 1914 "Doc" Dennison was refused a commission due to being "unknown". NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, MG 30, E 241, "War Diary", 30 June 1917.

³⁵NAC, Thomas Brenton Smith Papers, "Clearing", p. 173. Some of the medical officers were lenient about military regulations: a stretcher bearer asked two of his officers if he and a mate could buy a bottle of whisky to celebrate their second anniversary in the army. One officer sold them a
(continued...)

that crept into Sergeant Smith's "Clearing" occurred after the Armistice. On their arrival in Germany the CCS's officers were invited to dine with some nursing sisters at Divisional Headquarters; the men, however, were obliged to wait with empty stomachs:

This hospitality was more appreciated by the officers and sisters than by the other ranks, whose appetites sharpened with the wait. The courtesies over, the party proceeded to the site at the outskirts of the town, arriving shortly after midnight. The ambulances were unlcaded, and the other ranks served with hot cocoa before retiring.³⁶

The CAMC, of course, also enlisted nurses: sisters served as lieutenants and matrons as captains.³⁷ Equipped with two stars and a Sam Browne belt, nursing sisters were also entitled to an orderly (six nurses to one orderly) who

³⁵(...continued)
bottle, but the other gave them one free. NAC, Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 28.

³⁶NAC, Thomas Brenton Smith Papers, "Clearing", p. 286.

³⁷M. B. Clint, Our Bit (Montreal: Barwick Limited, 1934), p. 26. The fact that nurses ranked as officers must have amused many men: "Old Black Watch" marvelled at nursing sisters who were also officers: "I see ye have two stars on yer shoulder. Is it that ye're a real officer?" "That's right", laughs the Sister... Jock lays back his head and meditates on the curious phases of life which allow of his being energetically nursed by a lieutenant in a white veil and apron." NAC, Margaret Clothilde MacDonald Papers, MG 30, E 45, MS, "Extracts from Printed History of No. 7 Canadian General Hospital", p. 6. See also Gertrude Arnold, Sister Anne! Sister Anne! (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1919), and Katherine M. Wilson-Simmie, Lights Out (Belleville, Ontario: Mika, 1981), for background on the activities of Canadian nursing sisters.

kept their premises neat, polished their buttons, and waited on them at meals.³⁸ Nurses were officially "out of bounds" to other ranks from the minute they stepped on board ship to the minute they arrived at their destination. An officer's uniform entitled them to have their baggage carried for them and it also entitled them to salutes.³⁹ Nurses invariably went on sorties and to parties with officers only, a fact which reinforced the image of the "off-duty" nurse as an officer. Interestingly enough, Canadian soldiers had nothing to write about nurses being their military superiors: in virtually all cases the nurse's medical role (as well as her sex) superseded her military rank.⁴⁰

Looking back on his varied career as a military doctor, George Ryerson remembered that as a lieutenant-colonel in the Medical Corps during the South African War, junior officers would never salute him:

A military doctor lived on his pay, a gentleman does not work, ergo the doctor

³⁸NAC, Irene Peterkin Papers, MG 30, E 160, Irene Peterkin to Rene, 20 June 1915. See also NAC, Sophie M. Hoerner Papers, MG 30, E 290, Sophie Hoerner to Mollie, 26 May 1915.

³⁹NAC, Sophie M. Hoerner Papers, Sophie Hoerner to Mother, 16 May 1915.

⁴⁰That nurses were indeed women was all too obvious to some. Lieutenant-Colonel Creelman remarked disapprovingly on the presence of 100 nurses on the Franconia: the "moral conditions" on board ship turned out to be "just what some of us expected." "Dozens of hugging couples" necessitated putting the upper deck out of bounds after dark. NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, MG 30, E 8, diary entry, 15 October 1914.

was no gentleman.⁴¹

Fortunately, Ryerson concluded, the Great War had "killed this kind of snobbery."⁴² The war certainly had removed the stigma of a "gentleman" having to work for a living, but it had not erased the idea that an officer, including a medical officer, was a gentleman. As such the private soldier was immediately at a disadvantage, due to the respect and deference he was obliged to pay the medical officer. Canadian soldiers seem to have been roughly divided as to their perceptions of military doctors: some had had unpleasant experiences which prejudiced all further contact with them, while other men had nothing but praise and admiration for their position and professional conduct.

The case of military chaplains was somewhat different. Some 426 chaplains of various denominations served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force, in hospitals, casualty clearing stations or in the lines.⁴³ The aim presumably was to provide all ranks with a "friend" and spiritual counsellor. Like the medical officer, the chaplain had no specific military duties

⁴¹Ryerson, Looking Backward, p. 182.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Canada in the Great World War, 6 vols. (Toronto: United Publishers, 1919), vol. VI, p. 136. Six chaplains died on active service, two killed in action and one dead of wounds. Two published memoirs by Canadian chaplains are extant: B. J. Murdoch's The Red Vineyard (Wexford, Ireland: John English & Co., 1918) for a Catholic viewpoint, and Canon Frederick George Scott's The Great War as I Saw It (Toronto: F. D. Goodchild Company, 1922) for an Anglican view.

and had been taken on the strength by virtue of his civilian qualifications. His new job, however, was substantially different to that which he had held before enlisting, since a military chaplain instantly acquired a host of activities which had no peacetime equivalent. In effect, the chaplain became an entertainer, a bookie, a cocoa-maker, letter-writer, bomb-toter, cigarette-supplier and turkey-procurer, in addition to his strictly religious duties.⁴⁴ As the chaplains were to learn, the responsibilities of ministering to men during war far exceeded that of simply burying the dead and holding Sunday church parades.

As an honorary captain the chaplain arrived in France wearing an officer's uniform. This immediately suggests a problem which, as will be seen, was remarked upon with great frequency throughout and after the war. The uniform might have given the chaplain a legitimate place in the military organisation but in so doing it placed the private soldier at a distance and seriously hindered communication between the two. Needless to say, the Sam Browne did not prevent various chaplains from rendering a sterling service; nor, in some cases, did it discourage the growth of a close and meaningful

⁴⁴At least one chaplain was responsible for the wagers on board ship concerning daily distances covered, etc. Frederic C. Curry, From the St. Lawrence to the Yser (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), p. 39. Chaplains were also entrusted with the onerous and demanding job of scouring the French countryside for Christmas turkeys. See NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, MG 30, E 23, diary entries, 15 December and 19 December 1916.

relationship between them and combatant soldiers.

Private Peat provided a typical example of some of the other ranks' admiration for chaplains:

All of us have deep in our hearts love, veneration and respect for the sky-pilot-chaplain, if you would rather call him so. To us sky-pilot and very truly so, the man who not only points the way to higher things, but the man who travels with us over the rough road which leads to peace in our innermost selves. ... the chaplain of today is a real man, maybe he always was, I don't know. A man who risks his life as do we who are in the fighting line.⁴⁵

Private Peat's reminiscences were intended for publication, (and may therefore be viewed with some scepticism) but not so Private McNab's "diary" of his service with the 38th Battalion. Private McNab's admiration of chaplains was less altruistic than that of Private Peat and for this reason was perhaps a more truthful sentiment:

One thing that is a blessing to the place ann [sic] does more good than anything is the Chaplains Service. They give out coffee to everybody that comes out of the trenches. If you come along froze [sic] and wet and stop there ... you get a cup of coffee there and it sure helps you out.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Harold R. Peat, Private Peat (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1917), pp. 115, 117.

⁴⁶NAC, John Peter McNab Papers, MG 30, E 42, "Diary", p. 5. As a matter of interest McNab's mother gave his diary after his death to Col. W. Beattie (Director of Chaplain Services) who then gave a copy to the Director of Historical Section, M. & D., Brig.-Gen. E. A. Cruickshank. Cruickshank wrote his thanks to Beattie saying that he was "very glad to obtain anything of that sort which gives us the point of view (continued...)"

These representative samples from two private soldiers may be found replicated in many other sources.⁴⁷

Officers also were impressed by the efforts of chaplains, especially in the lines. What is more interesting, however, is the emphasis that many officers placed on the chaplain-man relationship. For instance, Colonel Kirkpatrick wrote the following in his diary about a church parade:

A fine soldier's sermon from the Padre this morning. He is always among the men, knows them well and speaks to them as a comrade and with conviction.⁴⁸

Lieutenant Williams expressed a similar feeling in his letters to his parents:

... the Chaplains are doing great work

⁴⁶(...continued)
of the man in the ranks. We have not got enough of that kind of material." Ibid., Cruickshank to Beattie, 19 December 1920.

⁴⁷For instance, Private Bell writes of his "sky-pilot" setting an "inspiring example" by distributing food and comfort to weary troops. NAC, George V. Bell Papers, MG 30, E 113, typed MS, "Back to Blighty", p. 31. Another chaplain was greatly admired for removing his tin helmet for a burial service although there was heavy shellfire going on. Quoted in James L. McWilliams and R. James Steel, The Suicide Battalion (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1978), p. 138. A prisoner of war in Germany remembers that the camp padre, who had volunteered to serve in the POW camp, was "well liked by all." NAC, George Drillie Scott Papers, MG 30, E 28, MS, "3 Years and 8 Months in a German Prison", p. 8. The death of the 22nd Battalion's chaplain was sad news for all men, including the "fortes tetes". A. J. Lapointe, Souvenirs d'un soldat du Quebec 22eme Bataillon (1917-1918 4ieme edition (S.l.: Les editions du castor, [1944]), pp. 192-193.

⁴⁸NAC, A. J. E. Kirkpatrick Papers, typed diary extract, 11 October 1914.

over here. ... They are great sports, referee boxing bouts, etc., and live with the men practically. ... The men think a lot of them The men certainly appreciate the good work they are doing.⁴⁹

Lieutenant Dawson wrote in his letters that one particular chaplain "never came near the officers, but he haunted the men at the forward guns."⁵⁰ This would all seem to suggest that chaplains concentrated their ministering activities on the men and by so doing established close and affectionate relations with them. While this was certainly not the case for all chaplains, one individual does indeed stand out as an incontestable example of dedication (according to the rank and file).

George Frederick Scott, Senior Chaplain of the First Division, brought "more credit to the Chaplain Services than any other man."⁵¹ This statement is borne out by the complete lack of negative comment about him: the closest that one can come to in terms of criticism is that he was a "charming old snob of the old school" and that his dog snored.⁵² Men and officers were unanimous in their praise of this energetic and

⁴⁹NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, Lt. Williams to parents, 28 October 1916 and 25 May 1917.

⁵⁰Coningsby Dawson, Living Bayonets (New York: John Lane, 1919), p. 108. See also More Letters from Billy (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), pp. 107-108: the anonymous lieutenant wrote that "adoration is scarcely the word" to describe his men's feelings for their chaplain.

⁵¹Canada in the Great World War, vol. VI, pp. 132-133.

⁵²NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 7, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 6 July and 9 July 1917.

brave chaplain, and stories of his good nature and understanding circulated throughout the entire Canadian Corps:⁵³

The Canon keeps around among the men cheering them up, for he is a simple hearted good natured soul.

The men loved him, as well they might, for in hours of misery, help and comfort radiates from this undaunted soul.

He was loved by all the Canadian Army. He was always going up to the front line with cigarettes and candy. He took the same risk as we did

Tradition has it that he would never accept a cup of tea or a bite of bully from soldiers in the trenches when he was doing his rounds; the men had enough to carry, he said, so he brought his own food in his pocket.

It was easy to admire and love a man who had been advised, begged, ordered and warned to stay out of dangerous places but who insisted on sharing the danger and hardship with his "boys".⁵⁴

What perhaps most endeared Scott to the men was his

⁵³Scott's fame spread to the British Chaplains' Department. See Sir John Smyth, In This Sign Conquer (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1968), p. 170. Gunner Morison never heard Canon Scott preach but he was told by some infantrymen that he was a "very good sort" and that he got on well with the men in the trenches. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 10, diary entry, 13 March 1917.

⁵⁴NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, MG 30, C 64, vol. 16, Maj. Woodside to wife, 7 October 1914; J. E. B. Seely, Adventure (London: William Heinemann, 1930), p. 234; NAC, William Green Papers, MG 30, E 430, typed MS, "An Autobiography of World War I", p. 16; James H. Pedley, Only This: A War Retrospect (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927), p. 100; Unknown Soldiers by One of Them (New York: Vantage Press, 1959), pp. 68-69.

genuine sympathy with their wretched and often tragic circumstances. His last-minute efforts to have the death sentence of a "deserter" commuted to imprisonment won him sincere and lasting respect amongst many soldiers.⁵⁵ The pleasure he so obviously felt in the men's company eased many of their apprehensions about chaplains (and officers) although some fears still remained.⁵⁶ As the war progressed Scott was pleased to note what he felt was a relaxation of the rules separating chaplains from the men:

The whole conception of the position of an army chaplain was undergoing a great and beneficial change. The rules which hitherto had fenced off the chaplains, as being officers, from easy intercourse with the men were being relaxed. ... They could be visited freely by the men, and could also have meals with the men when they saw fit. ... His office being a spiritual one ought to be quite outside military rank. To both officers and men, he holds a unique position, enabling him to become the friend and champion of

⁵⁵Unknown Soldiers, p. 68. See Scott's The Great War as I Saw it (Toronto: F. D. Goodchild, 1922), Chapter XXII, "A Tragedy of War", for a description of the "deserter's" execution and Scott's own efforts to forestall it. Scott admits blocking up his ears to avoid hearing the fatal shots. His sympathy with the executed man was evident in his hope that the soldier's spirit "had entered the ranks of his heroic comrades in Paradise." Ibid., p. 214.

⁵⁶"I have received many guests of all ranks. ... On one occasion two privates and I had just finished luncheon, and were having a delightful smoke, when a certain general was announced, and the men were seized with panic, fled up the steps to my bedroom and bolting through my window hurried back to their lines." Ibid., p. 112. Scott dined with all ranks, from the lowest to the highest, but always thought that the most enjoyable meals were those he shared "with the men in dirty cook-houses". Ibid., p. 180.

all.⁵⁷

Scott's optimism regarding the chaplain-man relationship was premature. For every remark made of dedicated chaplains who worked closely with the men, there were at least one or more to contradict it. Many men felt that chaplains, because they wore an officer's uniform, did not "belong" with the other ranks and therefore could not empathise with them. As Corporal Bird put it:

He [the chaplain] was a fluent speaker, a nice singer, and led a smooth church service, but his place was with the officers and every man knew it.⁵⁸

Corporal Bird continued:

Padres, as a rule, were scorned, for only sincerity could--with the "other ranks", and they knew, whatever the showing, that he was not one of them.⁵⁹

A primary criticism of chaplains was that they seemed to spend a good deal if not all of their time with officers, at the expense of the men. This led at least one soldier to temporarily "convert" from Presbyterianism to Anglicanism, as the Presbyterian chaplain never bothered to visit him and his

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 99-100.

⁵⁸Will R. Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1968), p. 119.

⁵⁹Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), p. 193. See also p. 300. Bill Gammage writes that Australian soldiers did not trust chaplains because they were officers and, even worse, officers who did not share in the risks and responsibilities of warfare. The Broken Years (Canberra: Australian National University, 1974), p. xiv.

mates.⁶⁰ Despite polite invitations in battalion routine orders men were not likely to seek out their chaplain on their own initiative, especially if they felt that he was more interested in consorting with his brother officers than attending to the men. Even a nursing sister noticed that many chaplains were doing as little as possible for those who needed it most.⁶¹

What particularly irked and offended weary soldiers were the compulsory church parades.⁶² Although chaplains were not always responsible for actually convening these parades, they were nonetheless totally responsible for the contents of their sermons. And it was these sermons which in many cases disgusted the men and eliminated any possibility of the chaplain getting close to them. Corporal Norris for instance was not impressed with one of his chaplain's addresses:

⁶⁰NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book I, diary entry, 13 June 1915. Some chaplains obviously enjoyed visiting officers' messes: Captain Savage noted in his diary that one padre (an ex-missionary from Portuguese East Africa) spent two hours in his battalion's mess discussing "methods of immorality among niggers". As Captain Savage concluded: "not elevating!" NAC, Alfred Savage Papers, MG 30, E 472, diary entry, 18 November 1917. Chaplains also enjoyed the many poker games played in officers' messes. See NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, MG 30, E 8, diary entry, 10 October 1914.

⁶¹NAC, Sophie M. Hoerner Papers, Sophie Hoerner to mother, 15 June 1915 and 28 February 1916.

⁶²"There was no greater stupidity shown, no more blind disregard of the soldier's intelligence and right to individualistic feeling, than compulsory church parades. They went because they had to go, and carried with them an instinctive defiance that no fine words of the padre could overcome." Bird, And We Go On, p. 192.

I can't say I enjoyed the sermon, and you'd think our chaplain should know us better than to preach as he did. We're proud of our dead but don't want their deaths spoken of to us as "glorious sacrifice".⁶³

In a similar tone, Corporal West wrote about one church parade he attended:

He spoke on the "Cameron spirit" ... and shewed [sic] how we soldiers should embody characteristics of both in our lives. A good address but rather bad taste shown, for we had shown the fighting spirit pretty well in past month [sic].⁶⁴

Sermons which warned of impending casualties were not popular either: Major Beattie's warning that many men would not return alive from the next engagement did not win him many friends.⁶⁵ Another chaplain unwisely predicted that all those men standing within earshot of his voice would either be killed or wounded within the next six months. The chaplain's exhortation that the men be "good boys" for this reason was

⁶³[Armine Norris], "Mainly for Mother" (Toronto: Ryerson, [1920]), p. 137.

⁶⁴NAC, Albert C. West Papers, typed diary entry, 1 September 1918.

⁶⁵Reginald H. Roy, ed., The Journal of Private Fraser (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis, 1985), p. 44. Lieutenant Ponton, though, thought that Beattie was very popular and a "splendid clergyman". NAC, William Nisbet Ponton Papers, MG 30, E 96, vol. 2, Dick Ponton to May Ponton, 5 April 1915. Gunner Morison on one occasion was very impressed with Beattie's "splendid sermon" and stayed to chat with him after the service. Morison was surprised that Beattie had dispensed the elements of communion himself. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 7, diary entry, 23 July 1916.

met with a facetious remark.⁶⁶

Chaplains were also castigated (silently) for laziness, effeminacy and hypocrisy. A padre who stopped to eat an apple and change his socks while the rest of the battalion continued on the march was not likely to set the men an inspiring example, nor gain their confidence.⁶⁷ A chaplain who presented the appearance of an "effeminate, prating creature" was deemed to be entirely incompatible with the image of a soldier padre.⁶⁸ Finally, chaplains who frowned on soldiers swearing were themselves sometimes guilty of the same "sin": on one occasion a Roman Catholic padre toting a corpse tripped over some barbed wire and fell, the weight of the dead body pinning him to the ground. The stretcher bearer accompanying the padre was urged by him to "get this

⁶⁶Ernest G. Black, I Want One Volunteer (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), p. 93. The resentment by private soldiers of ridiculous and pompous sermons was sometimes shared by officers: Lieutenant-Colonel Creelman confided to his diary that some chaplains appeared to "have no sense at all." This remark was provoked by what he considered to have been a highly inappropriate sermon by a Methodist chaplain on "repentance and particular sin". NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, diary entry, 26 September 1915.

⁶⁷NAC, Paul Frederick Villiers Papers, MG 30, E 236, vol. 4, typed diary entry, p. 12.

⁶⁸NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book VIII, diary entry, 22 July 1917. Another chaplain was declared to be an "old woman of the masculine sex" and although trying hard to "stand in well with the men" failed signally to do so. NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 432, diary entry, 21 February 1915.

--- etc. stiff off me."⁶⁹

Gunner Morison made several insightful remarks in his extensive diaries about individual chaplains. As a man serving in the ranks, Morison was able to observe the interaction of his fellow soldiers with the padres. What made his observations even more acute and interesting is that Morison was himself an ordained Presbyterian minister.⁷⁰

Many of Morison's observations confirm points raised earlier in this discussion. Padres were respected if they associated informally with the men and occasionally stopped to have a chat and share refreshment with them.⁷¹ A fluent, interesting sermon might likewise gain the men's sympathy, as did the offer to censor letters which they didn't want their own officers to read.⁷² Also, the padre's ability to mediate

⁶⁹NAC, H. M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, typed MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 16. Gunner Morison remarked on one of his chaplain's sermons which dealt with swearing. The chaplain didn't mind "damn" or "hell" as he had used them himself, but he didn't want the men saying "Jesus". Soldiers had a good sense of humour, if what Morison then recorded in his diary was true: "later in the hut one of the fellows gives the gist of his [the chaplain's] remarks to one who wasn't on the parade. "He doesnt [sic] mind you swearing but for Christ' [sic] sake dont [sic] say Jesus"." NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 7, diary entry, 6 August 1916.

⁷⁰See Chapter 7 for Gunner W. R. Morison.

⁷¹NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 2, diary entry, 22 August 1915. It also helped if padres could play football, as one "rough little bugger" of a chaplain did. Ibid., book 15, diary entry, 10 June 1918.

⁷²Ibid., book 1, diary entry, 30 May 1915; book 7, diary entry, 13 August 1916; book 9, diary entry, 15 October 1916; book 5, diary entry, 26 March 1916.

between a private soldier in trouble and those in authority was certainly appreciated: Morison's original punishment of three years hard labour for a military offence was reduced to four months, largely due to a chaplain's efforts.⁷³

On the other hand, many padres were perceived as total failures in their jobs. Mild young curates who had the men sing unfamiliar hymns and who then sent them to sleep during the sermon were bound to be disliked.⁷⁴ Those who preached or presented themselves in a "churchy" manner were distrusted, as were those who wouldn't look the men in the eyes.⁷⁵ There was also no denying that many padres either spent too much time with the officers, or tried to exert their authority in a military rather than spiritual manner. A friend of Morison's, Rufe Chamberlin, used this last point as justification for his dislike of a particular chaplain:

Rufe said he used to stand up for him
[the chaplain] among the fellows till one
day when he was at Dibgate camp counting
over some blankets the chaplain comes

⁷³Ibid., book 8, diary entry, 19 September 1916.

⁷⁴Ibid., book 7, diary entry, 23 July 1916.

⁷⁵Ibid., book 15, diary entry, 23 June 1916; "The chaplain is a big prepossessing looking fellow but he reads the service in a very perfunctory & slovenly manner slurring over the words. His sermon is not much and all the time he speaks he rolls his eyes about the top of the tent or looks at the floor and our feet but never in our faces." Ibid., book 12, diary entry, 12 August 1917. It seems that this chaplain never developed the habit of looking the men in the eyes, as on Boxing Day of the same year Morison referred again to him in the same tone, just prior to remarking that the chaplain had been "pickled" on Christmas Day. Ibid., book 13, diary entry, 26 December 1917.

along [sic] out of pure desire to show authority, pokes him in the back with his cane and points to another pile to get busy on.⁷⁶

Gunner Morison never heard "Ralph Connor" preach in France, as did other soldiers, although he was certainly familiar with his books.⁷⁷ The senior chaplain of the Third Canadian Division, Connor (Charles W. Gordon) was a well known Canadian novelist and Presbyterian minister.⁷⁸ He is of brief interest to this discussion because he published in 1919 a book about a chaplain serving with the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land presents the story of a young Canadian minister, Barry Dunbar, who goes overseas as

⁷⁶Ibid., book 12, diary entry, 19 September 1917. See also book 10, diary entry, 13 March 1917, for some infantrymen's remarks about the chaplains not being seen often in the trenches; and book 12, diary entry, 14 July 1917, for remarks about an unemployed minister coming to France as a chaplain and becoming president of the officers' mess.

⁷⁷Ibid., book 3, diary entry, 7 October 1915. Gunner Roy also never heard Connor preach but managed to read at least three of his novels fairly rapidly whilst in the lines. NAC, Roy Family Papers, MG 30, E 47, Gnr. Archibald Carlyle Roy, book 7, diary entry, 22 December 1917; book 8, diary entries, 15 February and 21 February 1918. Some men and officers however did hear him preach, among them Major Woodside (NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, vol. 16, diary entry, 21 June 1915) and also Signaller Wheeler who was disappointed in his speaking. Victor W. Wheeler, The 50th Battalion in No Man's Land (Calgary: Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, 1980), p. 179. Private Black remembers meeting Connor in the lines, while he was watching some artillerymen reassemble a gun. Black, I Want One Volunteer, p. 141.

⁷⁸See Charles W. Gordon's autobiography, Postscript to Adventure (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1938).

a chaplain.⁷⁹ He at first experiences difficulties fulfilling his duties and has no success in gaining the men's trust and confidence (largely due to his own inadequacies). It is only after the death of his father than Dunbar realises that the "policeman" approach he has been using with the men is not appropriate and has in fact alienated them. Once Dunbar changes his style and adopts a "fatherly" approach with the men he manages to overcome their hostility and reserve:

"Oh, I can see a difference myself ..."
said the pioneer sergeant. "The boys
used to get out of his way. He used to
jump on 'em something fierce. You
remember?"

"Huh-uh!"

"Well, they just love to have him drop in
now and they tell him things. I saw
Corporal Thom the other night showin' him
his girl's picture, and the Pilot thought
she was a fine girl too, and got her
address down, and said he was going to
write her and tell her what a fine chap
the corporal was, and you ought to see
Corporal Thom swell up until he 'most
bust his tunic.⁸⁰

Dunbar is killed in the last pages of the book, shielding a wounded sergeant from shrapnel. It is a fitting end to a romantic and sympathetic character.

If one overlooks the cloying sentimentality of this book, three general conclusions may be drawn. First, the fact that chaplains were bound to have been viewed with some suspicion until they had shown themselves willing to

⁷⁹Ralph Connor [Charles W. Gordon], The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land (New York: George H. Doran, 1919).

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 247.

understand and commiserate with the men. Second, the certainty that chaplains made many mistakes before they realised how best to approach the men.⁸¹ Third, the relationship Barry Dunbar eventually shared with his men was a fictional portrayal of what should have existed between chaplains and soldiers in France. (It is clear that the author hoped that his audience would believe that this had indeed been the situation.) The reality was in many cases very different.

The Director of Chaplain Services, Lt.-Col. William Beattie, in his "History of the Chaplain Service" presented an uncritical, laudatory narrative of the activities of Canadian chaplains during the war. Beattie wished the reader to believe that padres quickly earned and never lost their special position as the soldier's friend and counsellor. "From the very beginning a fine camaraderie was established" wrote Beattie, and although there were some "misfits" who were sent home, chaplains "kept clearly in mind the spiritual and moral welfare of the men."⁸² Throughout his manuscript

⁸¹As one chaplain admitted to Gunner Morison after the war, chaplains had not always been "wise" in the conduct of their affairs. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 19, diary entry, 26 March 1919.

⁸²NAC, William Beattie Papers, MG 30, E 4, typed MS, "History of the Chaplain Service", pp. 4, 12, 198. Chaplains also supposedly rendered great service in England by helping Canadian soldiers avoid "ladies of ill-repute" in the streets of London. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162. In addition, chaplains bought "good engravings" and distributed them free of charge to billets and mess rooms so that "cheap and oft times lewd pictures" did not have to be hung. *Ibid.*, p. 193.

Beattie could not stress too much the friendliness existing between padres and men. He quoted extensively from chaplains' letters describing their activities; but one letter from a padre with an artillery unit seems to have posed a problem:

"Chaplains it has been said, may be divided into four classes; -
 (1) Those who get on with the Officers and not with the men.
 (2) Those who get on with the men and not with the Officers.
 (3) Those who get on with both Officers and men.
 (4) Another class.
 Happy is he who is in Class Three."⁸³

In the manuscript this quote was scored over with pencil and Beattie has written in the left margin "OMIT WB". Why should Beattie have wanted this quote omitted? One reason could well be that he did not want to allow any comments to detract from his own perception of the chaplain as a friend and advisor to all ranks of the CEF.

There is no doubt that chaplains as a whole would have had a closer relationship with the men had they joined them in the ranks:

...I believe it was a mistake their going out as captains (honorary). Tommy is just a wee bit apprehensive about approaching an officer's uniform. They might have got nearer their boys in a private's uniform.⁸⁴

⁸³Ibid., p. 111.

⁸⁴Stanley A. Rutledge, Pen Pictures From the Trenches (Toronto: William Briggs, 1918), p. 151. Gunner Morison (continued...)

Although it can not be denied that individual chaplains did exemplary work in the hospitals, casualty clearing stations and in the lines, there remains the feeling that private soldiers did not relate in a very positive fashion with chaplains as a group. Diaries, correspondence, memoirs and reminiscences are evidence of this. In too many cases, the officer's uniform prevented the soldier on the one hand from being relaxed and intimate with his padre, and the padre, on the other hand, from feeling detached from the soldier on account of his rank. Those close relationships which did exist (of which Canon Scott is the best example) were entirely due to the efforts of individual chaplains and men.

⁸⁴ (...continued)

quoted from the Presbyterian Record that "a minister as a private has a grand opportunity of doing good. He is in closest touch with the men, completely one with them." NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 11, diary entry, 12 April 1917. An alternative to this would have been to allow a theology student or ordained minister from the ranks to conduct a brief service as did Morison himself on at least two occasions. Ibid., book 3, diary entries, 19 September 1915 and 3 October 1915. The First Newfoundland Regiment also did this, with a private (ex-missionary) taking a church parade in Gallipoli. John Gallishaw, Trenching at Gallipoli (New York: Century, 1916), p. 136. See also NAC, W. Arthur Steel Papers, MG 30, A 42, vol. 2, diary entry, 12 March 1916. The necessity usually arose on board ship or wherever a chaplain was not close at hand. A commanding officer also might take a church parade, as did Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson of the PPCLI (despite the presence of six divinity students, three Church of England ministers and seven "job lot parsons" in the ranks). NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 6, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 10 December 1916.

CHAPTER FIVE

Officers' Privileges

At present it is 86 in the shade and no wind. Also we have no soda water or lemons. Again I say "War is hell".¹

The fact that Canadian officers did not altogether share their men's situation in respects to food, accommodation, leave and creature comforts was all too obvious to many soldiers. Their perceptions of officers' privileges and "luxuries" were sometimes ill-founded, but what soldiers actually observed with their own eyes gave them the definite impression that it would have been much more agreeable to have gone to war "de luxe", as an officer.² As a mate of Gunner Morison aptly put it:

Its [sic] all very well to say youre [sic] going to die but you may as well die in the best way and not like a damned navy.³

Much has been made of the Canadian soldier's independence, initiative and "free spirit". As such it is surprising to find comparatively little evidence of real anger or hostility in regards to the specific privileges reserved for the commissioned ranks. There were indeed

¹National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), John Jennings Creelman Papers, MG 30, E 8, file 1, diary entry, 31 July 1916.

²NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, MG 30, E 65, file 2, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 17 February 1918.

³NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 2, diary entry, 26 July 1915.

isolated statements of protest (especially in diaries) but these were mostly limited to articulate men who, even then, were not really questioning or challenging the military hierarchy.

In terms of a working hypothesis it would be unreasonable and untrue to suggest that all Canadian soldiers resented their officers' privileges. On the other hand, it is equally ill-advised to support the opposite extreme of this issue--that no soldier found the material and ideological differences between him and his officers irksome or humiliating. What is actually required is a hypothesis which borrows from these two extremes and adds a third element.

Therefore, based on a study of published and unpublished memoirs, correspondence and diaries of Canadian officers and soldiers the following proposition may be made: first, Canadian officers enjoyed numerous privileges and prerogatives (virtually identical to those of their British Army counterparts); second, most if not all Canadian soldiers were aware of these privileges and; third, while neither endorsing nor rejecting them, the other ranks accepted them as a natural component of the officer's status. In addition, these privileges constituted a barrier between officer and soldier, and served to distinguish the one from the other in the absence of a rigid social order. This was especially applicable to the initial years of the war, when most new

officers had no prior military service (and certainly no front-line experience).

In remarking on the differences between commissioned and noncommissioned ranks, the vast majority of comments focussed on three basic items: travel arrangements, sleeping/living accommodation, and food. On their trip across the Atlantic, a battalion followed the civilian class-based allotment of accommodation: officers in staterooms (first-class cabins), senior NCOs in second-class rooms and the other ranks in steerage. Dining facilities were divided likewise: officers in first-class dining saloons and sergeants in second-class dining rooms. Officers certainly had little to complain about (except seasickness), since a six-course dinner and "plenty of good wine" consumed to the accompaniment of an eight-piece orchestra did much to alleviate the tedium of a long ocean journey.⁴ On some ships, sergeants used the same dining facilities as their officers, but dined an hour ahead of them.⁵ In isolated cases, sergeants also had the same accommodation as officers, an "extraordinary" situation which annoyed one lieutenant:

Being a one class boat she has no
intermediate accomodation [sic] and

⁴NAC, Thomas Dalton Johnston Papers, MG 30, E 132, Lt. Johnston to Geraldine, 12 October 1914.

⁵NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, MG 30, C 64, vol. 16, Maj. Woodside to wife, 2 October 1914. On this voyage, the sergeants received the same bill of fare as the officers and also enjoyed the orchestra which played for them at noon and evening.

everything is either second class or steerage, which accounts for the extraordinary condition where officers and N.C.Os are treated exactly the same with the latter somewhat better served than the junior officers and as well served as any of the majors, in the matter of cabins, etc. They will get a drastic awakening when we reach England
 ...⁶

Private Dinesen, sailing to England with the Black Watch, was comparatively fortunate as the men of his battalion were given second-class cabins.⁷ The usual accommodation for the men, however, was in steerage, although some men quickly found other more agreeable places to sleep. Hundreds of seasick men lying in cramped, poorly ventilated quarters invariably resulted in an unpleasant aroma pervading the lower decks. In all fairness to the military authorities, there was little that could have been done to alleviate their suffering. On the other hand, battalion officers could have shown more interest in their men's condition, apart from just making the obligatory rounds as Orderly Officer.⁸

⁶NAC, Edmund Freeman Newcombe Papers, MG 30, E 365, diary entry, [May 1915]. The officers were also deprived of their smoking room: "The smoking room which is a splendid room has been abandoned to the N.C.Os and in consequence is lost to us." Ibid.

⁷Thomas Dinesen, Merry Hell! A Dane with the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, s.d.), p. 57. This was somewhat of a relief for Dinesen, who had sailed across the Atlantic from Denmark five months earlier as a "spoiled first-class passenger". Ibid., p. 58.

⁸An exception to this was "Billy", an unidentified lieutenant who, after observing the conditions below decks, "longed to take some of the men up into our comfortable
 (continued...)

On board ship, the Orderly Officer was responsible for cursory inspections and overseeing the meal parades. The quantity of food varied greatly from ship to ship, but by the time the men had been at sea for nearly two weeks, the quality had certainly suffered:

Men beginning to tire of food. This is 2 wks. on board. ... Finished inspection just in time to take first dinner parade 11.30. There are four parades at every meal, one every 1/2 hr. Quite a bit of complaining, but no real foundation. ... Took all supper parades. More complaints. Had to eat about a dozen eggs to prove they weren't bad. Men need a change.⁹

This practice theoretically allowed men to air their grievances about the food without risking punishment. However, the manner in which a man expressed his disapproval could result in disciplinary action.¹⁰ Besides the food, the

⁸(...continued)
quarters." A Canadian Subaltern: Billy's Letters to his Mother (London: Constable, 1917), p. 11.

⁹NAC, W. Arthur Steel Papers, MG 30, A 42, vol. 2, diary entry, 23 March 1916. It was standard procedure (and a military tradition) for the Orderly Officer to enquire whether or not there were "any complaints" about the food. This could be an embarrassing (and dangerous) job: on board ship en route to the South African war, a Canadian officer making the rounds of the men's mess was hit in the back of the neck with an inedible loaf of bread. See NAC, William Frederick Athawes Papers, MG 30, E 402, typed MS, "To my Grandchildren", p. 22.

¹⁰For instance, one lance-corporal was demoted for expressing his opinion about the food "in a manner too forcible to be passed over." (However, this did not hinder his career as he was later commissioned.) NAC, Paul Frederick Villiers Papers, MG 30, E 236, vol. 4, typed diary entry, p. 10. Louis Keene, a private with a machine gun unit, complained about the tea, milk and sugar being all mixed
(continued...)

Orderly Officer was also responsible for fielding complaints regarding other matters. Lance-Corporal Clarke, on board the "Northland" in 1915, was stifled in his steerage room of six feet by eight feet (shared with three other men). He and his mates were greatly dissatisfied by the officers' and NCOs' appropriation of all the upper/promenade decks; and their protests resulted in a partial concession by the officers:

... our protests regarding the division of the deck space began to have some effect, for the officers generously condescended to share a small part of the 1st cabin promenade deck, thus allowing us a small amount of upper deck space & a small lounge. I suppose they think they have done remarkably well to do that much although in reality the division is still absurdly unfair.¹¹

Other distinctions between officers and men on board ship mostly concerned activities and "entertainment". The men played interminable games of cards (especially poker), sergeants played shuffle-board, and officers played with "rope quirts" or "cricket with the ball on a string".¹² (The latter also had access to any nursing sisters on board, since nurses, as officers, qualified for first-class

¹⁰(...continued)

together: he was told by the Orderly Officer that if he complained further about it, all three would be taken away. Louis Keene, "Crumps": the Plain Story of a Canadian who Went (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 13.

¹¹NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, MG 30, E 155, vol. 1, book I, diary entry, 21 April 1915. See also diary entry, 18 April 1915, for an earlier remark on this problem.

¹²NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 1, diary entry, 21 May 1915.

accommodation.) There was little for the men to do, and wise commanding officers organised impromptu concerts and sporting events (especially boxing tournaments). The lack of access to alcohol meant that the men were sober but bored, a situation which was definitely not improved when they discovered that the "dry ship" did not extend to their officers:

The sea was quite calm and there was little or no trouble, except quite a lot of dissatisfaction when it was found out that the officers were having beer and intoxicating liquors while the other ranks were not. It was most unfair.¹³

The separation of officers and men continued in Canadian camps in England. Accommodation and laundry facilities were organised according to commissioned and noncommissioned rank, as were messing arrangements. Harrods was contracted to feed the officers and, although this arrangement was not entirely satisfactory to all officers, it was certainly better than the men's fare:

The men have no mess tent, a big black pot of food is deposited in front of each tent, out of which the 12 or 15 men dig

¹³NAC, Peter Anderson Papers, MG 30, E 318, typed copy of original MS, "We Arrive", p. 3. Major Anderson excused the men's drunkenness at Plymouth on the grounds that they certainly deserved their "wee drop", as the officers had had "the privileges all the way over". Ibid., "In England", p. [1]. The antics of drunk officers on board ship probably annoyed many men. For a representative example of inebriated officers see NAC, Thomas Dalton Johnston Papers, Lt. Johnston to Geraldine, 12 October 1914.

their respective portions.¹⁴

In England, however, it was possible to supplement one's military diet with civilian cooking, especially once the strange British monetary system had been deciphered.

The greatest percentage of remarks concerning differences in accommodation and food were from soldiers and officers on active service. In France travelling by train meant that the men occupied heated or unheated box cars, and the officers passenger coaches. This arrangement went beyond the standard civilian first-class/second-class system, in that the men often shared their cars with horses.¹⁵ Billets behind the lines were assigned in a similar fashion: farmhouses for the officers and barns for the men. A board

¹⁴NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, MG 30, E 149, vol. 2, Mabel Adamson to mother, 10 November 1914. On at least one occasion, officers were obliged to share their men's dinner. On a route march in England it was discovered that the officers' food was missing: "They forgot to send out the officers' "grub" to us, so we had to eat with the men--stew out of buckets, bread out of boxes and tea from dixies. We didn't mind roughing it with the men tho." [sic] NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, MG 30, E 400, Lt. Williams to mother, 7 July 1916. Compare this with the following account: "At Hankley Common, a parade ground, our officers were preparing to take us out on manoeuvres. They got whiskey, chicken sandwiches and other stuff, because they were going to have a regular picnic out there. Some of our fellows got wise. We found the grub and stole it from the officers. When we got out there all the officers could find was bully-beef. They were wild! They tried to find out who did it for months, but never did." Bombardier Logan, quoted in Gordon Reid, ed., Poor Bloody Murder: Personal Memoirs of the First World War (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1980), p. 34.

¹⁵"Our officers explained the lack of comfort by reminding us "there's a war on,"..." NAC, George V. Bell Papers, MG 30, E 113, typed MS, "Back to Blighty", p. 6 (reference to the forty men/eight horses train cars).

outside a farmhouse with "90 hommes - 1 bed" inscribed on it meant that the bed was for one officer; the ninety men could shift for themselves in the various out-buildings and sheds of the farm.¹⁶ While Lieutenant Pedley lodged in the house of an accountant and slept in a "high bed with a square, puffy coverlet", his men were billeted in less attractive circumstances:

The appearance of the bulk of these billets was depressing. ... Where each man had slept his blanket lay crumpled and frowsy, while at the head of his sleeping-place were scattered his few possessions--dirty towel and unsavory pair of socks, mess-tin containing bits of food saved from the morning meal ... A few magazines, torn and worn by many hands, and here and there a book. Shaving kit and eating utensils thrown carelessly about. Candle grease on the blankets and clothing, on the knives and forks as well.¹⁷

There were very isolated cases of Canadian men and officers sharing the same accommodation. Private Green, 4th Battalion, was billeted in a house when some friends of the owner came to visit. They were immediately struck by Green's resemblance to a nephew, a French prisoner-of-war:

They were so taken up with the likeness that they asked the Sergant [sic] if I could stay overnight at their house. Our

¹⁶Anna Chapin Ray, ed., Letters of a Canadian Stretcher Bearer (by R. A. L.) (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918), pp. 212-213.

¹⁷James H. Pedley, Only This: A War Retrospect (Ottawa: Graphic Publishers, 1927), p. 87. His batman slept in the same house as Pedley, "on a pile of rags in an unfurnished corner of some stairs." Ibid.

adjutant was billeted there too but he never said anything about me being there.¹⁸

In the lines, officers supposedly shared the same living conditions and rations as the men:

The men's dugouts are built the same as ours (officers) the only difference is they are a little larger, have more bunks, and are minus a table. We live under paractically [sic] the same conditions as they do, get exactly the same food, and have the option of buying extra delicacies if we wish.¹⁹

This was a point which many authors (especially officers) were wont to emphasize in their published material. Col. J. A. Currie, for instance, claimed that not only did the men get the same rations as officers, but that they also fared "much better" than their superiors, largely due to the many parcels they received from home.²⁰ (However, Currie said nothing about the equally numerous parcels that officers received from their families and friends.) F. A. McKenzie, "correspondent" with the Canadian forces in France, also wrote that the privates in the trenches lived as a rule "much better than the officers":

Men in the ranks will scoff at this, but I've shared both their meals, and I know.

¹⁸NAC, William Green Papers, MG 30, E 430, typed MS, "An Autobiography of World War I", p. 10.

¹⁹NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, Lt. Williams to mother, 23 December 1916.

²⁰Col. J. A. Currie, "The Red Watch", with the First Canadian Division in Flanders (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1916), pp. 141-142.

The men carry eggs and bacon, chops and potatoes, in their haversacks, and I have more than once witnessed them cooking glorious meals in their canteens over half-hidden fires. The officer has something else to think of than food while he is guarding his sector.²¹

Lieutenant Munroe, PPCLI, would have agreed with this. He also maintained that the officers had experienced the same hardships as the men and had had "perhaps as little to eat."²²

Regardless of the strict accuracy of these statements,²³ the fact remains that officers were privy to comforts which the other ranks were not: unlimited purchase of YMCA canteen food and unrestricted access to alcohol.²⁴ It was this last item which particularly annoyed soldiers. While they themselves were only entitled to a swallow of rum (SRD, or service rum diluted) in the lines, under the supervision of

²¹F. A. McKenzie, Canada's Day of Glory (Toronto: William Briggs, 1918), pp. 270-271.

²²Lt. Jack Munroe, Mopping Up! (New York: H. K. Fly Company, 1918), p. 157.

²³For instance, a simple entry in one officer's diary suggests otherwise: "The men had a bean feast & rum and we had some dinner." NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, MG 30, E 23, vol. 5, diary entry, 31 October 1916.

²⁴Corporal Bird tried to purchase a dozen tins each of cherries and peaches but was told that he could only buy one of each, as the rest was reserved for officers. Needless to say, Corporal Bird was not amused. Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), pp. 264-265. For another perspective (from an officer's point of view but attributed to privates) on this issue see Capt. Ralph W. Bell, Canada in War-Paint (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1917), p. 71: "Wot d'y'er expec'? D'y'er think a horficer is goin' to deny 'is stummick if 'e can buy food ter put in it? 'E ain't so blame stark starin' mad as all that."

an officer, their superiors could buy "excellent whiskey" at \$1.25 a quart.²⁵ Gunner Morison, helping to load stores on board the ship which was to transport him and his unit to France, noticed that they mostly consisted of goods for the YMCA and "whisky and other drinks for the officers."²⁶ The fact that their alcoholic intake was limited to cheap "vin blanc" and diluted beer while out of the lines disgusted most men, especially if, as in the case of Private Craig, they had had once to make a thirty-kilometre round-trip to deliver a bottle of whisky to an officer.²⁷

On no occasion was the difference in food and drink quite so apparent as at Christmas:

[the men had] a huge roast pig, of 270 pounds weight, with large quantities of apple sauce & vegetables, & a big barrel of beer. ... For ourselves, we fared almost too well--cream tomato soup, lobster salad, roast chickens, plum pudding & brandy sauce, nuts & raisins & ginger & apples, with fair burgundy, good champagne, cognac, whisky & port ...²⁸

²⁵Unknown Soldiers by One of Them (New York: Vantage Press, 1959), p. 84.

²⁶NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 3, diary entry, 16 September 1915. Morison was equally piqued in February 1919 when he noticed that an officer had a travelling stock of "24 bottles of booze" which he was solicitously guarding against damage. Ibid., book 18, diary entry, 4 February 1919.

²⁷NAC, Claude C. Craig Papers, MG 30, E 351, diary entry, 9 February 1918. Craig, an artilleryman, was somewhat pacified by the fifteen francs he was paid for the job.

²⁸NAC, Peregrine Acland Papers, MG 30, E 222, Lt. Acland to father, 28 December 1915. Private Wheeler noticed that his officers' Christmas fare ran to "turkeys or pheasant, ducks
(continued...)

Christmas dinner, not necessarily consumed on 25 December (depending on whether or not the unit was in the lines), was a topic of great interest to most soldiers. This was largely due to the traditional components of turkey, plum pudding and fine drink. There was understandably a great variation in the quality of Christmas dinners. Private Cullen, 19th Battalion, carefully noted on three occasions the exact contents of his Christmas dinners: in 1915, "corn beef stew boiled potatoes hard tack bread butter and tea"[sic], in 1917, "frozen potatoes, rotten mutten [sic] and nigger bread" and finally, in 1918, a substantial improvement, mainly because Private Cullen was on kitchen duty and therefore was able to consume "turkey and plum duff galore".²⁹ The standard bill of fare, however, was turkey, vegetable(s), occasionally nuts and fruits, plum pudding (if it arrived in time), the whole meal having been purchased out of canteen funds or by

²⁸(...continued)

or geese, partridge or grouse" but definitely "nothing so plebeian as pork". Victor W. Wheeler, The 50th Battalion in No Man's Land (Calgary: Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, 1980), p. 245. Lieutenant Wilson's Christmas dinner consisted of nine unspecified courses, with no mention of the men's fare. NAC, Selwyn H. Wilson Papers, MG 30, E 345, diary entry, 17 December 1917. Another Christmas distinction was greeting cards: Lt.-Col. Agar Adamson had to send some men's Christmas cards to his family as the order of officers' cards was never received ("most annoying"). The difference between the two was that the officers' cards were tied with the PPCLI regimental ribbon. NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 6, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 25 December 1916.

²⁹NAC, Felix J. Cullen Papers, MG 30, E 452, diary entries, 25 December 1915, 25 December 1917, and 25 December 1918.

the senior NCOs and officers, and served by the officers themselves.

The distinctions between officers and men regarding food and accommodation were continued in civilian establishments. It was common for officers in France to take refreshment in a "saloon bar for officers only" or at an "officers' restaurant".³⁰ The practice was continued in Germany, where cafes, restaurants, beer halls, etc. were segregated.³¹ Also, officers going on leave to England were supposedly "restricted" in their selection of restaurants and hotels:

... there are only certain places officers are permitted to go, practically no restaurant outside the Criterion, Trocadero and the Cecil and Savoy, outside Claridge's and some of the high-priced hotels.³²

This situation led one sapper to complain that instead of joining the army to "see the world" all the common soldier ever saw was the sign "Officers Only".³³

³⁰NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, typed diary entry, 8 August 1915; NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book II, diary entry, 25 May 1916.

³¹See for instance Battalion Orders, 26th Battalion, 6 January 1919, 10 January 1919 and 15 January 1919 in NAC, Gordon G. K. Holder Papers, MG 30, E 203, vol. 4.

³²A Canadian Subaltern: Billy's Letters to His Mother, p. 24. A recently commissioned lieutenant in the RFC found his hotel (the Cecil) rather noisy, but "they make a specialty of officers from the front and also now I can not stop just where I like." NAC, William George Barker Papers, MG 30, E 195, Lt. Barker to parents, 12 April 1916.

³³NAC, Nicholas Garland Bradley Papers, MG 30, E 341, Pte. Bradley to brother, 13 August 1917. Officers certainly (continued...)

Segregation also extended to social clubs and entertainment. Officers' clubs were opened in England and France; and the YMCA allowed officers to reserve their seats for cinema shows and concerts.³⁴ For more physical gratification, blue lamps indicated the presence of "officers' houses" where services were no doubt rendered at higher prices than those offered at "red lamp" establishments.³⁵ Less risky pursuits were bridge and poker: bridge was considered an officer's card game and men rarely played it. Poker was primarily a men's game but officers soon adopted it and seem to have played it as often as bridge.³⁶ The immensely popular Crown and Anchor was

³³(...continued)

had no complaints about this (except for increased prices): as Lt. Herrick Duggan put it, an officer's uniform opened most doors. NAC, Herrick Stevenson Duggan Papers, MG 30, E 303, Lt. Duggan to mother, 29 November 1914.

³⁴See for instance Battalion orders, 26th Battalion, 6 October 1917 and 1 February 1919, in NAC, Gordon G. K. Holder Papers, vol. 3 and vol. 4. Officers considered the YMCA an institution primarily for the other ranks. For this reason, more than one officer felt that he had been less well served than the average soldier in regards to social amenities. See Arthur Hunt Chute, The Real Front (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918), p. 266.

³⁵Sidney Allinson, The Bantams: The Untold Story of World War I (Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1982), pp. 202-203. Some authors have questioned the existence of the blue lamp establishments, but it would be unrealistic to deny that officers did not use specially designated brothels. See George Coppard, With a Machine Gun to Cambrai (London: HMSO, 1969), p. 56.

³⁶On rare occasions an officer played poker with his men. Gunner Morison noted that a lieutenant leaving the unit dropped by to play a few games of poker with Morison's mates.
(continued...)

officially forbidden by Army regulations, but most troops (with the exception of officers) played it regularly.

Apart from food and accommodation, there were other perceived and actual differences in the men's and officers' situations. Virtually all soldiers (men as well as officers) were acutely aware of that scourge of communal living--lice. Many men resented officers for their alleged ability to keep clean and louse-free. Hot water (reserved for officers), better quarters, and the diligent services of a military orderly were all believed to contribute to officers' freedom from the "little pests".³⁷ It is highly doubtful that officers were able to keep the lice at bay. Lieutenant Acland wrote to his father that his clothes all needed replacing as they were "verminous", and that the other

³⁶(...continued)

The officer only lost a franc, but a private lost thirty-five francs. Morison kidded the private about "making a splash because an officer was playing and he says yes that's why he played just to say he had played with an officer." NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 9, diary entries, 12 December and 13 December 1916. Morison noted also that Dr. MacPhail of the CAMC ran a roulette table for his officers. *Ibid.*, book 6, diary entry, 7 June 1916.

³⁷Ernest G. Black, I Want One Volunteer (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), p. 11. Black describes an incident in which a soldier with a grudge against one of his officers deliberately infected his bed roll with a sizeable contingent of lice. Although the officer refused to betray the presence of the creatures by scratching, Black and his mates noticed that the officer's batman thereafter "had less idle time on his hands than was usual." *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

officers were in the same predicament.³⁸

Bathing parades did little to eliminate the louse problem. Here again, officers did not share the facilities with their men. As Lieutenant Pedley put it, "there was a distinction between men and officers, a delicacy as between male and females; mixed bathing was not the rule."³⁹ Private Hare had another explanation for the mixed bathing: he thought that the separate facilities for officers was to avoid them "getting hurt by the men when the rush commences to get under the shower sprinklers."⁴⁰ Be that as it may, any new officer who had first served in the ranks noticed the difference immediately:

The officers' bathing quarters were quite a luxury, 4 fine porcelain tubs, a cold shower, any amount of towels & room & an attendant.⁴¹

There were no negative comments about separate bathing

³⁸NAC, Peregrine Acland Papers, Lt. Acland to father, undated [1915]. See R. J. Manion, A Surgeon in Arms (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1918), pp. 94-95, for an interesting description of three officers (medical officer, chaplain and major) all engaged in a louse hunting session. Separated from their "soldier-servants" by a partition, they nonetheless realised that the men were also employed in the same occupation.

³⁹Pedley, Only This, p. 90.

⁴⁰NAC, William Archibald Hare Papers, MG 29, E 25, Pte. James Arthur Hare to Florence, 9 July 1917. There were normally about 100 men using twenty sprinklers at a time. At the beginning of the war, bath houses were set up in breweries, with beer barrels cut in two to provide bath tubs.

⁴¹NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book II, diary entry, 25 May 1916.

facilities in the other ranks' memoirs or private papers. This was probably due to the fact that few of the other ranks ever saw the officers' baths.

A feature of military life that the noncommissioned ranks certainly remembered was the difference in march discipline between officers and men. Officially, men leaving for France carried a full load of ninety pounds (blankets, greatcoat, rifle, ammunition, gas mask, entrenching tool, personal effects, etc.) and officers seventy-five pounds. In reality, once men had dispensed with unnecessary equipment, the load was much lighter (unless they happened to have acquired "souvenirs"). The differences still rankled, however. As one artilleryman noted:

When you've been hiking along with all your junk on your back and finally squeeze on top of a limber, it's rather irritating to have a spruce officer, who travels on horseback with no weight except his respirator and a water-bottle which does not contain water, gallop up and tell you to get down and foot it. Yet these are the little things one remembers.⁴²

Many men indeed remembered these "little things". Falling out on the march was discouraged by dire threats, but it was an unavoidable and common occurrence. Sensible officers realised that there was a limit to their men's endurance and many officers at one time or the other carried a rifle for a

⁴²Hugh R. Kay, George Magee, and F. A. MacLennan, Battery Action! The Story of the 43rd Battery CFA (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter Ltd., [1919]), p. 225.

weary soldier or lent one his horse. More heroic measures were sometimes employed to encourage exhausted men, especially on the march:

Those officers of ours ... were in no better shape than ourselves; in fact, owing to their responsibility, they were in worse plight. ... Lining up across the road, they bade us halt for a space, telling us that they had a bet to decide, and it must be decided at once. They were going to run a race. Their effort was pitiful in the extreme. They started out bravely enough, but a few paces, and one after the other would stagger and fall; but they struggled to their feet and staggered away again. After such an exhibition of courage what could we do or say.⁴³

Differences in uniform and equipment also provoked criticism. Officers and men, especially in the later stages of the war, wore virtually the same uniform: this included the new "Webb" equipment, to which a revolver could be fastened (thus dispensing with the Sam Browne).⁴⁴ A revolver was, of course, a much lighter and more portable weapon that

⁴³Sgt. Harold Baldwin, "Holding the Line" (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1918), pp. 223-224. See also NAC, Ernest William Russell Papers, MG 30, E 220, MS, "A Private Soldier's Views on the Great War 1914-1918", pp. 13-14: Russell was impressed with a captain who gave up his horse for a footsore soldier. It was an action which Russell never forgot.

⁴⁴Lt. (later Lt.-Col.) MacIntyre was always amused by the physical appearance of new officers in the trenches: in contrast, he himself wore a "private's tunic and pants, no rank badges, no belt and [carried] a gas helmet and a lead pencil." NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, MG 30, E 241, vol. 1, diary entry, 15 December 1915. A private put it another way: "As a matter of fact we can dress exactly like an officer so long as we don't put the stars on our shoulders." NAC, Frank N. Hazlewood Papers, MG 30, E 170, Pte. Hazlewood to Harry, 24 December 1916.

the rifle: despite the acquisition by many privates of revolvers, their use was officially restricted to officers and scouts.⁴⁵ Another reason for their popularity was reliability, especially when compared with the Ross rifle.⁴⁶ Apart from his weapon, an officer also could "carry" a fair amount of personal kit: cots, wash basins, "wolseley valises", pyjamas, marlingspikes, oyster knives, etc.⁴⁷

In England, as well as on active service, a host of sundry differences separated officers and men. Only officers were permitted to shoot a lame or wounded horse; and in the

⁴⁵Family members and friends were also prime culprits: Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson was "constantly having to take revolvers away from men who [had] had them sent to them." NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 5, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 29 August 1916.

⁴⁶The Ross rifle, an excellent target-shooting weapon, was virtually useless in the rapid-fire circumstances of battle. Before the Lee-Enfield was officially adopted as the Canadian forces' weapon, many soldiers grabbed one wherever they could find it (especially off British corpses). Many officers turned a blind eye to this practice. See for instance NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, MG 30, E 156, typed MS, "Merry Hell, the Way I Saw It", p. 156. Sgt. Arthur Gibbons in A Guest of the Kaiser (Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1919), p. 49, tells a somewhat different story.

⁴⁷Herbert Rae, Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), p. 54. For a comprehensive list of an officer's kit see [Edwin Austin Abbey II], An American Soldier: Letters of Edwin Austin Abbey, 2d (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), p. 75. All his baggage could easily cost an officer a minimum of \$200.00, as Lieutenant Barker found to his surprise. NAC, William George Barker Papers, Lt. Barker to parents, 12 April 1916. Regulations concerning officers' extra baggage were not strictly enforced until the arrival of American units. Thereafter, because of the increased demand for horses, mules and wagons, officers were limited to forty pounds supplementary baggage. NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, MS, "Merry Hell, the Way I Saw It", p. 265.

case of wounded men, officers were entitled to carry morphia (which even stretcher bearers were not permitted to have).⁴⁸ Officers were exempted the rule of "lights out" in their quarters by the simple device of calling out "officer's tent" when the picket came round to inspect.⁴⁹ They could also attend an officers' dental clinic: a separate facility had been established for officers since they had invariably been given priority when attending the men's clinics.⁵⁰ Wounded or ill officers had access to officers' wards, or in some cases, separate hospitals. An order to receive sick officers at Number One Canadian General Hospital caused some consternation amongst the nursing staff: an improvised officers' ward had to be fashioned with tarpaulin partitions, but there was no furniture:

Not that the officers demanded either more attention or better accommodation than their men, but the change from normal habits struck deeper, and we have no furniture of any kind, not even

⁴⁸Lt. J. Harvey Douglas, Captured: Sixteen Months as a Prisoner-of-War (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1918), p. 31; Ray, ed., Letters of a Canadian Stretcher Bearer, p. 222. Lt.-Col. Agar Adamson found that opium was "of great effect in relieving wounded men" and wrote his wife for a supply of capsules. NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1915.

⁴⁹NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 1, diary entry, 4 June 1915.

⁵⁰Canada in the Great World War, 6 vols. (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada Limited, 1919), vol. VI, pp. 108-109.

chairs.⁵¹

Railway cars operating as hospital trains did not have separate accommodation for officers, a situation which led one lieutenant to make the following remark:

I have only this criticism to make. There was no separate accommodation for officers. This was all right, but our meals were much superior to those provided for the men and a distinction which was not pleasant for officers or men.⁵²

Lieutenant Baldwin's point was interesting and had a practical purpose: if officers received better food while in "hospital" then it would have been far wiser not to have flaunted the fact in front of private soldiers.

The notion that officers felt their separation from the creature comforts of home more keenly than the men perhaps prompted many English estate-owners to invite convalescent

⁵¹M. B. Clint, Our Bit: Memories of War Service by a Canadian Nursing Sister (Montreal: Barwick Limited, 1934), p. 66. See R. J. Manion, A Surgeon in Arms, pp. 170-171, for an interesting incident concerning a lieutenant-colonel who objected to being evacuated in the same ambulance as a private soldier. See also John Gallishaw, Trenching at Gallipoli (New York: The Century Co., 1916), pp. 199-200, for a similar episode: a wounded officer (obviously British since he wore second-lieutenant stars and there were no second-lieutenants in the Canadian forces) resented the smile of a wounded Newfoundland corporal: "I [the corporal] had committed the unpardonable sin. I had smiled at an officer as if I had been an equal, forgetting that he was not made of common clay. ... Not a word had passed between us, but his expression in turning away had been eloquent. I cursed him and the system that produced him, and swore that never again would I put on a uniform." This is an extreme example, probably exaggerated, and reflects the tone of the book's anti-British bias.

⁵²NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 19 July 1918.

officers to be their guests:

Dukes, earls and lords are just the same, they throw their mansions and castles open to any Colonial officers who wish to enjoy their hospitality--not a bit of stiffness or formality. They are fine.⁵³

(Canadian noncommissioned soldiers were also invited to some private homes, but were not quite so desirable commodities as Canadian officers.) Leave arrangements in England and France for officers were much more generous, a fact which led many soldiers to consider it the greatest advantage to being an officer.⁵⁴ Gunner Morison conscientiously noted the exact occasions on which one of his officers, Captain Routier, went on leave. By December 1917, the captain had departed on his sixth leave, whereas Morison, who had left Canada and come to France with him at the same time, had only had one leave.⁵⁵ Surprisingly, Morison did not seem bitter or even incredulous: on the occasions of Captain Routier's leaves, Morison made no remark other than that the officer had gone on leave. This was also the case for other private soldiers:

⁵³NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, Lt. Williams to mother, 29 October 1917. See also Mary MacLeod Moore, The Maple Leaf's Red Cross (London: Skeffington, [1919]), pp. 80-81, and Canada in the Great World War, vol. II, pp. 227-228.

⁵⁴NAC, Frank N. Hazlewood Papers, Pte. Hazlewood to Roy Hazlewood, 24 August 1917.

⁵⁵NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 13, diary entry, 19 December 1917. Gunner Morison noticed that Routier went on his next leave in July 1918 (a special leave of ten days, not part of his regular leave), and then again in October 1918. Ibid., book 15, diary entry, 1 July 1918 and book 17, diary entry, 17 October 1918.

they often mentioned their officers being on leave, but made no further comment.

There were also differences in disciplinary procedures and the practice of military justice. "A Canadian Subaltern", the author of Billy's Letters to his Mother, was not far from the truth when he wrote that in the army one could be punished for anything.⁵⁶ If one collates a list of offences for which soldiers could be arrested, fined, charged, imprisoned or executed, it is immediately apparent that "A Canadian Subaltern" was reasonably accurate.⁵⁷ This, however, applied only to the other ranks. If one considers the offences for which officers could be arrested and charged, the situation was hardly analogous.

Drunkenness constituted the most common offence for which an officer was brought up for court martial. The problem bordered on the epidemic: a count of the references to drunk officers in the archival material yielded a staggering total of fifty-one. (Gunner Morison accounted for thirty-two or sixty-three percent of these entries.) In the early stages of the war, it was difficult to know how to deal with these drunk "gentlemen":

Managers of London theatres have written to the Authorities to know what they are to do with drunken Officers, civilians they know what to do with, and also the Tommies, but drunken officers, they have

⁵⁶A Canadian Subaltern, p. 47.

⁵⁷See Appendix A.

no precedent for.⁵⁸

In severe cases a drunk officer was sent home or cashiered. Many officers resigned their commissions to avoid the disgrace of cashiering and re-enlisted in the ranks. At any rate, no officer was awarded Field Punishment Number One or Two for this or any other offence. Indeed, no Canadian officer was ever officially executed for desertion, cowardice or murder: the one lieutenant who was accused of desertion on active service was cashiered and sentenced to ten years in prison.⁵⁹

This difference between the ranks in respects to military justice definitely created resentment. A slightly tipsy officer was liable to cause amusement, but when lives and physical comfort were jeopardised, amusement very quickly turned to anger. Two soldiers who spent a night chasing a litter of pigs which had been released by a drunk officer discussed officers all the time they were searching.⁶⁰ One

⁵⁸NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Mabel Adamson to mother, 10 November 1914.

⁵⁹Desmond Morton, "The Supreme Penalty: Canadian Deaths by Firing Squad in the First World War", Queen's Quarterly, LXXIX, No. 3 (Autumn 1972), p. 348. See this entire article for an interesting discussion of the twenty-five Canadian soldiers executed during the war. See also Anthony Babington, For the Sake of Example: Capital Courts-martial 1914-1920 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983): only three British officers were executed during the war, two for desertion and one for murder. A sensitive fictional account of one of the British officers executed for desertion may be found in A. P. Herbert's The Secret Battle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982 [c. 1919]).

⁶⁰Unknown Soldiers by One of Them, p. 47.

can well imagine that their discussion was anything but complimentary, for had the drunk soldier been a private less time would have been spent chasing the porcine escapees and more time chastising the offender. A private who led a drunk captain by the hand out of the lines was later astonished to read in the Canada Gazette that the same officer had been decorated and promoted to major.⁶¹ Gunner Morison's mates were quite vocal on this issue:

Hyde [an officer] was so drunk that the traffic men in G[?] almost arrested him. ... He was so drunk he was falling off his horse. ... Egan speaking of it says if an N.C.O. had been caught in a like condition he would likely be broken of his rank and fined a couple months pay. ... This afternoon Sgt. Jago of No 3 Su [sic] and Mr. Furze are drunk. Furze rides about camp bare back getting thrown off time after time while the fellows are all laughing at him. Once he is thrown right in front of the horses [sic] feet but the animal stops short till he picks himself up climbs on and spurs it about madly again. At tea the fellows were saying the horse was worked into a lather and if it had been a man who had acted so he would have got very heavy punishment.⁶²

There was one final area in which distinctions could be made between officers and men. Burial of the dead, or as John McCrae referred to it, the "last class distinction that

⁶¹Ibid., p. 97.

⁶²NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 15, diary entry, 24 June 1918.

the world can ever make",⁶³ was quickly perceived to be a problem. The Canadian authorities, unlike their American counterparts, decided not to repatriate the thousands of dead bodies, and they were eventually interred in permanent cemeteries in France. Prior to their interment in official cemeteries, however, the bodies of Canadian men and officers were buried with a minimum of decorum in hastily dug holes or trenches.

Lieutenant-Colonel Farquhar, first commanding officer of the PPCLI, received a fatal bullet in the chest. His dying words constituted a plea to bury him "with the boys".⁶⁴ According to established burial practice, Farquhar's last resting place (prior to reinterment in a permanent cemetery) would indeed have been "with the boys" as only general officers were entitled to a separate disposal of their

⁶³Sir Andrew MacPhail, In Flanders Fields and Other Poems by Lieut.-Col. John McCrae, M. D. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1919), p. 100. McCrae had watched two funerals during the South African War, that of a "Tommy" and that of a peer. The contrast between the two was striking: band, firing party, flag and three companies of troops for the peer cum officer, and a blanket and thirteen men for the Tommy. Ibid. In the case of the South African War, it was probably standard practice to bury Canadian officers and men together in common graves. Pte. Frederick Lee, RCR, in a letter to his parents remarked on finding the grave of a family friend: he had been buried with an NCO, several privates and an officer in the same grave. NAC, Frederick S. Lee Papers, MG 30, E 387, Pte. Lee to parents, 24 May 1900. See also George L. Mosse, "Two World Wars and the Myth of the War Experience", Journal of Contemporary History, XXI, No. 4 (October 1986), 500, for a brief but tantalising discussion of the "cult of the fallen soldier" in respects to equality in the graveyard.

⁶⁴Munroe, Mopping Up!, p. 209.

remains.⁶⁵ As Herbert Rae wrote, "in the churchyard all ranks are equal",⁶⁶ and so officers and men lay side by side in a camaraderie which might not necessarily have existed in life.

However, it is possible that some distinctions between Canadian officers and men were indeed maintained. An orderly at No. 3 Canadian General Hospital spent an unenviable afternoon transferring "stiffs" from the hospital to ambulances whence they were conveyed to the morgue. From there they were buried in a cemetery, French and English troops facing each other, "men with white crosses, officers brown--men three in a grave, officers one."⁶⁷ It is not known whether by "English" was also meant "Canadian", but other

⁶⁵See Army Form A.G. 3212(0) "Instructions Regarding Burials" (verso of "Burial Return, Specimen Form") in which paragraph 7 stipulated that officers were to be buried with the other ranks, except in the case of General Officers "whose bodies [would] be disposed as of directed." NAC, Edward Whipple Bancroft Morrison Papers, MG 30, E 81, vol. 1. It should be noted that, according to A. M. J. Hyatt's article on Canadian generals, a full colonel, although not a general, was considered a "general officer". See A. M. J. Hyatt, "Canadian Generals of the First World War and the Popular View of Military Leadership", Histoire sociale/Social History, XII, No. 24 (November 1979), 418-430. See also a handwritten "Burial List" for the 26th Battalion, in which a lieutenant-colonel was buried with privates of the same unit. NAC, Gordon G. K. Holder Papers, vol. 1, file 10. Burial of the dead was a delicate and unwelcome task, the organisation of which many officers (and men) understandably sought to avoid. At least one commanding officer reprimanded his officers on this matter: for instance, Lieutenant-Colonel Griesbach had a major and captain charged in regards to burial of their dead. NAC, William Antrobus Griesbach Papers, MG 30, E 15, diary entry, 7 August 1917.

⁶⁶Rae, Maples Leaves in Flanders Fields, p. 86.

⁶⁷Ray, ed., Letters of a Canadian Stretcher Bearer, pp. 71-72.

sources suggested that some care was indeed taken to distinguish the burial of Canadian officers from that of their men.

Colonel Currie of the 48th Battalion noted that troops killed at Neuve Chapelle were buried in long trenches, three and four deep, "with the officers who fell at the head of the mounds."⁶⁸ In another instance, a Canadian artilleryman helped to bury one of his officers in a military cemetery near Ypres: as the deceased had been an officer he was interred in a cemetery, whereas the gunners and drivers were "usually buried where they fell."⁶⁹ Concern for his final resting place led one Canadian officer to actually purchase a cemetery lot from an enterprising private, a transaction which does not seem to have happened very often!⁷⁰ Finally, officers were sometimes buried in coffins (instead of blankets), subject to availability and whenever one could be manufactured with the skills and material at hand.⁷¹

The Armistice did not end segregated billets and

⁶⁸Currie, "The Red Watch", p. 186.

⁶⁹Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "Shrieks and Crashes" being Memories of Canada's Corps 1917 (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1929), p. 184.

⁷⁰This same canny soldier also sold Oxo pills to the "natives". NAC, Arthur Edward Ross Papers, MG 30, E 87, diary entry, [?] 1916.

⁷¹A metallic coffin was made for one captain in the 48th Battalion. Currie, "The Red Watch", p. 201. Lieutenant MacPherson recorded that a sergeant made a "very stout coffin & cross" for a dead officer. NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, diary entry, 9 July 1917.

shipboard accommodation. One month after the end of the war, Corporal Morgan was peeved by the difference between the billets of his officers and those of the men: the officers occupied rooms in a castle, a "very sumptuous place", while the men slept on straw in the stables. Corporal Morgan also remarked on the arrangements on board ship returning to Canada: the boat deck and first class saloons remained "off limits" to the noncommissioned ranks.⁷² Private Green and his mates were less complacent than Corporal Morgan. Unable to sleep on their hammocks below decks they tried to accommodate themselves in the hallways of the officers' quarters but were quickly evicted.⁷³

Within a very short time of their arrival on Canadian soil, men and officers were discharged from military service. The privileges accruing to officers by virtue of their rank were stripped from them: gone were the batmen, the first-class accommodation, the superior billets and food, the finer uniforms and the higher rates of pay. These became but a memory of days past, as officers joined men in the frustrating search for employment.

⁷²NAC, William Clement Morgan Papers, MG 30, E 488, diary entries, 13 December and 14 December 1918, 11 May and 13 May 1919.

⁷³NAC, William Green Papers, typed MS, "An Autobiography of World War I", pp. 14-15. Corporal Bird was more ingenuous: he appropriated an empty officer's stateroom (with bath) by dumping his kit in it and chalking "occupied" on the door. Will R. Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1968), p. 247.

In returning to the hypothesis proposed at the beginning of this chapter, it may be concluded that Canadian officers were certainly not bereft of certain privileges designed to distinguish them from the other ranks. These privileges were recognised and for the most part accepted without major criticism by both officers and men. This is at first glance surprising, considering the much-touted theory about Canadian "democracy" and its impact on Canadian soldiers. One would certainly have expected much more commentary in the private papers of ex-soldiers (especially their diaries) regarding officers' privileges. That only a few men were vocal in their disapproval of this situation indicates that most soldiers were not overly perturbed.

The behaviour of Canadian officers in respects to their privileges suggests that they considered these a fundamental perquisite of their status. While not governed by quite so strict a social code as that of British society, Canadian officers nonetheless emerged as a "class" of their own--a class which was defined by the privileges given to its members upon receipt of a commission. In short, "democratic" principles collapsed when confronted by the tempting "extras" which made life in the trenches far more bearable. This does not deny the fact that officers, collectively and individually, had far more responsibility than the private soldiers; nor does it discredit the heroic efforts of many officers in sustaining their men throughout an unprecedented

traumatic experience.

CHAPTER SIX

Batmen, saluting and censorship

Who are batmen? What are they for?
They drive one mad and make one sore,
They clean our boots and bring us water,
Do little work and act as porter(s).

They cook our eggs and also bacon
Our mush betimes, and God-forsaken
Steak and onions, tough as leather;
We sometimes have to live on weather.

My batman (who is quite a clown)
Just "boiled" and spoilt my dear "Sam Brown". [sic]
He said he really quite forgot
That water on a stove gets hot.

Not satisfied with mischief done,
He further acts the Kultured Hun,
My boots, old pals for comfort noted,
Completely ruined, burnt, fried and roasted.¹

The term "batman" derives from the French bat, and originally referred to a soldier who was in charge of a bat-horse (a beast which carried an officer's kit). Since the late eighteenth century, the word has been used to designate a soldier who serves as an orderly to a British officer. Other armies adopted somewhat different names to describe the same individual: 'orderly' in the American forces² and 'ordonnance' in the French. Canadian officers inherited this

¹The Listening Post, No. 10, 20 January 1916, p. 48, in National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), William George Barker Papers, MG 30, E 195.

²Will R. Bird claimed that the first American officer to have had a batman was George Washington. The Communication Trench (Amherst, N. S.: The author, 1933), p. 159.

feature of military life from the British Army,³ and during the Great War one may observe that at least five different terms were used by them: batman, servant, man, orderly and steward.

A significant proportion of the archival material contained references to batmen. A total of forty-nine individuals (thirty-seven percent of all the manuscript collections) mentioned batmen in some context or other: forty-three were officers (including one nursing sister) and only six were men (including one NCO). (This represents forty-eight percent of all officers and fourteen percent of all men from the archival material.) Of the six men, two had actually served as batmen, albeit very briefly. Based on these percentages, therefore, it would seem that the subject was of greater significance to officers than it had been to the other ranks. Two conclusions may be tentatively inferred from this. First, that Canadian officers regarded batmen as a fundamental and inviolable prerogative; and second, that Canadian private soldiers as a whole were not unduly offended by the existence of batmen (who, of course, were all drawn from the ranks).

³For some interesting descriptions of British officer-batman relationships see: Guy Chapman, "Conversation Piece", in Guy Chapman, ed., Vain Glory (London: Cassell, 1968), p. 576; George Coppard, With a Machine Gun to Cambrai (London: HMSO, 1969), pp. 68-71, 115-116; Gilbert Nobbs, Englishman, Kamerad! Right of the British Line (London: William Heinemann, 1918), pp. 191-192; and especially, Graham Seton, Footslogger (London: Hutchinson, 1931), pp. 142-151.

How well are these two conclusions corroborated by the archival evidence and the published material? Also, what can reasonably be determined from these documents of the officer-batman relationship?

Military servants were not foreign to Canadian officers who had served in previous campaigns: batmen had certainly been in evidence during the South African War.⁴ However, the Great War saw the number of officers escalate in an exponential fashion; but, apart from a lone voice in the dark (from Winston Churchill)⁵ there was no suggestion of abolishing batmen, in Britain or in Canada. Newly commissioned officers and those promoted from the ranks accepted and welcomed their magic endowment of a servant.

Most newly commissioned officers referred to batmen in their correspondence or private papers. The batman was mentioned in almost the same breath as the separate living and dining arrangements and letter censoring. Those commissioned from the ranks were clearly delighted to be rid of the more onerous duties associated with daily military

⁴See for instance a letter from John McCrae, who served as an artillery officer in South Africa: "I have luckily got some butter, which can't be procured but my man got around the storekeeper's wife by kissing the baby (a heavy price) and was enabled thereby to purchase butter at about 3\ per lb." NAC, John McCrae Papers, MG 30, D 209, Microfilm reel A-1102, Lt. McCrae to mother, 29 April 1900.

⁵Col. E. A. Baker heard a speech by Churchill in January 1916 in which he decried the fact that 50,000 British soldiers in France were doing nothing but polishing officers' boots and equipment. NAC, Edwin Albert Baker Papers, MG 30, C 103, vol. 1, tape 2, track 2, transcripts, p. 112.

life. Lieutenant Clarke, formerly a corporal, revelled in the "unique experience" of a batman bringing in hot water for shaving at the same time as his polished shoes.⁶ After some two years as a private, Lieutenant Dinesen was pleased with the prospect of a batman to "skip" for him.⁷

New officers also found that, apart from his valet talents, a batman was an unequalled source of information and advice on various military matters:

... have a batman between three of us. These are mostly casualties and not fit for further active service. The older ones are not only very helpful but are able to tip us off to correct protocol, there being so many simple pitfalls a new officer can fall into.⁸

A naval cadet at Halifax had much the same to say about "Buncombe":

One thing we learnt was that even lowly cadets were entitled to a 'servant', the equivalent of the army's batman. Val Godfrey and I were "looked after" by a fatherly old character by the name of Buncombe, a marine bandsman. He taught us a lot in a quiet way, and we paid him

⁶NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, MG 30, E 155, vol. 1, book II, diary entry, 23 May 1916.

⁷Thomas Dinesen, Merry Hell! A Dane with the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, s.d.), p. 251. See also O. C. S. Wallace, ed., From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), pp. 62-63, and NAC, William George Barker Papers, Lt. Barker to mother, 25 April 1916.

⁸Norman Shrive, ed., The Diary of a P.B.O. (Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills, 1981), p. 34.

\$3 a month for the privilege.⁹

An officer quickly learnt to budget for his batman, whose wages (in addition to his regular army pay) ranged anywhere from three to five dollars a month, ten shillings a month or as low as one franc a week.

In the lines, the batman was responsible for keeping his officer's uniform, equipment and quarters clean and in good repair. He was also cook, scrounger, bodyguard and gossip supplier on a regular basis and, on a less frequent basis, barber, doctor, masseur and philosopher. As the theory suggested, where the officer went, so went the batman. Batmen often accompanied their officers on training courses and, in a few instances, went with them on leave. And, of course, batmen also died with their officers if they were unlucky enough to be in their officers' company during a heavy shelling.

On a material level, many officers were the beneficiaries of their batmen's handiwork. An amateur craftsman could easily nail up a table, install a crude mirror and, in general, make one's improvised living quarters reasonably comfortable:

I hated leaving my nice little hut at transport lines, it had got to be a regular little home & my Batman had turned it into a most comfortable

⁹NAC, Frank Llewellyn Houghton Papers, MG 30, E 444, typed MS, "A Sailor's Life for Me!", p. 9.

convenient abode.¹⁰

An added comfort was any item "scrounged" legally or illegally by one's batman. These items could be of great variety: a wooden bathtub, a replacement for a frayed sword-frog, new trousers and extra blankets.¹¹ Moreover, as Colonel Nasmith noted, it was unwise and pointless to ask "too many foolish questions as to the origin of things."¹²

Some batmen's culinary skills were noteworthy. From five-course dinners to bully beef served seven different ways, batmen produced some memorable meals:

My servant bought some macaroni in the village and added cheese to it: the finest dish I have tasted since I came to

¹⁰NAC, Henry Lionel Brockett Burdett-Burgess Papers, MG 30, E 416, Lt. Burdett-Burgess to Ethel, 4 February 1918. See also NAC, Roger F. Clarke Papers, vol. 1, book III, diary entry, 14 July 1916, and Louis Keene, "Crumps": The Plain Story of a Canadian Who Went (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 119. In some cases, officers were not too convinced about their domestic comfort: Captain Johnston wrote that he was living in a tent, his "man" having made him a stove out of two big cans. Further, his batman was "having quite a time" making Johnston believe that he was really comfortable. NAC, Thomas Dalton Johnston Papers, MG 30, E 132, Capt. Johnston to Geraldine, 2 April 1917.

¹¹NAC, William Nisbet Ponton Papers, MG 30, E 96, vol. 2, Lt. Dick Ponton to May Ponton, 14 March 1915; Roger Pocock, Chorus to Adventurers (London: Bodley Head, 1931), p. 148; Ralph W. Bell, Canada in War-Paint (Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1917), pp. 61-62; R. J. Manion, Life is an Adventure (Toronto: Ryerson, 1936), p. 191.

¹²George G. Nasmith, On the Fringe of the Great Fight (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 13. See also Department of National Defence, History Directorate (hereafter DHIST), George Southern Bond Fuller Papers, File 82/719, typed MS, "We Couldn't All be Aces", pp. 117-118.

France.¹³

Captain Davis commented favourably on his batman's cooking prowess on no less than three occasions within a seventeen-day period; his satisfaction was echoed by another officer whose batman prepared a "soup plate full of stewed grouse, with onions, spuds, and tomatoes, a steak, mashed potatoes, and green peas."¹⁴

Living quarters and food aside, batmen performed a miscellany of tasks for their officers: among them, cutting hair, cleaning motorcycles and polishing crucifixes.¹⁵ They accompanied their officers on numerous tours of the lines, and were responsible for hauling them out of bed whenever necessary. (Batmen were sometimes not too successful at this, judging from the number of diary entries to the effect that the writer had "overslept" because his batman had failed to waken him.) In some instances, batmen were responsible

¹³NAC, William Nisbet Ponton Papers, vol. 2, Lt. Dick Ponton to Grace Ponton, 28 March 1915. See also Lt. J. H. Walton in Letters from the Front, 2 vols. (S.l.: The Canadian Bank of Commerce, [1920-1921]), vol. 1, p. 172, and NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, MG 30, E 400, Lt. Williams to mother, 31 March 1917.

¹⁴NAC, Gustavus Mitchell Davis Papers, MG 30, E 11, diary entries, 3 July 1915, 9 July 1915, and 20 July 1915; [Armine Norris], "Mainly for Mother" (Toronto: Ryerson, [1920]), p. 190.

¹⁵Coningsby Dawson, Carry On (New York: John Lane, 1917), p. 65; NAC, Arthur W. Steel Papers, MG 30, A 42, vol. 2, diary entry, 27 July 1916; NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, MG 30, E 65, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 25 November 1917. Lieutenant Baldwin's Irish batman had irreverently hung a shirt over Baldwin's wall crucifix, and besides receiving a "tongue wagging" was sentenced to polish it.

for saving their officers' lives, but in others, certainly more frequently, they lost their own lives.¹⁶ Finally, the absence of his batman, due to illness or other reasons, led many an officer to bemoan his temporary abandonment.¹⁷

As astonishing wealth of batman-related detail has survived in officers' published memoirs,¹⁸ correspondence and diaries, and their anecdotes would fill an entire volume. Their often acute descriptions of batmen's activities, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies can not but reflect a genuine attachment and affection between officer and batman. This unfortunately has gone unnoticed by military historians. The special relationship a batman enjoyed with his officer has all too frequently been dismissed by a superficial discussion of the feudal master-servant bond. In the case of Canadian officers and their batmen, it behooves the

¹⁶In Salonika, Lieutenant Lighthall had a Eurasian batman who saved him from a cobra snake by some quick work with a razor-sharp bayonet. NAC, William S. Lighthall Papers, MG 30, E 284, typed MS, "Grandfather's War", pp. 99-100. Gunner Morison mentioned a disembowelled batman, killed at the same time as his officer. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 317, book 9, diary entry, 6 December 1916. The circumstances in this case were more tragic than usual in that the shell that killed the two was probably from a Canadian gun.

¹⁷However, one is inclined to be a trifle unsympathetic with Lieutenant Johnston's particular situation: "My man Thompson went away to the hospital with the measles last night, and I have no one to make my bed or clean my boots, and everything is shot to the duece." [sic] NAC, Thomas Dalton Johnston Papers, Lt. Johnston to Geraldine, 1 April 1915.

¹⁸See for instance, Bell, Canada in War-Paint, pp. 60-66; R. J. Manion, A Surgeon in Arms (New York: D. Appleton, 1918), Chapter IV, "Kelly", pp. 31-49.

researcher to examine the records of a few selected officers with a specific aim in mind: namely to extract from their diary entries and correspondence those elements which will determine as accurately as possible the nature of the officer-batman relationship.

For the purpose of the following discussion the personal papers of eight officers were chosen (two lieutenants, two majors and four lieutenant-colonels).¹⁹ These were selected on the basis of their remarks pertaining to batmen, especially in the case of Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson and Lieutenant-Colonel Woodside. Both quantity and quality were considered: these papers for the most part contained the greatest number of references to batmen out of all the material examined, and they also were the most insightful.

What was immediately striking about this material was the sheer variety of information. No two officers made identical or similar remarks, except in the case of batmen's illnesses and drunkenness. Major Papineau was the only officer to provide a detailed account of his batman's early morning duties:

At 7 Blatchford [Papineau's batman]
brought me a cup of tea and then busied
himself getting my clothes laid out while

¹⁹NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, MG 30, E 149; NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, MG 30, E 8; NAC, Harold Isidore Hellmuth Papers, MG 30, E 109; NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, MG 30, E 241; NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, MG 30, E 23; NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, MG 30, E 52; NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, MG 30, E 400; NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, MG 30, C 64.

I rolled over and stretched and sipped the tea. With a final roll I came into my slippers and lightly clad I went through various exercises for fifteen minutes. Then I called "Alright Blatchford" and he came in and laid a macintosh on the floor and then staggered in with a 2 by 2 tub full of very cold water. With much difficulty and splashing I get thoroughly wet and cold - Then a hard rub and Blatchford hands me one thing after the other - the while giving me the latest gossip - until I am fully cleaned and equipped.²⁰

No other officer provided any in-depth description of his servant's functions. Officers did however write briefly of miscellaneous duties which their batmen performed as part of their job. For instance, Lieutenant-Colonel MacIntyre's batman was kept busy looking after his kit and tent, and "Menzies", Lieutenant Williams' batman, spent all his "spare time ... brushing up leather and polishing silver and brass."²¹ Lieutenant-Colonel MacPherson's "faithful" batman kept a meal of steak and soup ready for him when he returned late for dinner one day, and he also ensured that there was

²⁰NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 11 May 1916. Papineau also was the only officer to write an excellent physical description of his batman: "He is rather imposing in appearance but has an abnormally small mind. Over 6 feet and after 7 years in the Irish Guards straight as a poker and a clean shaven fighters face. Strong but as I have seen him badly frightened by a shell I have no slightest fear of him. ... is rather good looking. Neat as a pin in appearance and always wants me to buy new boots and clothes." Ibid., vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 6 January 1917.

²¹NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, diary entry, 10 June 1915; NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, Lt. Williams to mother, 23 June 1916.

a can of beans in MacPherson's saddlebags for emergencies.²²

It was, however, much more common for the officers to remark on activities which were not part of their batmen's "regular" job. Thus, Major Papineau wrote that his batman had been feeding and caring for his young dog; Lieutenant-Colonel MacIntyre, suffering from a bad cold, remarked that his batman had put mustard plasters on his chest and obtained some cough mixture for him; and Major Hellmuth's batman pleased his officer's civilian "hosts" by chopping wood for them and carrying parcels.²³ All these activities went beyond the strict call of duty, and this is perhaps why officers remarked on them. They clearly expected the regular tasks to be performed (which is probably why they didn't mention them very often), but were impressed enough by extra services which some batmen rendered to include them in their diaries or letters.

Three officers experienced problems with drunk or misbehaving batmen: Lieutenant-Colonel Creelman, Lieutenant-Colonel MacIntyre and Major Papineau. Papineau was sympathetic, MacIntyre apathetic (but later grateful) and

²²NAC, Huntley Wilson MacPherson Papers, vol. IV, diary entries, 3 September and 4 September 1916.

²³Papineau was annoyed to find that "Bobs", the dog, had attached himself to his batman rather than to him. NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 14 August and 18 August 1915; NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, diary entry, 21 April 1916; NAC, Harold Isidore Hellmuth Papers, Microfilm reel M-827, "Retrospection and Two War Diaries", p. 3.

Creelman punitive. Papineau was quite fond of his servant, Blatchford, and was obviously concerned when he was sentenced (along with another soldier) to a year's imprisonment for an unidentified offence:

I am trying to get the sentence suspended. Saw them the other day and we all almost wept together. Very sorry for the d-- rascals. Feel like punching them - told Blatchford I would "knock the face off him" when I got the chance. Confound them I am angry but sorry.²⁴

MacIntyre, on the other hand, was not concerned about his batman's sentence of fourteen days Field Punishment Number One for drunkenness. A replacement batman was so efficient that MacIntyre took the "priceless opportunity" to get rid of his former servant.²⁵ In contrast to both Papineau and MacIntyre, Creelman was pitiless. Perhaps because his feather bed had been well and truly soaked by his drunk servant, he had little compunction about having him arrested. A subsequent batman also got drunk, and this time let a stove smoke for four hours in Creelman's hut, thereby changing Creelman's khaki greatcoat into a "black Persian lamb coat". More than a year later, Creelman gave a third batman twenty-eight days Field Punishment Number One for drunkenness:

²⁴NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 11 November 1916. Papineau did indeed manage to have Blatchford's sentence suspended. Nine days later he wrote that his "faithful rascal" was back with him. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 20 November 1916.

²⁵NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, diary entries, 26 February 1916 and 2 March 1916.

At present he is out in the sun, tied up with his back to a cart-wheel. He gets this for two hours each day during the period of his punishment. My usual custom is to give 14 days for the first drunk, 28 for the second and any further cases are referred to Court Martial.²⁶

The officers were also called upon to deal with a variety of other problems directly related to their batmen. "Jackson", MacIntyre's batman for eighteen months, disappeared from his billet without explanation. His body was found a month later: he had apparently committed suicide with MacIntyre's revolver. MacIntyre was surprised but not overwhelmingly upset: his concern lay more with the need to find a new and satisfactory batman.²⁷ Major Hellmuth's problem was slightly different and far less tragic. His batman had fallen in love with a French girl, "Mademoiselle Irene", and her mother requested that Hellmuth supply character references for the batman. In addition, Hellmuth had to "wine and dine" the priest who had accepted to marry the couple: during the dinner Hellmuth managed to reduce the priest's wedding fee from 300 francs to twenty-five francs, two cans of bully beef, a sack of beans and five packages of

²⁶NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, diary entries, 1 November 1914, 1 January 1915 and 31 July 1916.

²⁷NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, diary entries, 15 May 1917 and 30 June 1917. After Jackson's "disappearance", MacIntyre tried eight different batmen before he finally found a "good one". *Ibid.*, diary entry, 19 July 1917.

cigarettes.²⁸ Other problems associated with the batmen of these officers were illness, injuries, death and discharge.²⁹

Thus far two of the officers, Woodside and Adamson, have been omitted from the study. The reason for this is that their particular comments about batmen came closest to what may be perceived as a civilian master-servant relationship. In contrast with the other six officers, Woodside and Adamson seem to have been the most comfortable with their batmen and the batmen, in turn, seem to have been the most at ease with their status as military servants.

Woodside's servant, "Gagnon", had originally been a steward at the Laurentian Club.³⁰ Woodside was very happy with his efficiency and evidently pleased with his loyalty: Gagnon had described him as the "tallest and finest looking

²⁸NAC, Harold Isidore Hellmuth Papers, "Retrospection and Two War Diaries", pp. 46, 53, 55-56.

²⁹Lieutenant Williams instructed his family to see that his discharged batman got "fixed all right with a job" upon his return to Canada. NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, Lt. Williams to mother, 14 October 1916. A number of batmen injured themselves with their officers' revolvers: Major Papineau was brought before Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson for allowing his batman to clean his revolver without first having unloaded it himself. The batman shot another while unloading it. NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 9, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 16 August 1917. Lieutenant Sinclair's batman "Doncaster" wounded himself in the hand while cleaning Sinclair's revolver. Doncaster managed to stay on duty, so Sinclair was not brought up for court martial. NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 432, diary entry, 21 December 1915.

³⁰He had obviously been highly regarded at the Club as, upon his enlisting in the forces, the members gave him a gift of \$80.00. NAC, Henry Joseph Woodside Papers, vol. 16, Maj. Woodside to wife, 1 September 1914.

officer in the battalion."³¹ In addition, Gagnon was presentable enough to accompany Woodside on leave to London:

I took Gagnon along on this trip instead of giving him so much money for his services for Sept. and Oct. He wanted to go very much. He travelled 3rd class. ... we walked to the Strand Palace Hotel and got a room with two beds in it for \$3 per day including our breakfast. Gagnon got his other 2 meals where he liked.³²

Note that officer and batman both stayed in the same hotel (and the same room): this would have permitted Gagnon to continue his duties as batman, in much the same fashion as a civilian valet.

Gagnon left Woodside's service in early 1915, and before departing for France sent his officer a "very nice letter of thanks".³³ Thereafter, Woodside had "Gaudreau" as a batman, a "very faithful man" whose only fault was his inability to read English.³⁴ He was as punctilious as Gagnon had been in upholding his officer's reputation:

I was somewhat amused, when he [Gaudreau] admitted slapping one of the men's face [sic] for saying something against me. He said "dat man makes me so angry I slap

³¹Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 29 November 1914.

³²Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 8 November 1914.

³³Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 15 February 1915. Woodside had on a number of occasions deposited money in a bank for Gagnon and another soldier. Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 4 April 1915.

³⁴Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 24 March 1915 and 11 April 1915.

his face". He was not punished for it.³⁵

Gaudreau, like his predecessor, clearly exceeded his military mandate in that his activities more closely resembled those of a civilian servant. His constant queries to Woodside ("now is der anyting [sic] I can get for you")³⁶ call to mind a fussy family retainer, who has a personal interest in his employer's well-being and happiness.

Gaudreau's counterpart in the service of Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson was "Hance". At least thirty-one references to Hance were made in Adamson's voluminous correspondence to his wife Mabel. No other batman in all the archival material received such attention; nor did any other come closest to the position of professional valet/servant:

Hance is wonderful ... bullies me into wearing the proper things, and eating at the right time, and insists upon my cleaning my teeth 3 times a day, soaking my feet in ointment, changing my underclothes, breaking in new boots, hiding my flask, and denying that there is anything in it, drinking rum before I go to bed and not again until that time arrives, and he has gone so far as to constantly enquire as to the exact state of my bowels, and I can no more avoid giving him a direct answer than I can you when you are bent upon diagonalizing [sic] the case.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 24 March 1915.

³⁶Ibid., Maj. Woodside to wife, 9 June 1915.

³⁷NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1915. In the same letter, Adamson wrote that Hance had served as servant with Papineau, but that he had been unhappy. Hance was
(continued...)

Adamson kept his wife extremely well informed of Hance's activities and experiences (Mabel was living in London, England at the time). His rheumatism, his broken rib and his hospitalisation were all discussed, as were his various "mistakes", such as filling Adamson's washbasin with rum instead of water.³⁸ Hance's lack of a macintosh prompted Adamson to ask Mabel to purchase a new one for him: Mabel must have had an eye for quality, as the waterproof she bought and sent to France was deemed by Adamson to be too good for Hance.³⁹ Mabel was also asked to lend Hance her car when he came to London on leave, so that he could take his family for an outing.⁴⁰ The long-suffering Mabel was further commissioned to buy Hance a watch, as he had smashed the one Adamson (or Mabel) had given him earlier.⁴¹

³⁷(...continued)

originally with the Kings' Royal Rifles, and was well known to the older officers of the KRR who "greet him as a friend." Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 25 February 1916.

³⁹"I rather fancy poor Hance will have to wear my old one." Ibid., vol. 3, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 October 1915. In a subsequent letter it was confirmed that Hance indeed was given Adamson's old coat rather than the new one. Ibid., vol. 3, 21 October 1915.

⁴⁰Ibid., vol. 3, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 28 October 1915. Mabel might not have been too enthusiastic about the idea as Adamson wrote that he would be "much obliged" if she could arrange it and that she was to remember that Hance was "most faithful" to him. Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., vol. 3, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 20 December 1915.

Adamson wrote of many more incidents: Hance's refusal of promotion, his replacement by other batmen during hospitalisation, his occasional "fibs" and his souvenir-hunting expeditions. Adamson's high regard for Hance as an individual as well as a servant was evident throughout all his correspondence. However, it is interesting to note that he also made several remarks about servants in general, a fact which suggests that he had given the subject some thought.

Adamson never referred to Hance as his batman: Hance, as well as subsequent batmen, was always his "servant". Adamson was clearly quite comfortable with the idea of having personal servants (in the army as well as in civilian life), but he was sometimes perplexed by their mentalities. Irritation with Hance over the smashed watch incident (Hance was reluctant to tell him that it had been broken) led Adamson to declare that the "workings of the mind of a really good servant will never be thoroughly understood this side of the grave."⁴² A short while later, he wrote that men were indeed "awful fools" but that this trait was "most highly developed in the servant class."⁴³ This opinion perhaps led Adamson to treat his servants in a manner which his wife deplored:

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid., vol. 4, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 12 February 1916.

I am rather pleased to hear that, notwithstanding my brutal bullying way of treating servants, as you always accuse me of, that Hance still remains faithful. Someday perhaps we shall understand each other.⁴⁴

Military servants, however, required a "special individuality":⁴⁵ Hance was perhaps such a success in his job with Adamson because he combined an unwavering devotion with an independent spirit.

The preceding study of the personal records of eight specific officers support the two conclusions suggested at the beginning of this chapter. First, Canadian officers considered the batman a natural and justifiable prerogative of their rank. The average officer had no difficulty adjusting to the presence of a personal servant and, in some cases such as Woodside and Adamson, the officer-batman relationship resembled that of a civilian master-valet. Second, the job of batman was not particularly resented by those who held it; there was, after all, no mention of willful insubordination by batmen in any of the material. Many batmen enjoyed warm and interesting relationships with their officers and treated their duties with a touching sense

⁴⁴Ibid., vol. 3, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 6 November 1915. Hance had just returned from leave in London, where he had taken the opportunity to visit Mabel. He had apparently given Mabel a glowing report of his "employer".

⁴⁵Ibid., vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1915.

of responsibility.⁴⁶

However, these conclusions are based exclusively on officers' testimonies. How accurate are they, especially the second point, if one examines the published and archival material of the other ranks?

Despite Lieutenant Baldwin's claim that the batman's job was "much in demand",⁴⁷ there is some doubt whether or not it was actually considered desirable. In terms of food, drink and material comfort, the job might well have been worth it: batmen had access to officers' chits which allowed them to sign (i.e. forge an officer's signature) for all manner of foodstuffs at canteens.⁴⁸ The same chits could be used to purchase whisky, a drink which was otherwise denied the other ranks.⁴⁹ A batman was also privy to his officer's generosity with parcels and other goods (i.e. socks); as well, he had unlimited access to his officer's personal belongings, a

⁴⁶See for instance Private Bywell's letter to Lt.-Col. Robert Leckie in which he described his experiences since being wounded: "I hope I haven't left you in a fix at all. All your stuff was together on the Wagon so I hope it is alright." NAC, Robert Gilmour Edwards Leckie Papers, MG 30, E 84, Pte. C. Bywell to Lt.-Col. Leckie, 24 May 1915.

⁴⁷NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 18 May 1918. However, see Hugh R. Kay, George Magee and F. A. MacLennan, Battery Action! The Story of the 43rd Battery CFA (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter, [1919]), pp. 180-182, for a humorous description of an officer's hunt for a batman.

⁴⁸Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), p. 265.

⁴⁹James L. McWilliams and R. James Steel, The Suicide Battalion (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1978), p. 50. See also NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 15, diary entry, 1 July 1918.

situation which suited the individual with a felonious streak.⁵⁰ In certain cases, the batman and his officer could enjoy escapades together:

Shipton comes in ... tells me how he was made batman by Mr. Davidson in Otterpool, went down with him to Div H.Q. at St. Martin's Plains, wandered about & had refreshment with him, went to the Stationery Hut & each did their share of pinching, got a motor car back to camp which broke down on the way and as Mr. Davidson's money was spent he had to pay for the car.⁵¹

Finally, batmen did not ordinarily have to worry about fighting: only in extreme cases were they sent "over the bags".

The men who wrote in a negative fashion about batmen and their jobs were few indeed. Private Kerr was perhaps the most censorious:

Personal service to an officer was considered degrading; batmen (officers' servants) lost caste among their comrades and were regarded as having sold their birthright, their manhood. The assertion, "There isn't an officer in any army I would be batman to" never failed to evoke hearty approval ...⁵²

⁵⁰See for instance Lieutenant Lighthall, whose "apple-cheeked Welsh batman" liberated a great deal of his belongings and sold them. NAC, William S. Lighthall Papers, typed MS, "Grandfather's War", p. 136.

⁵¹NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 9, diary entry, 26 November 1916.

⁵²Wilfred Brenton Kerr, "Shrieks and Crashes" being Memories of Canada's Corps 1917 (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1929), p. 137. See also James H. Pedley who referred to this in a more reasonable tone: "it was ... considered a bit infra (continued...)"

Corporal Bird was not enamoured of batmen and their "kind": in his unit a particular batman, "The Rat", was suspected of having stolen a supply of scarce water with which to provide his officer with a bath.⁵³ Certainly the fact that batmen avoided a lot of the dirty work (including the fighting) rankled with some soldiers. One corporal of the PPCLI welcomed the emergency which called for every able-bodied man, including the batmen, to grab a rifle:

... even those wasteful luxuries, the petted officers' servants were amongst us, doing fighting duty for the first time, so that we almost welcomed the desperate occasion which furnished so rare and sweet a sight.⁵⁴

Private Kerr's claim that batmen had "lost caste among their comrades" and "sold their manhood" was exaggerated. However, it was an interesting statement, especially when contrasted with the following by Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson:

... Div. H.Q. have taken almost 40 of our special men for H.Q. duties, even to servants and grooms to the General himself. The last thing I thought

⁵²(...continued)

dignitatem by the rankers to want a batman's job." Only This (Ottawa: Graphic, 1927), p. 181.

⁵³Will R. Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1968), p. 118. See also Private Rigsby, who bemoaned the fact that the signal officer's batman had brought him water for a wash and then had thrown it out. In times of scarce water (especially when it had to be brought in on mules) this was greatly resented. NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, MG 30, E 111, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 11 April 1918.

⁵⁴George Pearson, The Escape of a Princess Pat (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1918), p. 20.

Canadians understood was being servants
 ...⁵⁵

Did Canadian soldiers really "understand" how to be servants, or was this misguided thinking on Adamson's part? How did the average Canadian ranker reconcile his "democratic" inclinations with the job of military servant?

As mentioned earlier, only two soldiers from the archival material had served as batmen (one as a temporary replacement).⁵⁶ Neither of them had anything in particular to say about the experience except for a straight-forward account of duties performed.⁵⁷ Also, they were both relatively positive about the officers they encountered during their military service. Based on these two records it would be hard to conclude that they had found the batman's position undignified, humiliating or "undemocratic".

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that some of the batmen were intellectually inferior to the rest of their brothers-in-arms.⁵⁸ This would partly account for the absence

⁵⁵NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1915.

⁵⁶NAC, John Merritt Johnson Papers, MG 30, E 429; NAC, F. Lacey Papers, MG 30, E 438.

⁵⁷NAC, F. Lacey Papers, book 5, diary entries, 22 February and 23 February 1918.

⁵⁸It was certainly noticeable when a batman who was more intelligent than the average cropped up: "He is really too intelligent a person to spend his time cleaning belts and shoes, etc., but does all his work perfectly." O. C. S. Wallace, ed., From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond, p. 116. See also Pedley, Only This, p. 180, for "Louis Morin" who was
 (continued...)

of written comment from many soldiers who had served as batmen. Officers have certainly not been silent on his point: one of the best descriptions of "dim-witted" batmen came from Colonel Nasmith, quoting some talk in an officers' mess:

"It beats hell," fussed the Colonel, "how ignorant that boy [a batman] is; he hasn't a single ray of intelligence; he carries on just like a trained monkey; he never thinks, never."

"Yes, he does," contradicted the Captain ... I actually saw him thinking yesterday; I could almost see the wheels going around; in fact, I imagined I could hear them grating, so seldom had they been used. It was really one of the most fascinating things I ever saw ..."

"It was a marvel," said the Doctor. "I have always classed Rawson as belonging to the palaeolithic age and imagined the missing link to have about the same brain capacity as he has ..."⁵⁹

Also, one has only to observe the number of officer-authors who used slang or colloquial accents to portray their batmen's speech: while the officers invariably spoke the "King's English" the batmen always responded with "dunno",

⁵⁸(...continued)

"too good to slave all his days over an officer's boots"; and Lt. Harold Warnica Price for "Hunter" who, "unlike most batmen", had "brains". Brereton Greenhous, ed., A Rattle of Pebbles: The First World War Diaries of Two Canadian Airmen, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Monograph No. 4 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987), p. 175.

⁵⁹Nasmith, On the Fringe of the Great Fight, p. 213.

"ain't", "we was", etc.⁶⁰ This suggests that many officers perceived their batmen as socially and intellectually different, or to put it more bluntly, as members of a lower class.

Both the officers' and other ranks' published and unpublished material support the two principal conclusions about Canadian batmen: that they were considered an officer's automatic privilege and that the average Canadian soldier (with only a few exceptions) had little to say about them. For the officer, the batman represented comfort, freedom from cleaning, cooking and polishing and, in many cases, friendship.⁶¹ For the private soldier (batman), it is more difficult to say. The job brought some material advantages and also some spiritual ones. It would be absurd

⁶⁰See for example F. McKelvey Bell, The Canadians in France (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), pp. 47-49 and pp. 128-130 for "Tim", an Irishman who had emigrated to Canada; also Ibid., pp. 14-15 for "Wilson", "a slow lad, slow in speech, slower in action"; Ralph W. Bell, Canada in War-Paint, pp. 61-62 for "Cozens" and pp. 64, 65-66 for two other batmen; Nasmith, On the Fringe of the Great Fight, pp. 211-214 for "Rawson" and "Bittleson". This is also borne out by Private Johnson, a soldier/batman who certainly was not fluently literate: "We have a fine bunch of Officers in our Batt, believe me. I just here [sic] them calling me so I expect I will have to go, I will keep on till they come in the tent, now they have went [sic] by so I will be clear." NAC, John Merritt Johnson Papers, Pte. Johnson to parents, 12 September 1916.

⁶¹Lt.-Col. Adamson apparently suggested that a new toast be added to formal mess functions after the war--to the officer's servant. Hamilton Gault, founder of the PPCLI, thought this very appropriate, as a "good one on service is worth his weight in gold." NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 10, Hamilton Gault to Lt.-Col. Adamson, 5 January 1919.

to conclude that batmen never enjoyed their officers' friendship and confidence: a close affection between the two often extended into peace-time years.⁶²

If serving as a batman was considered "degrading", the practise of military compliments--saluting--was perceived by some men as even more so. It will never be known which culture or society first devised the salute as a means of distinguishing military leaders from followers. However, the salute rapidly became an integral part of military etiquette and discipline in most societies, and the Canadian forces were no exception.⁶³

It has generally been assumed that Canadian soldiers did not look upon the salute with any marked enthusiasm.⁶⁴ The standard interpretation of their reluctance to salute officers derives from the supposed "democratic" nature of Canadian

⁶²For instance, thirteen years after the war, Capt. R. J. Manion paid thirty dollars to release his ex-batman from gaol. Life is an Adventure, pp. 203-204.

⁶³The history of saluting and its variations merits an independent study. A fascinating explanation of the French Army's open-palm salutes may be found in NAC, Harold Isidore Hellmuth Papers, "Retrospection and Two War Diaries", p. 49: "... in the old days many [French] soldiers did not like their officers and ... saluting offered the opportunity of close proximity; how easy it was then in merely raising the hand as a token of respect to conceal a knife or dagger, and with the downward movement to stab the officer to death. With the open hand, a knife was harder to conceal."

⁶⁴A typical remark to this effect was Nasmith, On the Fringe of the Great Fight, p. 80: "Canadians have never been overfond of saluting officers."

society in the pre-war years.⁶⁵ True or not, saluting was a frequent point of discussion in many soldiers' personal papers and correspondence.

One of the historiographical fabrications about Canadians and saluting should be dispelled at once. Based on their written legacy, it is difficult to justify the contention that all Canadian soldiers were reluctant or refused to salute officers. There is no doubt that the majority of Canadian officers were indeed saluted by their men, although perhaps in a slightly less punctilious manner than that prescribed by the drill book. As a pre-war directive for "Young Soldiers" illustrates, saluting was certainly not new to the Canadian military tradition:

Soldiers must always be on the look-out to render the proper mark of respect to their superiors. They will salute at all times and places all Officers, to whatever branch of the service they may belong, whether dressed in uniform or not, when they know them to be Officers.⁶⁶

Saluting was nonetheless a somewhat novel activity for

⁶⁵See for instance Arthur R. M. Lower, Canadians in the Making (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958), p. 403.

⁶⁶NAC, William B. Converse Papers, MG 29, E 83, "Rules for the Guidance of Young Soldiers", Infantry School, St. Johns, Quebec, s.d. At least half of the "Rules" dealt with saluting: fourteen different situations for saluting officers were described. Men joining the 5th Canadian Mounted Rifles just after the South African War received leaflets on "Instructions, When and How to Salute". See NAC, Archibald Cameron Macdonell Papers, MG 30, E 20, file 1, MS, biography of Lt.-Gen. Sir Archibald Cameron Macdonell by A. E. Kennedy-Cavefoot, p. 83.

civilians who had had no previous military experience. Initial parancia (and perhaps fear) led many novice soldiers to salute junior and senior NCOs, doormen and Salvation Army officers.⁶⁷ Gunner Morison's brother Keith, out of nervousness or awkwardness, badly fumbled his first attempts at saluting: he dropped his newspaper and other items as he saluted and was then "put out" by the officer's amused grin.⁶⁸ Soldiers quickly learnt that compliments to officers were not paid in the trenches, nor were they presented to officers (even General Currie) who appeared without their Sam Brownes.⁶⁹ Of course, with a little skillful dodging the whole business could be avoided entirely, although this risked a reprimand (or worse) if the soldier was caught.

While the majority of soldiers seem to have resigned themselves to saluting whenever and wherever strictly necessary, many officers clearly enjoyed the ritual. This

⁶⁷NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, MG 30, E 389, revised diary entry, p. 167; Leslie M. Frost, Fighting Men (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1967), p. 84; NAC, Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, MG 30, E 379, typed MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 3. It has been suggested that many Canadian soldiers saluted civilians wearing gold braid out of sheer deviltry, but this has not been substantiated by any of the archival material. It is difficult to imagine soldiers wasting energy saluting when it was not strictly necessary.

⁶⁸NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 1, diary entry, 2 June 1915. This did not stop Gunner Morison from "dutifully" saluting all officers he met on a jaunt a year later in Armentieres. Ibid., book 5, diary entry, 24 February 1916.

⁶⁹NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 12 March 1918.

was most apparent in the cases of officers commissioned from the ranks. In no less than four cases, ex-rankers recorded their delight in being able to return soldiers' salutes. Was this due to a perverse (but understandable) pleasure in having the tables turned, or was this a reflection of their desire to be respected and admired?

... when I came out in full uniform on the Strand I had to acknowledge & return the salutes of hundreds of Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, Imperials, etc. Some change. However, you know I am very conceited & that I believe carried me through.⁷⁰

On the other hand, as in the case of Lieutenant Wells, commissioned from the rank of sergeant, sheer relief in being back in the company of "gentlemen" and being able to wear "comfortable underwear" again only sweetened the pleasure of "returning many salutes".⁷¹

Some officers who had been commissioned from the beginning of their military service were also enthralled by the process of saluting. Gunner Morison sensed that his unit's paymaster always enjoyed having the men salute him after they had received their fifteen francs: what else

⁷⁰NAC, William George Barker Papers, Lt. Barker to mother, 25 April 1916. See also NAC, William S. Lighthall Papers, "Grandfather's War", p. 55; and [Armine Norris], "Mainly for Mother" (Toronto: Ryerson, [1920]), pp. 147-148.

⁷¹Wallace, From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond, pp. 63-65.

could account for the "twinkle" at the "back of his eye"?⁷²
 Major Papineau unabashedly confessed his delight in riding
 with a mounted escort and acknowledging salutes:

Do I seem important! I try not to feel
 so but when we meet soldiers and officers
 at every step and I return salutes now
 left now right can you not excuse a
 certain exhilaration! [sic]⁷³

It was of course only natural for Canadian officers to have
 responded in this fashion. "Democratic" principles aside,
 human beings have always enjoyed having their vanity appealed
 to, and one must certainly not look askance at those who have
 had the grace to admit it.

In the event that the soldier failed to salute at the
 prescribed time and place, there was a well-defined mechanism
 for ensuring that it did not go unnoticed and unpunished. A
 soldier might be "pulled up" and reprimanded for not
 saluting, or, depending on the individuals involved, he might
 be disciplined accordingly. Private Graham, 26th Battalion,
 unfortunately neglected to salute Major-General Turner, an
 omission which cost him twenty-eight days Field Punishment
 Number One.⁷⁴ Other men received lesser sentences: ten days

⁷²NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 7, diary entry, 21
 August 1916.

⁷³NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, vol. 1, Maj.
 Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 11 May 1916.

⁷⁴It is believed that Private Graham was not quite sober
 on this occasion as he was also charged with drunkenness at
 the same time. NAC, Gordon G. K. Holder Papers, MG 30, E 203,
 vol. 2, 26th Battalion Daily Orders, No. 10, 27 November 1915.
 (continued...)

Field Punishment Number Two for not paying proper compliments to the Assistant Provost Marshal, Second Canadian Division, and only five days Field Punishment Number Two for not saluting a regular officer.⁷⁵

A perceived slackness in saluting especially in the last year of the war resulted in constant reminders being published in battalion orders. During a period of no less than three months there were four reminders printed in the 26th Battalion's Orders about saluting: one referred to French officers and another to the Corps Commander:

It is notified for information that the Motor Car of the Corps Commander, Canadian Corps, now carries a Blue Canadian Ensign, which is flown from the left side near the mudguard. ... The Corps Commander's Motor Car is a Rolls-Royce, with a dark brown limousine body.⁷⁶

In addition, men on parade were read directives ("harangues") from various general officers, "calling for instruction [and] practise in the art and strict observance of saluting."⁷⁷

⁷⁴(...continued)

Note that Private Gormley received the same punishment (28 days Field Punishment No. 1) for stabbing an NCO and "causing bodily harm". Ibid., 26th Battalion Daily Orders, 31 July 1916.

⁷⁵Ibid., 26th Battalion Daily Orders, No. 14, 31 March 1916; 26th Battalion Daily Orders, No. 15, 7 April 1916.

⁷⁶Ibid., vol. 4, 26th Battalion Daily Orders, 16 March 1918. To further complicate matters the next day's Orders amended the brown Rolls-Royce to a blue Rolls-Royce. Ibid., 26th Battalion Daily Orders, 17 March 1918.

⁷⁷NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 15, diary entry, 26 July 1918.

These were invariably followed by saluting drills and parades: Gunner Morison's unit participated in at least one such exercise, parading singly before their Colonel and saluting him.⁷⁸ After the Armistice, efforts to enforce saluting were intensified; and at one time the Canadian general staff threatened to curtail passes into Cologne should saluting not be rigorously practised.⁷⁹

It is around this preceding discussion that a whole ethos about Canadians and saluting has arisen. Because the complaints about Canadian soldiers not saluting were so much more vocal than the silence of compliance, they have been elevated from specific incidents of neglect or disobedience to a general military tradition. The generalisation of British soldiers saluting more assiduously due to an inherent class-based deference is as ill-founded as that of the Canadian soldier refusing to salute because it violated his "democratic" inclinations.⁸⁰ Gunner Morison, it should be

⁷⁸The Colonel, however, did not bother to return the salutes, a fact which undermined the "disciplinary" intent of these exercises. Ibid., book 17, diary entry, 16 November 1918.

⁷⁹NAC, Edward Whipple Bancroft Morrison Papers, MG 30, E 81, vol. 1, memo from Canadian Corps General Staff, 17 December 1918. Furthermore, the military police had been instructed to be "specially vigilant and to take the name of any soldier who does not pay proper respect to an officer." Ibid., vol. 1, memo to Canadian Corps from DAAG Canadian Corps, 29 December 1918.

⁸⁰Considering the eventual composition of the Great War British Army (i.e. enlisted volunteers and conscripts from all professions and occupations) it is hardly surprising that
(continued...)

noted, was never officially "pulled up" for not saluting; on the contrary, he seems to have been comparatively conscientious about paying compliments, despite a sincere lack of regard for many specific officers and officers in general.⁸¹ Although an educated, opinionated and highly independent man, Morison was apparently not averse to the principle of saluting and did not perceive it as an affront to his dignity.

In a similar vein, Corporal Bird's objections were not so much to saluting itself, but the manner in which it was enforced. He deplored the victimisation of men who inadvertently failed to salute an officer,⁸² and even more so, was disgusted at the circumstances which enabled an officer to belabour a soldier for not delivering an instantaneous, text-book salute:

[Corporal Bird, on leave in England, was walking and reading a book] ... I never saw him [the officer] until his rasping voice requested me to "Drop that damn

⁸⁰(...continued)
British soldiers also received "harangues" about saluting from their general staff. See Lyn Macdonald, Somme (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), p. 197.

⁸¹The following incident is of interest: "While talking to Tom an officer rides past. I see him coming & tell Tom to salute but he doesn't. The officer turns back & bawls us out for not saluting. Asks us if we are Canadians & why we dont [sic] salute. Tom says nothing so I say apologetically, "I'm afraid we are rather sloppy sir and dont [sic] salute as we should." He said he didnt [sic] want to be cranky about it and rode off." NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 6, diary entry, 18 May 1916.

⁸²Bird, Ghosts Have Warm Hands, p. 245.

book and salute an officer."

The book was thrust into my tunic pocket and I gave my snappiest salute. It was not good enough. ...

"As you were," came the rasping voice. "Three paces backward, march. Now then, try again. ... As you were, three paces backward, march. Try again, cut your hand away, my man, don't let it fall beside you." ...

Four times I had to pace backward, advance and salute that smirking monkey, a weak-chinned lieutenant, and then he dismissed me with the sharp warning to look out when I next met him. And he a Canadian, at least he wore Canadian badges!⁸³

This type of behaviour made it difficult for many soldiers to accept the notion that it was the rank, not the man, that they were saluting. (A problem by no means restricted to Canadians, it surely persists to this day in virtually all the armies of the western world.) A poem written by "Dubbin" and printed in The Listening Post addressed this difficulty in a humorous but acerbic tone; again, the argument was not against saluting itself, but rather against the lack of common humanity which so often seemed to surround its practice:

Some "Shuns"

...
 Brave men in command high respect do demand
 From the "ranks" in correct salutation,
 As is meet in inferiors when faced by superiors,
 To show their intense admiration.
 When the salute is given the private has striven
 To offer a true demonstration.
 The officer noting this hero love doting,
 Returns some sign of acception.

⁸³Bird, And We Go On, p. 142.

These acknowledgements vary and almost invariably fail to fulfil expectation.
 The "nose-pull"; the "ear-scratch"; the Staff's formal "cap-catch",
 Are original stunts in formation.
 There's the cane-flicking dude; there's the cad that is rude;
 There's the nervous one out on probation;
 There's the unpleasant churl who'll pick up and hurl
 His salute at you with indignation.⁸⁴

The role of saluting in maintaining good morale was probably more understood in the Second World War than it had been in the First.⁸⁵ Military psychology had not progressed sufficiently by 1914-1918 to allow both officers and men to recognise the value of saluting as a sign of mutual self-respect. While both parties misinterpreted its raison d'etre and abused its practice, it was in many cases turned into an inane, ridiculous exercise.

The question of saluting in the CEF was therefore far

⁸⁴The Listening Post, No. 20, 10 December 1916, p. 132, in NAC, Arthur Edward Ross Papers, MG 30, E 76, vol. 6. It should be noted that only one Canadian source calling for the abolition of saluting (except on parades) was found. See Stanley A. Rutledge, Pen Pictures from the Trenches (Toronto: William Briggs, 1918), pp. 138-139.

⁸⁵See for instance, Field Marshal the Viscount Slim, Defeat into Victory (New York: David McKay, 1961), pp. 166-167 and Lord Moran, The Anatomy of Courage (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), p. 64. James Brent Wilson touches briefly on this point in his unpublished M.A. thesis, "Morale and Discipline in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1918", University of New Brunswick, 1978, p. 12. John Baynes describes this succinctly in Morale: A Study of Men and Courage (London: Cassell, 1967), p. 94. It should be noted that the impact of saluting on self-respect was a point briefly raised in a lecture given at the Canadian Corps Officers' School, 21 July 1916. See NAC, Elmer Watson Jones Papers, MG 30, E 50, "The Duties and Responsibility of an Officer", p. 8.

from simple. Superficial statements to the effect that Canadians did not like saluting obscure an interesting and absorbing issue. Many years after the war, it still had the power to arouse emotions:

The general [Macdonell] was very jovial that morning, wanted to know what we were doing and if we had any complaints. ... Then, as an after thought, he turned, and asked, "Do you boys know who is shitting in these trenches?" There was a chorus of "No, Sirs". Then he confided "I think it must be the 2nd Pioneers; they never salute me", and moved on. Many years later, I had a good friend and neighbor who had been second in command of the 2nd Pioneers. When I told him this story, he reacted very badly, denied both charges and said they always saluted the old --
 ---.⁸⁶

Most Canadian soldiers, however, remembered their saluting activities with a shrug and a moue: a shrug because they had had little choice in the matter, and a moue for the often abused circumstances in which they had exercised it.

Somewhat less contentious than batmen or saluting was the issue of censorship. During the South African War Canadian soldiers had written many letters home to their families and friends. These letters were informative and no doubt entertaining, largely because their authors were

⁸⁶NAC, Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, typed MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I", p. 24. See NAC, Archibald Cameron Macdonell Papers, MS, biography of Lt.-Gen. Sir Archibald Cameron Macdonell by A. E. Kennedy-Cavefoot, pp. 164-165, for another interesting incident relating to saluting.

unhampered by censorship regulations.⁸⁷ At the beginning of the Great War, however, it was decided that soldiers' letters could be a valuable source of information to the "enemy" and, even more importantly, that they could have devastating effects on civilian morale and recruitment. This last argument particularly applied to Canadians: since they could not return home on leave (as the British, French and German troops could), their only means of communication was by letter. And, as the contents of their letters were censored, this meant that the "folks back home" received an edited, colourless bulletin of the war's progress.

It is surprising that the Canadian military bureaucracy did not create a special department or service to handle soldiers' personal correspondence. The letters were usually censored by a soldier's OC, his CO (rarely) or a collection of battalion officers. It was to some extent a fortunate arrangement, as it allowed for a certain amount of flexibility, especially in the case of junior officers who knew their men and could therefore exercise some discretion. On the other hand, many soldiers would have preferred to have had their letters read by unknown officers.

There is no doubt that soldiers were very aware of the censor when they composed their letters. Sapper Bradley and

⁸⁷Carman Miller, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Socio-economic Composition of South African War Contingents", Histoire sociale/Social History, VIII, No. 16 (November 1975), 368.

Gunner Morison both cited the censor as the reason for their letters being so bald and uninformative.⁸⁸ Private Rigsby was equally careful about his correspondence, as he didn't wish to displease "that very important personage, the Censor".⁸⁹ Some officers also realised that soldiers were often at a loss to write more extensively:

... it is hard for a lot of them to write, they seem to think there is nothing to write about when the censor, they think, is so strict (of course I am the censor here), so it discourages them.⁹⁰

The situation was aggravated by family and friends informing their soldier kin that their letters had been badly mutilated by the censor. This annoyed and infuriated some soldiers, but others took it in good humour:

So the censor was taking liberties with one of my letters eh? I guess I'll have to be carefull [sic] or I'll find myself in a bad fix. I can't remember what it could be that offended him so I guess you'll never know what that part of it was.⁹¹

⁸⁸NAC, Nicholas Garland Bradley Papers, MG 30, E 341, Sapper Bradley to sister, 29 November 1916; NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 3, diary entry, 21 September 1915.

⁸⁹NAC, Rigsby Family Papers, Pte. R. Walter Rigsby, diary entry, 2 March 1918.

⁹⁰NAC, Claude Vivian Williams Papers, Lt. Williams to father, 6 November 1916.

⁹¹NAC, Macfie Family Papers, MG 30, E 427, vol. 1, Pte. Donald Roy Macfie to Muriel, 15 February 1918. His brother. Pte. John McKenzie Macfie, might have had the same experience as he closed one letter with the hope that it would pass the censor. Ibid., vol. 1, Pte. John McKenzie Macfie to mother, (continued...)

On the other hand, some soldiers wrote with relative freedom, believing that the censors would delete whatever they found "offensive" anyway.⁹² This tactic worked in most cases, but men still risked being disciplined for deliberately trying to "deceive" the censor. Countless ploys were devised with which to circumvent the restrictions of censorship: elaborate (and some not so elaborate!) codes were developed between spouses or sons and parents by which means the soldiers' kin could keep in touch with their movements. This of course occasionally backfired:

Paraded at 11.15 am and brought up before the Colonel for writing a letter in England with the intention of deceiving the censors. Edith's letter No. 18. Case dismissed but warned.⁹³

What really curtailed a soldier's power of expression,

⁹¹(...continued)

26 April 1917. At least two of Pte. James Arthur Hare's letters were "very badly mutilated by the censor", as his brother informed him. NAC, William Archibald Hare Papers, MG 29, E 25, William Archibald Hare to Pte. James Archibald Hare, 28 July 1917. See also Gunner Morison, whose brother Keith had one particular letter "very heavily censored": Keith's opinions about how leave was distributed to soldiers obviously offended the censor! NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 12, diary entry, 4 August 1917.

⁹²Unknown Soldiers by One of Them (New York: Vantage Press, 1959), p. 66. Private Hare (an artilleryman) certainly didn't care: in a letter to his brother, he remarked on how easy it was to get out of parades and other unpleasant activities by letting "the horse step on your foot, when you are in the stall, it doesn't hurt much and you usually can work a couple of days out of it." NAC, William Archibald Hare Papers, Pte. Frederick Hare to William Archibald Hare, 18 February 1917.

⁹³NAC, William C. Morgan Papers, MG 30, E 488, diary entry, 30 June 1917.

however, was the fact that his own officers were usually his censors. The following remark was definitely not typical:

Dont be afraid to write any ting on your letters, because no body's reads them, they read mine, but I dont care, they dont know me.⁹⁴ [sic whole sentence]

The majority of soldiers felt compelled to adopt a more formal approach in their letters, a fact which many officers noted and remarked upon.⁹⁵ It was difficult (and embarrassing in some cases) for soldiers to write freely of their emotions and feelings when they knew that their letters would be scrutinised by their officers. A soldier's reticence was intensified by rumours that officers enjoyed reading the men's letters because they were so entertaining.⁹⁶

Officers all agreed that the job was a veritable chore, especially as it had to be done as often as time would permit.⁹⁷ Many a new officer was probably intrigued by the

⁹⁴NAC, Frank [Francis-Xavier] Maheux Papers, MG 30, E 297, Pte. Maheux to wife, 20 February 1916.

⁹⁵"... the ones to their respective girls invariably start off by remarking that they are "a little more formal than usual but that is only due to the strict censorship." NAC, Kenneth L. Duggan Papers, MG 30, E 304, Lt. Duggan to mother, 27 October 1915.

⁹⁶Although some officers have referred to them as "beautiful" and "remarkable", the majority of letters were dull: "The men talk of the weather and the food. They are always in the pink and hope their correspondent is the same, and please send socks." Pedley, Only This, p. 89.

⁹⁷"Billy", an anonymous lieutenant, wrote that censoring was "the bane of an officer's day" in More Letters from Billy (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), p. 109. Chaplains and medical officers did not escape the chore
(continued...)

idea of reading his men's correspondence, but the novelty no doubt quickly dissipated:

I now censor all their letters, a most boring proceeding as they're all alike except the ones that have to have bits cut out: they generally contain (a) good wishes for health of recipient & relatives (b) statement as to health of self (c) kind of journey (d) military reasons for secrecy and then a lot of crosses - when you wade through 80 of this type it grows monotonous.⁹⁸

However, virtually every officer who mentioned letter censoring in his own correspondence or private papers remarked on two things. First, the fact that many soldiers wrote sparse letters (perhaps only a few lines) did not prevent them from writing as often as possible. Second, many of these letters were actually quite amusing, for one reason or another.

Censorship did not normally affect the frequency with which soldiers wrote their letters. Virtually every soldier had someone at home to write to, and this of course, meant

⁹⁷(...continued)

either: Captain Davis noted ruefully in his diary that his medical staff kept him very busy as he had "to censor their letters which is a bother." NAC, Gustavus Mitchell Davis Papers, diary entry, 17 July 1915.

⁹⁸NAC, Herrick Stevenson Duggan Papers, MG 30, E 303, Lt. Duggan to mother, 1 June 1915. Two weeks later, the novelty had most certainly worn off. Duggan wrote that his spare time was absorbed by letter censoring: "... they fairly write reams & it keeps me busy I tell you." Ibid., 16 June 1915.

that many of the letters were not in English.⁹⁹ Some men were aware of officers' impatience with their voluminous correspondence:

Mr. Johnston says about the writing of letters that you can write all the love you like, but its a job for the censors to wade through.¹⁰⁰

Many soldiers were told to restrict their correspondence to a reasonable amount. A hospitalised soldier who had just received a packet of mail from home and who replied with eight letters the same day understandably incurred his medical officer's wrath.¹⁰¹ The situation was further aggravated by wives and parents complaining to commanding officers that their husbands or sons were not writing often

⁹⁹For instance, Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson had letters submitted to him for censoring in French, Bulgarian and Romanian. He ordered them translated before he would pass them. NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 19 February 1915.

¹⁰⁰NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 3, diary entry, 23 September 1915. See also Capt. Thomas Johnston who wrote that it was difficult for him to find the time to write his own people as he was so busy censoring. A "never tiring penchant for letter writing" on the part of his men meant that he signed his name on letters an average of 200 times a day over a 2 1/2 month period. NAC, Thomas Dalton Johnston Papers, Capt. Johnston to Geraldine, 25 January 1917.

¹⁰¹NAC, F. Lacey Papers, diary entry, 21 August 1916. See also Pte. John Johnson who on two occasions remarked that he did not want to trouble the censor by writing too many letters. NAC, John Merritt Johnson Papers, Pte. Johnson to parents, 16 April 1917 and to mother, 23 September, 1917. There was also a problem with lengthy letters, as Armine Norris told his mother. [Armine Norris], "Mainly for Mother" (Toronto: Ryerson, [1920]), pp. 34, 55.

enough.¹⁰²

Many of the officers thought the letters were "excruciatingly funny".¹⁰³ One source of amusement was the amount of "hot air" which soldiers frequently included in their letters. The temptation to exaggerate and embroider was strong: realising that kin and friends at home were eager for details (the gorier the better) many soldiers willingly obliged, and this led some officers to curse, but many others to laugh:

... when censoring a letter written by the batman for our hut A.M. Spencer, I could not help but smile as I read something like this: "Last night old Fritz dropped a bomb right at the door of our dug out. Thank God, I am unhurt, but I ain't half deaf."¹⁰⁴

Another perhaps more frequent source of amusement was the amorous missives which the "Don Juans" were wont to send to their wives and sundry lady acquaintances. There were numerous instances in which men sent the same letter but with

¹⁰²See for instance NAC, John Jennings Creelman Papers, diary entry, 26 March 1915, and J. A. Currie, "The Red Watch", with the First Canadian Division in Flanders (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1916), p. 178.

¹⁰³NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, diary entry, 22 February 1915.

¹⁰⁴DHIST, George Southern Bond Fuller Papers, "We Couldn't All be Aces", p. 116. (The bomb probably landed at some distance from the batman's dugout.) See also William D. Mathieson, My Grandfather's War (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), p. 74; and especially Herbert Rae, Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), pp. 111-112, for an example of the "morbid liar".

different addresses and salutations.¹⁰⁵ This practice led at least one officer to intervene on behalf of the ladies involved.¹⁰⁶

However, officers were certainly not amused at some of the letters' contents, especially when they included subtle (and some not so subtle) suggestions that the writer should be promoted.¹⁰⁷ Even less welcome were insulting remarks about particular officers being "very stupid" or "very ignorant", or defamatory comments about officers stealing money from soldiers' letters.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, officers were sometimes gratified by what they read about themselves. Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson was cheered by one of his men's descriptions of him as a "dear, good, fat old man who crawls about in the trenches like a porpus [sic] and speaks to us like real men."¹⁰⁹ Gratification could change to sheer astonishment very quickly: one officer was amazed (and a little outraged) to find that he had been married during his

¹⁰⁵Keene, "Crumps": The Plain Story of a Canadian who Went, p. 72; Currie, "The Red Watch", pp. 177-178; NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, diary entry, 22 February 1915.

¹⁰⁶See this incident in Manion, A Surgeon in Arms, pp. 149-151.

¹⁰⁷Frederic C. Curry, From the St. Lawrence to the Yser (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1916), p. 114.

¹⁰⁸Keene, "Crumps", p. 72; Rae, Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields, p. 113.

¹⁰⁹NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1915.

last leave.¹¹⁰

This form of unofficial communication between soldier and officer had its advantages. It allowed a soldier to discreetly express his pleasure or displeasure with a specific officer (or officers in general) without compromising military etiquette. A subtle hint, carefully worded, could be inserted into a letter with little or no harm done to the man or officer.¹¹¹ The system also acted as a barometer of a unit's or individual's morale: a man's spirit and attitude were easily plumbed from his correspondence.¹¹²

There were ways by which a soldier could avoid having his correspondence censored by his own officers. Field

¹¹⁰"While censoring the mail on my return from leave I noticed that the general consensus of opinion among the battery drivers as to why I got an extension of leave was to get married! One of them wrote "Our captain (sic) [sic] has just returned from a well earned rest during which he got married to a very nice girl belonging to a country family." I don't mind them marrying me off to some indefinite female but when they get down to describing the wretched girl that is too entirely a personal matter." NAC, George Loranger Magann Papers, MG 30, E 352, vol. 2, Lt. Magann to mother, 2 May 1916.

¹¹¹See for instance NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1915, in which Adamson quoted from a soldier's letter. The letter suggested that the PPCLI's officers had improved: "I have only begun to realize what an officer's feelings must be if he is the Right kind, and all our officers now are."

¹¹²See NAC, Harold Vernon Ardagh Papers, MG 30, E 150, diary entry, 29 January 1919, and Shrive, ed., The Diary of a P.B.O., p. 75. See also NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, diary entry, 25 December 1917: O'Brien mentioned that the "boys" had genuinely enjoyed their Christmas dinner and that this was confirmed by the subsequent letters they wrote.

service post cards could be sent with absolute freedom, as they contained only a few stock sentences (whether the man was well, sick, wounded, hospitalised, whether he had received any letters or parcels recently, etc.). The soldier would simply score out any irrelevant items. Also, "green envelopes" were designed to permit greater intimacy of expression since their contents were not censored by battalion officers. They were certainly subject to censorship at Base, where inappropriate remarks were caught and reported.¹¹³ The best way, however, to avoid all censorship was to establish an 'arrangement' with one's officer:

He [Lieutenant Wilson] tells us to write our names inside the flap of the envelopes we put in and when he gets to know the fellows he will not bother to read them, as with the old fellows such as Morison whose letters home he never reads.¹¹⁴

¹¹³Sergeant Tambling's assessment of an officer as a "bloody silly ass" in one of his letters home (using a green envelope) resulted in his being reduced to the ranks. Quoted in Victor W. Wheeler, The 50th Battalion in No Man's Land (Calgary: Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, 1980), p. 70. An orderly at No. 3 Canadian General Hospital reported being issued with two green envelopes per month. However, he managed to buy extras at half a franc each from an English soldier. Anna Chapin Ray, ed., Letters of a Canadian Stretcher Bearer (by R. A. L.) (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918), pp. 37, 47.

¹¹⁴NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 15, diary entry, 15 May 1918. This news was received with some suspicion by Gunner Morison and his brother Keith, who reminded him that another officer had suggested the same arrangement but still managed to joke about the contents of some men's letters. Ibid. This arrangement was also common in the RFC. See (continued...)

If both parties honoured this agreement it reduced the officer's workload and also eased the soldier's timidity and frustration.

Soldiers occasionally expressed their dissatisfaction with a particular officer's censorship.¹¹⁵ Although no self-respecting officer would jeopardise his men's confidence by revealing private information from their letters, the odd item certainly was exposed: as Lieutenant Clements put it, "once in a while a real gem came along" and the censors therefore "could be pardoned if they briefly shared the thoughts expressed before passing the contents forward."¹¹⁶ Men had to rely on their officers' discretion, no simple task if there was the slightest animosity between the two. Certainly, some officers felt like "burglars" when reading intimate letters to wives and girlfriends.¹¹⁷ Also, officers probably found it difficult at times to forget private information garnered from these letters: it would have been an effort not to inadvertently reveal any details in the

¹¹⁴(...continued)

DHIST, George Southern Bond Fuller Papers, "We Couldn't All be Aces", p. 117.

¹¹⁵NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 8, diary entry, 19 September 1916.

¹¹⁶NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, MG 30, E 156, typed MS, "Merry Hell, The Way I Saw It", p. 275. "Now and then one of the officers reads a particularly gross passage for the edification of the others. But that practice is frowned on by the older officers ..." Pedley, Only This, p. 89.

¹¹⁷NAC, Duncan Eberts MacIntyre Papers, vol. 1, diary entry, 24 September 1915.

presence of the men or the officers.

It can not be denied that through censoring many officers gained a better appreciation of the characters and personalities of the men under their command:

We plumbed all manner of hidden depths in the reading of these letters, and by so doing obtained an understanding of our friends in the rank and file, which otherwise might have been denied us.¹¹⁸

Notwithstanding the invasion of privacy, the practise of military censorship was perhaps not as disturbing as one might consider today: despite a few murmurs of discontent most soldiers do not seem to have greatly resented it. In isolated cases it definitely worked in the soldier's (and sometimes his family's) favour. For example, one officer deliberately destroyed a bundle of letters from a deceased soldier's lover.¹¹⁹ Had the officer not been aware of his soldier's extra-marital affair (through his outgoing correspondence to the lady) then the widow's grief would certainly have been more acute. To some extent censorship also helped to bring man and officer closer together: this

¹¹⁸Rae, Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields, p. 114. "You can read love in the headings and the puckered lips which guide the pen." NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 17 February 1918.

¹¹⁹The soldier died of "flu" just before the Armistice, leaving a wife and six children in Canada. NAC, Alfred Savage Papers, MG 30, E 472, diary entry, 30 October 1918. This calls to mind an incident during the South African War in which some form of "censorship" was definitely practised: a deceased soldier's diary was "checked" by his officer before being sent home to his family in Canada. NAC, F. G. W. Floyd Papers, MG 29, E 85.

"sharing of privacy" in many cases strengthened the interest an officer had in his men.¹²⁰

Batmen, saluting and censorship were regular and essential features of Canadian military life, for both men and officers. The preceding discussion has shown that these three issues were of varying importance to soldiers, depending on their circumstances and their place in the military hierarchy. As regards batmen and saluting, the two most evocative of the three items, these had less negative impact on the other ranks than has been hitherto believed. As illustrated by the archival and published material, the other ranks were resigned to the necessity of providing officers with orderlies and according them the traditional signs of military respect. The same resignation applied to letter censorship: although it was clearly an unwelcome personal infringement it was nonetheless perceived as an unavoidable part of military life. The soiled and much-read letters of Canadian soldiers which now occupy the various archival repositories of the country prove that, for most men, censorship was merely an annoying fixture of modern war.

¹²⁰See Charles Carrington, Soldier From the Wars Returning (London: Hutchinson, 1965), pp. 159-160.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gunner W. R. Morison

Soldiers on active service were theoretically forbidden by King's Regulations to keep a diary.¹ Fortunately for historians, scores of Canadian soldiers ignored this edict and for one reason or the other kept a journal. It is difficult to ascertain what percentage of the 600,000-strong CEF maintained a regular diary: those now residing in the National Archives of Canada and in the various provincial archives probably represent only a fraction of the journals kept by serving soldiers.² This does not of course include published diaries; however, as historians have pointed out,

¹The purpose presumably was to avoid the enemy gaining valuable information from a lost, discarded or captured diary. There was some truth to this fear: for instance, Private Sinclair's brief diary (February - March 1915) was found by an NCO in the Saxon army on the battlefield of Frezenberg in May 1915, and later forwarded to Canada by a civilian in Germany. (Sinclair was a soldier in the 5th Battalion.) There were at least three items which would have interested (and amused) an "enemy" intelligence officer: Sinclair's references to the differences between officers' and men's accommodation (18 February 1915), officers' poor orienteering skills (22 February 1915), and the propensity of billeting officers to sample the "wine of the place" before arranging billets for the men (27 March 1915). National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Alexander Gibson Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 237, typed transcripts of Personal Diary.

²There must be many more lying in boxes of family memorabilia, which certainly risk being destroyed by an insensitive family member. One of the British war diaries examined by Jane Elisabeth Hewetson in her thesis ("Unofficial Records: A Study of Diaries with Special Reference to those kept by Soldiers on the Western Front during the First World War", unpublished MPhil dissertation, Loughborough University of Technology, 1983) was found in a Nottingham "junk shop"-a fate of too many valuable heritage documents.

published diaries and memoirs cannot be regarded with quite the same degree of reliability as unpublished material.³

What motivated a soldier to take up pencil and paper for purposes other than communicating with family and friends? Suggestions to the effect that diary keeping was a private activity, a means of alleviating boredom and tension, in an otherwise very public and ruthlessly impersonal world, perhaps explain some of the soldiers' and officers' interest in journals.⁴ However, this can surely not have accounted for the scribbled diary of semi-literate Private Albert Chandler, a chronic "shit disturber", whose regular appearance before his colonel was an eloquent indication of his disdain for the finer points of military discipline. Nor does it wholly explain the regular diary entries of other soldiers such as Lance-Corporal (later Lieutenant) Clarke, whose commentary constituted a reasonably complete saga of an educated civilian-turned-soldier. Private Fraser decided to keep a journal after having seen a fellow soldier "jot down particulars in a notebook".⁵ This might have appealed to some

³See for instance Hewetson's preface to her thesis ("Unofficial Records"): she found that there was a noticeable discrepancy between published and unpublished war diaries.

⁴Heather Robertson, A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War (S.l.: James Lorimer, 1977), p. 14.

⁵The friend shortly discontinued his diary: "probably like most he thought it of more importance to devote his whole time to the art of keeping alive than looking for copy." Private Donald Fraser, quoted in Reginald H. Roy, ed., The Journal of Private Fraser (Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis Press, 1985), p. 18.

men, but the self discipline required to maintain a steady rhythm of writing doubtless eluded many of them.

If self discipline was a prerequisite to regular diary keeping then Gunner W. R. Morison was certainly not lacking in this commodity. His nineteen note books of uniform size and length span 2,130 pages, and include almost daily entries from 29 March 1915 to 28 May 1919.⁶ Nothing is known of Morison himself except for sparse details revealed in his diaries. A graduate of the Presbyterian College in Montreal, he was an ordained minister, but had apparently renounced his profession in favour of work in a furniture factory. By March 1915 he was No. 618 Gunner Morison, having enlisted in the artillery with his brother Keith. (Another brother, Jim, was an officer in the Canadian Dental Corps, and an unidentified cousin was a medical officer in the CAMC.) Both brothers survived the war. Keith apparently became a librarian, but W. R. Morison seems to have disappeared. He perhaps carried out his intention to teach at a school "out West", as noted in one of his diaries.

It is not the impressive volume of Morison's diaries

⁶Hewetson points out that despite regulations forbidding soldiers to keep diaries, the stationery companies (i.e. Letts) nonetheless marketed products specially designed for the soldier on active service. Hewetson, "Unofficial Records", pp. 31-34. Lt. Harry Yates, a Canadian pilot in the RFC, kept a diary in a notebook published by George Clark of Bleury Street, Montreal: the notebook was clearly intended as a diary for Canadian soldiers as its title was "My Personal Experiences and Impressions of the Great European War." NAC, Harry A. Yates Papers, MG 30, E 479.

which qualify them for discussion in this chapter, but rather their superb detail and devastating candour. No single officer or man, in published or unpublished material, ever broached some of the subjects mentioned in Morison's journals. For instance, Morison's intellectual interest in the crude and colourful vagaries of "army talk" led him to record verbatim many conversations overheard from his mates. The more lurid of these involved (as usual!) "whores" and also "nigger women":

[a soldier recounted his] detailed incidents of his experiences with Paris whores. He can talk of nothing else since he got back & Hodge taking the tone from the surroundings tells Haldenby's characteristic saying that the nigger women in Montreal bear children so easily they drop them in the street. "In fact its [sic] nothing more than a sharp shit." As this is the most delicate of the conversation I wont [sic] record further.⁷

Morison's delicacy did not prevent him from developing a fascination with the use of the "f-word":

I have often thought of trying to transcribe an actual conversation to get all the flavour of the army talk. ... "Where is your billet when you are out of trenches" asks Mitchell. "Near Hell Blast Corner. Too God damn lonesome though. Cant [sic] see fuck all. They give us fucking route Marches now."⁸

⁷NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 12, diary entry, 2 September 1917. (All subsequent references to Morison in this chapter are to his diary entries.)

⁸Ibid., book 7, 11 August 1916. Morison recorded conversations using "fuck" or "fucking" fourteen times. This (continued...)

Among the many themes featured in Morison's diaries was one of direct importance to this study. Morison's relations with his officers (especially one captain), his impressions of them and his behaviour towards them, were all revealed in the many remarks, anecdotes and snippets of conversation which he conscientiously recorded in his notebooks. These regular entries allow the researcher to draw a clear picture of how Morison considered himself in relation to his officers. They also enable one to extrapolate from this one soldier's experiences and thoughts, and to venture a conclusive statement about officer-man relations in the CEF.

Let it first be stated that Morison's diaries did not contradict the conclusions already presented in the preceding chapters of this thesis. Morison was not interested in generals and actually had nothing to say about them. He was only slightly less reticent about his commanding officers and the few medical officers he encountered. He was understandably much more voluble regarding chaplains, given that he had been himself an ordained minister. Morison was indifferent to the office of batmen, apparently saluted promptly whenever the need arose, and was not unduly

⁸(...continued)

point alone proves how faithfully Morison's diaries reflected the "real" soldier. For the immense usage that "fuck" and its derivatives received by English-speaking troops, it is incredible that only one other collection from the archival pool (Hubert M. (Tiny) Morris Papers, MG 30, E 379, MS, "The Story of my 3 1/2 Years in World War I") included the word in its reminiscences. It is less surprising that none of the published material allowed it to appear.

disturbed by the censorship of his letters. In all these respects, Morison confirmed the thoughts, perceptions and attitudes of his fellow soldiers. Finally, and most importantly, Morison also validated other soldiers' observations regarding their junior and company officers.

The difference between Morison's comments and those of other soldier-diarists and correspondents lies essentially in his unparalleled talent for critical observation. An early indication that Morison was a far more discerning observer than his mates came a short time after his enlistment:

[Morison was travelling on a streetcar in Montreal] By the way getting off at Mark St. Lieut Johnston got on and there was in his eye the glint of recognition with the impossibility of showing it due to etiquette, he an officer taking a car & [?] carrying a suitcase.⁹

This entry established one basic but highly significant point: that although the officer and private "recognised" each other the difference in rank prevented the one from acknowledging the other. The idea that there was a definite but highly artificial distinction between the commissioned and noncommissioned ranks was to form the basis of Morison's future commentary regarding officers. It was moreover rendered far more acute by his talent for critical detail.

In the early weeks of his military service, Morison recorded various items relating to his officers: for instance, the poor lectures by some officer-instructors, a

⁹Ibid., book 1, 19 April 1915.

captain treating the men to ginger-ale during a route march, a popular lieutenant discussing with them the army's definition of "drunk", and an officer's advice regarding lice, crabs and other matters of shipboard hygiene. On the troopship crossing the Atlantic, Morison continued his relatively innocuous commentary, remarking on how one of the officers appeared to be "rushing" a nurse, and how the same officer removed his hat "very reverently" during the Sunday church service. Upon arrival in England, in late May 1915, Morison introduced into his diary an officer, Captain Routier, who was to figure very prominently in the journals throughout the entire war. On at least 51 occasions, the crass, vulgar but highly realistic Captain Routier was the object of Morison's attention.

If one were to sum up Morison's impressions of Captain Routier as a military leader and a human being the conclusions arrived at would not be complimentary. From Morison's many references to him, one is left with the opinion that Routier did little during the war but drink, womanise, and go on leave. Routier's interminable exploits with "whores" started shortly after the unit's arrival in England:

At tea Keith tells me the true story of which I had heard rumours before how the two whores put in the guard tent this morning were found in Capt. Routiers [sic] tent last night by Capt. Lovelace. Capt. Routier is now under arrest. ... Pilot a prisoner on the Captain's scrape account and sore at me for saying

"Speaking of the glory of war, how do you like being an officers pimp." ... [Pilot] gets telling with great glee of Captain Routier's scrape, how the [sic] found the two women in the field. Capt. Routier sent out for wine and cigarettes. They got into Steeles [sic] pyjamas and had a wild time. Hodge breaks in saying they could hear all over camp Pilot shouting "Prepare to mount, Capt. Routier".¹⁰

Routier's liaisons with local women were faithfully chronicled by Morison. They culminated in a post-armistice orgy, during which the "captain's travelling whore shop" supplied him with a woman every evening.¹¹

Captain Routier's sexual activities were no doubt

¹⁰Ibid., book 2, 27 & 29 August 1915. Captain Routier, it is presumed, was a reasonably attractive man. On a march in England, Morison noticed that some of the girls they passed smiled "most bewitchingly at the officers and we all give a hoot when an ugly old lady rolls big eyes at Capt. Routier ..." Ibid., book 2, 4 August 1915. Ed Pilot, an ex-bank clerk, was a "young fellow scarce out of his teens. ... Chummy with the captain ... The friend of Capt. [sic] in his scrape with wine and women." Ibid., undated entry at the end of book 2. Pilot's exact rank is unknown but he was definitely a noncommissioned soldier, probably a private. In August 1915 he was trying to get a commission with the help of "family pull" etc. Ibid., book 2, 2 August 1915. In the meantime, he seems to have been Routier's confidante and partner in crime: his exploits with "Root" on leave in London were related ad nauseam to his mates. See for instance, book 1, 28 June 1915. As a Russian mate of Morison's aptly put it, Pilot was "no better than excuse me to say whore master." Ibid., undated entry at the end of book 2.

¹¹Routier managed to acquire a carriage in which he had transported a woman to his billets every evening. He apparently wanted to keep a permanent mistress but was afraid of being caught by senior officers. Ibid., book 18, 23 December 1918, 28 December 1918, & 16 January 1919. Routier did at least exercise some precautions: on one occasion he stopped a soldier he knew in the street (possibly an NCO) and asked him if he knew where "French safes" could be purchased. Ibid., book 17, 22 November 1918.

facilitated by his eight leaves to Paris and England. (Despite having served overseas for the same length of time Morison had had only one leave by the time Routier was away on his sixth leave.) Depending on the quality of the company he kept whilst on leave, Routier probably refrained from exercising the full repertoire of his vocabulary. His liberal use of "fuck" and other expletives in the presence of his men might have made him popular with some of them, but Morison was evidently not impressed.¹² However, despite the fact that he reported Routier's usage of blue language, Morison was not judgmental, nor did he censure the officer for it.

Routier's foibles were legion: some of these concerned long service ribbons, medals, and various luxuries such as "cloth horse rubbers" with which to line his tent. His acquisition of a Military Cross meant that he wore his overcoat less frequently, as he didn't wish to hide the decoration. He was easily annoyed and was not slow to vent his spleen on the men:

¹²"Back to the camp. Capt. Routier tells the Sgt. Major he is going out for a fuck. He takes Long as his master of ceremonies." Ibid., book 7, 12 August 1916. At the unit's Christmas dinner, Routier gave the men a "jolly little address" before the "fucking Colonel" joined them. Ibid., book 18, 25 December 1918. The captain also made references to "cock-suckers" on at least two occasions. Ibid., book 14, 20 January 1918 & book 17, 14 December 1918. Morison was not loath to use the odd expletive himself: required to sign for a loaf of bread at a German bakery he signed "Jeremiah Jenkins, 74321 2nd Canadian Bullshitters". Ibid., book 17, 17 December 1918.

Marching back to camp Routier ... sets up such a lively pace that the rear of the column straggles & some of the fellows, marching at ease, begin to shout about the speed. He halts us and bawls us out then sets up the pace again till we are in front of his billet where he lines us up on the street and harangues us that he is not afraid of any man. Let the man who wants to double come out and run now if he is not a coward. He knows what to think of doze [sic] men who have come over at the 12th hour and the other men know what to think of them too. Having got rid of such ill considered & ill mannered bad temper he dismisses us. The fellows all laugh at him and his foolish vanities.¹³

Despite Morison's implicit criticism of Routier as a leader and a man, he nonetheless shared a surprisingly amicable relationship with him. This dated from the time of the unit's arrival in England, when Morison's brother was employed developing rolls of film for the officers. On one such occasion Morison was waiting for Keith to finish when Routier passed by, gave him some candy and to Morison's surprise, "put on no side".¹⁴ Routier thereafter often greeted Morison by name, stopping to chat, giving him chocolate and showing him pictures. On one particular occasion he was unusually loquacious: he dropped by to visit Pilot (who was ill) and stayed to talk with Morison. His conversation revealed his contempt for staff officers (incompetents and drunks) and junior officers (cowards), his

¹³Ibid., book 17, 16 November 1918.

¹⁴Ibid., book 1, 30 May 1915.

war-time experiences (he had once slept with three dead men and hadn't realised it until he woke up the next morning) and his plans for the future (no marriage, emigration to India). He also treated Morison, his brother, and a few other soldiers to some refreshment at an estaminet--an estaminet, it should be noted, that was not normally frequented by officers.¹⁵

Routier's "friendship" extended to vouching for Morison's character at his court martial. Morison was arrested in August 1916 for having a camera in his possession, a military offence according to Routine Order No. 189, issued 20 March 1915.¹⁶ The captain sent a manual of military law and a copy of the KR&Os to Morison via an NCO, who confided that the captain was "quite troubled about this business" and that he would be glad to do anything he could

¹⁵Morison had to hold the horses while the rest of the party visited the establishment. A child told Morison that he was "surprised at an officer going to that estaminet". Ibid., book 3, 29 September 1915. For an interesting pre-Great War discussion on the evils of militia officers "treating" their men in "whiskey dens" see the correspondence in the Montreal Star, November 1894, in NAC, William B. Converse Papers, MG 29, E 83, scrapbook of newspaper clippings, etc.

¹⁶This meant that a good deal of Canadian military history was lost to future generations. Some soldiers and officers did however retain their cameras. Private Bell was terrified when he learned that one of his officers knew about his camera; fortunately the sympathetic officer offered to take Bell's films back to London to have them developed. NAC, George V. Bell Papers, MG 30, E 113, typed MS, "Back to Blighty", p. 116. When Morison's unit was paraded to hear the order read in March 1916 the officer reading it was himself rumoured to have a camera. NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 5, 7 March 1916.

for him.¹⁷ At Morison's trial, two weeks later, Routier testified that "his friend Gunner Morison" was a good soldier and had a clean crime sheet. Despite his efforts and those of his other officers, Morison was awarded four months imprisonment with hard labour, a sentence which was later suspended.¹⁸

The assistance of Routier and his other officers during his trial did not prevent Morison from continuing his critical observation. It certainly did not temper his opinions about certain officers as well as officers in general: as he himself admitted, "I have no wish to be hanged" when asked by a chum if he was going to have his diaries printed.¹⁹ Some of his remarks were indeed

¹⁷Ibid., book 8, 30 August 1916.

¹⁸The sentence was originally three years but a chaplain managed to have it commuted to four months. This was "squashed" a couple weeks later: Routier showed the order to Morison on 26 September 1916, for which he thanked the officer "heartily". He also expressed his appreciation to another captain: "I thanked him and say all the officers have been very kind in helping me in this scrape." Ibid., book 9, 25 & 26 September 1916.

¹⁹Ibid., book 14, 3 April 1918. Morison's mates seem to have been intrigued by his regular diary keeping: "after dinner to-day the fellows were trying to get some jest out of me saying after the war I would have six months sermons out of my diary." Ibid., book 5, 14 March 1916. One soldier told Morison that he would not keep a diary as he had heard of too many being found and read. Ibid., book 4, 12 February 1916. Morison's officers were fully aware of his diaries: one suggested at Morison's trial that his photographs had been taken to supplement his diary material. Ibid., book 8, 12 September 1916. Keith Morison also kept a diary. He was told by his officer that there wasn't "much harm in it but it wasn't [sic] wise to take it into a forward area." Ibid., book 14, 5 April 1918.

inflammatory. Kinder comments ranged from "silly officers" or "young fool officers" through to "old grafter" or "silly little ass". Harsher comments referred to them (individually or collectively) as "moneyed blunderers", "double faced shysters", "heavy booze artists", "blundering boozefighting officers" or "drunken selfish licentious officers". Morison had no need to fear being hanged. No newspaper or editor would ever have published any of Morison's diaries (in part or in total), especially considering that passages like the following could easily be found:

There was an awful muddle of waggons at the dump. Mr. Jackson was drunk; Mr. Thompson--the officer who was in charge of our detail ... was there to help him and was drunker than he The other night Jackson had a case of whiskey and he and the S.M. were drunk while the dump was filled with batteries waiting to be loaded. Major McCaul came down and found him in this state. "You're drunk" says the Major. "You're a fucking liar" says Mr. Jackson.²⁰

Morison's frequent references to drunk officers (especially towards the end of the war and in post-armistice days) were not intended to shock or outrage (after all, he never intended to have anyone read his diaries) but were simply an attempt to report the situation as he observed it. His dispassionate descriptions of drink-incapacitated

²⁰Ibid., book 12, 16 August 1917. Readers back at home would have been even less amused by references to officers who had gotten themselves stranded in the "whore houses" or whose batmen brought them two breakfasts, one for themselves and the other for their "lady friends".

officers, and his patient reports on which officers were to be added to the "list of drunks today" were comparatively free of awe or surprise. It is not clear whether Morison was more disgusted or amused by his officers' drinking sprees: like most of his mates he often got a chuckle out of their drunken antics but in many cases he was merely curious. It would seem that Morison's curiosity was shared by many of his fellow soldiers. A soldier-pianist who was called upon to provide entertainment in the officers' mess one Christmas evening only agreed to do so in order to "see the way they carried on."²¹ Other soldiers had their curiosity more than satiated:

Begg of No. 1 who went with officers to St. Sauveur and is just back disgusted at riding as horse holder although he wears a stripe tells us that instead of being an advance party as he thought they just went in to an officers [sic] mess and had drinks then to another mess and had more drinks when one of them beginning to be in a mess told him they had just come down to visit the officers.²²

Morison's commentary was particularly effective and realistic due to his habit of reporting actual conversations he had had with various soldiers. These included not only

²¹This soldier certainly got an eye-full: on Christmas evening, the CO was drunk, another officer was "so far gone he just wobbled round falling over everything" and the padre was "pickled" (the YMCA officer was well on his way to being so). At the height of the merriment, the CO lined his officers up and with bowls of flaming plum pudding led them to the Mayor's residence. Ibid., book 13, 26 December 1917.

²²Ibid., book 16, 2 August 1918.

his fellow artillerymen but also men from other branches of the service. Surprisingly, despite the prevalent theme of officers' drunkenness, many remarks and stories dealt with the question of officers as "gentlemen". This issue first arose in England, where a particular officer was pronounced to be "no gentleman" by Morison, his brother and another private. The matter of an officer's socio-economic background surfaced frequently in soldiers' gossip regarding a new officer's "family":

Sommers was talking about Gooderham last night, that he is a member of a good firm of lawyers in Toronto, director of an insurance company as well as being of the wealthy distillers family. He is so well acquainted among the influential people that he is able to get things pretty much his own way over here. Such poor simpletons such as Col. Harrison are ready to kow-tow to him for his wealth & position for the social advantage they may gain.²³

This fully corroborates the belief, held by many if not all soldiers, that officers were a separate group, not only by virtue of their commissioned rank but also due to their position in civilian society.

Morison, educated and articulate as he was, recognised and indeed accepted the distinctions in rank. In his diaries, he constantly referred to his junior officers by their surnames, preceded by "Mr". This suggests an unusual

²³Ibid., book 10, 2 March 1917. This officer distributed many of his parcels to the men. Ibid., book 11, 15 April 1917.

degree of respect, a sentiment which was seemingly incompatible with Morison's freely-expressed opinion of officers. Morison was the intellectual equal of his officers but his military rank prevented him from unreservedly conversing with some (but not all) officers. For instance, the chaplain who helped to get Morison's sentence reduced and who later spoke with him about the "camera scrape" was gently but firmly rebuffed: as Morison put it, "I don't feel easy in any position of private speaking to an officer."²⁴ One may almost detect a note of disapproval and censure in the following remark:

Forgot to remark that last night while waiting ... I got talking with Mr. Wright. The conversation was not altogether unconstrained as he is too young to forget that he is an officer but he told me about a "damned" rug that he got from the "damned" Navajo Indians, about the "damned" peaches of Pasadena Cal. and various other "damned" things. He is a minister's son He is still enough of an infant to enjoy being bold & bad.²⁵

Morison might have felt uneasy as a private conversing with an officer, but he also seemed somewhat discomfited by the company he was forced to keep in the ranks. Watching his

²⁴Ibid., book 9, 2 November 1916. However, this did not hinder Morison's lengthy verbal exchanges with some other officers such as Captain Gamblin, although it is likely that the officers did most of the talking, not Morison. For the conversation with Gamblin see book 7, 6 July 1916.

²⁵Ibid., book 4, 26 January 1916. On the other hand, some officers were uncomfortable talking with Morison on account of his rank. See book 11, 14 June 1917 for an officer who wasn't "at all free talking with a private."

fellow soldiers hurling marmalade about and listening to them "talk their rough rubbish", Morison concluded that he "was not democratic enough to appreciate this company."²⁶ In this opinion he was joined by a soldier who resented being bossed by "a lot of underbred N.C.O.s"; unfortunately, his mates were little better and were spoken of with disgust "as though it were a misfortune to be associated with them." This same private vowed never to serve in the ranks again, as his associates before the war had always been drawn from the "upper middle classes".²⁷

The question of "class" was discussed on a number of occasions, one of which saw Morison being "roused" by a sergeant's defence of the class system. An even more revealing conversation was Morison's exchange with a private, "J.B.". Morison initiated the conversation by asking "J.B." (an Englishman) to "classify" a corporal: Morison had already decided that the corporal, while a "bright clever handsome young fellow", did not have the necessary education with which to "lift him out of a lower class in civilian

²⁶Ibid., book 5, 11 March 1916. Three days later Morison confessed that he could not respond to his mates' jesting: "I have very little to say and am afraid am a very dry and unsocial thing." Ibid., book 5, 14 March 1916. Morison does not seem to have believed wholeheartedly in the principle of universal suffrage: in December 1917, after having cast his ballot in the general election he remarked that it was a "haphazard way to trust the rule of a country to the chance marking of a slip of paper by every Tom, Dick and Harry." Ibid., book 13, 6 December 1917.

²⁷Ibid., book 5, 31 March 1916, 8 April 1916.

life."²⁸ The ensuing conversation featured "J.B." describing his own social background, and explaining why he had not chosen a carpenter's job (which would have kept him close by to his parents' home):

The fact of having a son a working man near home would make it unpleasant socially for the old folks.²⁹

Officers were perceived to be of a "class" above that of the private in the ranks: this was obvious in Morison's comments and anecdotes. They could afford "swanky new clothes", eggs at four pence each, and quinine--a useful commodity which, when swallowed with a tumbler of whisky guaranteed the officer an undisturbed night's sleep.³⁰ Their business connections and obligations followed many of them into the trenches, as did their proclivities for the finer things in life. The much-touted fallacy that officers "roughed" it with their men was just that, a fallacy:

Capt. Routier is mad because some other officer has gone ahead of him on his fifth leave. He has hardly a thing to do and plenty of men to build him a hut and wait on him. "And the folks at home think the officers have to rough it over here" says Keith and adds laughing "but

²⁸Ibid., book 10, 14 March 1917.

²⁹ Ibid. A brother was in Brazil "with an interest in railways", but as he now belonged to a class "much above" that of his parents, he could not "associate with them with ease" whenever he returned home for a visit. Ibid.

³⁰This was a captain's advice to a private who had trouble sleeping through a shelling. Ibid., book 13, 2 November 1918.

they'll be put wise some day."³¹

Nonetheless, officers commanded a presence which intimidated many privates, even those aspiring to be officers themselves. It also led some to adopt unnecessary displays of "show", such as the soldier who borrowed Keith Morison's fountain pen to sign some documents at Headquarters.³²

As the war progressed, Morison's journals showed a rising unease and distaste for his officers and their behaviour. These sentiments did not necessarily emanate from Morison alone, as many of the opinions and comments expressed in the diaries were those of his fellow soldiers. Men remarked on officers who went around "reeking of scent" and "putting on airs as above the level of the private who does the work."³³ Others were contemptuous of their subordination to bank clerks-turned-officers, who called parades to verify that each individual soldier had shaved. The situation was certainly not improved by the not unjustified belief that commissioned soldiers were told not to associate with their former chums in the ranks.

Tentative suggestions that a "revolution" in the ranks could be possible if the men only had leaders were first aired in February 1918. A mate, "Dilly", confided to Morison that their overbearing officers were little better than the

³¹Ibid., book 12, 25 July 1917.

³²Ibid., book 13, 9 December 1917.

³³Ibid., book 15, 1 June 1918.

Germans: their "lording it over the men and unreasonable dealings" might well lead to "something serious" in the ranks.³⁴ Morison himself was increasingly impatient with his officers, especially following the Armistice. After his brother was arrested for not removing his overcoat during the victory marchpast on the Bonn bridge, Morison realised how intolerant his own attitude had become:

I make up my mind to try to keep my thoughts off the petty hatefulnesses of officers & their little lordings of it in their day, trying rather to get the freedom of a soul above such things.³⁵

Officers' post-armistice drinking sprees and their "lording it through the country" (Germany) further soured Morison's perceptions of his commissioned superiors. His mates were just as disgruntled and their stories of officers stealing bottles of booze, their bullying of German civilians, and their sending soldiers to pimp for them, all found expression in Morison's diaries. By January 1919, Morison had lost all possible confidence in his officers' abilities to behave like gentlemen:

The civilians are talking of the women that the captain and other officers have in their house It seems a disgraceful state of affairs and a way no gentlemen would carry on. ... to me it is just proof that human nature shows as base a side in our officers as ever in

³⁴Ibid., book 14, 5 February 1918.

³⁵Ibid., book 17, 13 December 1918. Keith Morison lost his stripe. He had not wished to take off his coat as he was suffering from a bad cold (it was also pouring with rain).

the Huns.³⁶

How representative of the average Canadian soldier were Morison's diaries? As John Keegan reminds us, soldiers' diaries, although a reasonably reliable source of information, must be carefully manipulated in order to extract from them something more than just "anecdotal history".³⁷ What can therefore be sensibly interpreted and concluded from Gunner Morison's notebooks?

First, it must be stated that Morison was concerned with many of the details which preoccupied other soldiers: daily incidents, food and gossip. His commitment to detail regarding these items was a boon for future researchers: where else may one find a comment regarding changes in the rules of puttee-winding?³⁸ Indeed, where else may one find faithful examples of the pithy dialogue which constituted the soldier's lingua franca? This indisputable quality of honesty in itself endorses Morison's diaries as authentic and reliable documents.

If further endorsement is required it may be found in

³⁶Ibid., book 18, 2 January 1919.

³⁷John Keegan, The Face of Battle (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 33.

³⁸As an artilleryman, Morison had to wind his puttees from the top down, a practice which he had avoided by rolling from the bottom up, until his captain made it a "crime". NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 7, 21 August 1916. This obviously made an impression on him as his first entry of the next day stated that he had wound his puttees "the new way". Ibid., book 7, 22 August 1916.

Morison's conscientious commitment to observation. This soldier, who practised his semaphore skills by transmitting Shakespearean sonnets, was educated, intelligent and articulate. All three attributes were employed to good use in his careful observation of personalities and situations. No other soldier ever described his officers in so perceptive a manner, nor did any reproduce so faithfully the particular observations of his fellow soldiers. The fact that Morison's commentary was not strictly confined to his own opinions and perceptions again vouches for the diaries' authenticity.

Morison had little respect for many of his officers. However, this lack of esteem did not prevent him from acknowledging the considerations and courtesies they often extended to the men, especially in the form of foodstuffs and other material comforts.³⁹ Morison also acknowledged the overtures of comradeship which some officers tendered to the men in the ranks, usually by engaging them in informal and unrestrained conversation. On the other hand, Morison clearly felt that there were too many areas in which officers abused their authority and privilege. An overwhelming number of them were too free with the bottle, had questionable morals, and cared little if at all for their men's safety and comfort. The spectacle of an officer purchasing "indecent

³⁹One particular "comfort" was purely spiritual: an artillery section was rumoured to be safe from harm because its officer used to pray for his men and horses every night! Ibid., book 10, 29 December 1916.

postcards" in a French shop or that of a drunk officer being assisted to his billets by two others was enough to convince Morison that many officers hardly qualified as "gentlemen".

Morison fully expected his officers to behave in a different fashion to that of the men. By virtue of their commissioned rank, they were entitled to special privileges and powers, and this was acceptable as long as the officers fulfilled their part of the bargain by comporting themselves as required. Disappointment and disillusionment were perhaps the predominant feelings of Morison and many of his mates when they tallied their officers' individual and collective worth. The situation was aggravated by the fact that many of the officers were from a background which should have prepared them to behave like "gentlemen".

Were Morison's opinions and perceptions (as well as those of his comrades) fully justified? Morison himself eventually conceded that he might have been premature in categorically denouncing his officers:

A T.M. officer is in charge of us and here I may as well confess that while time and time again going out on detail or anywhere in guidance of an officer I have been most critical blaming them for much unreasonableness & ignorance when in the end when [sic] I begin to understand what they have been up against I have been most unjust and they have all along been doing the best that could be done under the circumstances. Of course there are notable exceptions.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Ibid., book 14, 12 April 1918.

Morison might have been overly harsh about his officers' professional abilities but he was certainly not mistaken as regards their conduct--the post-armistice excesses proved this. Nor was Morison mistaken in his opinion that officers and men constituted two separate groups, a belief which was obviously not dispelled by the Armistice. For instance, In April 1919, Morison and a friend "escaped" from camp for an evening and ran into Captain Routier at the train station:

... our train comes into sight so we salute & run for it. ... On the train Martin laughs at how when I am beating it off without leave this way we run into the O.C. and hob nob with him.⁴¹

"Hobnobbing" with an officer was an activity which most soldiers did not indulge in. The next chapter examines what may be termed the "officer ethos", its impact on the men in the ranks and on Canadian society in general. It will perhaps explain why Gunner Morison felt that although he was certainly capable of interacting with any officer on an equal intellectual footing he could not do so while in a military situation.

⁴¹Ibid., book 19, 3 April 1919.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Officer Ethos and 'Class'

There was an infantry working party--a young subaltern in charge & we linemen as supervisors. ... The young officer turned his back to the troops to releave [sic] himself & one of my group spoke up "sotto voce" "What you know? Ee pisses just like a man!"¹

As has already been discussed, the situation of officers differed greatly to that of men in the ranks, especially in respects to food and drink, living quarters, transport and leave. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that soldiers (and civilians) regarded officers in a somewhat exalted light. It was also to be expected that many men regarded a commission as a highly desirable commodity. This was evident in the extensive use of "pull" in obtaining commissions, the equally widespread belief in officers as "gentlemen" and the overall skewing of public and literary opinion towards officers. A corollary to all this was the ever-present theme of "class" and social distinctions.

Although some rankers considered officers as "simply men in uniforms designed to make them look better than the privates",² many of them nonetheless coveted both the uniform and the privileges of officers. This was evident in many

¹National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), George Victor Drew-Brook Papers, MG 30, E 478, MS, "Journal Of "Memories"", pp. 49-50.

²Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), p. 143.

letters and private papers, and was also reflected in the number of men who practised an innocuous deception on their family and friends: for instance, some of Lieutenant Dawson's gunners told their girlfriends that they were officers and their letters were accordingly addressed to "Lieutenant X" rather than "Gunner X".³ Even Gunner Morison and his brother at one time toyed with the idea of applying for commissions: it would be a "new experience" and would give them both something to "work up in".⁴

Family pressure often reinforced a man's desire to become an officer. More than one mother, father or girlfriend was attracted to the idea of a son or boyfriend being an officer. This applied to men who were commissioned from the beginning of their service career as well as those who received commissions after having first served in the ranks. As an example of the former, "Billy", an unidentified lieutenant, was evidently pleased with his particular position:

Now, aren't you proud? One of Canada's
premier battalions and your son a
"hossifer" in it!⁵

Lance-Corporal (later Lieutenant) Norris, was equally proud

³Coningsby Dawson, Carry On: Letters in War-time (New York: John Lane, 1917), p. 42.

⁴"... if we ever got very disgusted we could resign and enlist in the ranks again." NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, MG 30, E 371, book 10, diary entry, 6 January 1917.

⁵A Canadian Subaltern: Billy's Letters to his Mother (London: Constable, 1917), p. 41.

of his commission, perhaps more so because his mother had expressed a desire for him to become an officer.⁶ Norris obviously was "officer material", or at the very least, he had the appropriate military and social qualifications for entrance into the commissioned ranks; he was also successful in coping with parental pressure. Other men were not so fortunate:

One of my friends, a scout corporal and a six-footer, told me that his mother kept writing to ask him why he was not an officer. It was getting him down. My next news of him was that he shot himself with his service pistol in a tent behind the lines, without waking the others, who found him dead in the morning.⁷

A great many doting parents who wished their sons to go to war "de luxe" had the necessary connections or "pull" to arrange the matter. Anyone doubting that commissions were awarded in this manner (especially during the early stages of the war) need only consult the voluminous correspondence of John Bassett. Aide-de-camp to Sir Sam Hughes from 1914 to 1916, Bassett regularly received pleas from solicitors, senior business executives, ministers, newspaper editors and

⁶[Armine Norris], "Mainly for Mother" (Toronto: Ryerson, [1920]), p. 116.

⁷Unknown Soldiers by One of Them (New York: Vantage Press, 1959), p. 96. The pressure of family and friends no doubt forced many men to aspire (reluctantly) to positions which exceeded their abilities. Community gossip being what it was (and still is), a question to the effect "Why is it that Brennan is only a Private?" would have placed many men on the defensive. NAC, Arnold du Toit Bottomley Papers, MG 30, E 137, S. Childs to Bottomley, 9 May 1916.

civil servants to have their sons, brothers or other male relatives commissioned:

In the first place he, [brother of sender] personally, is not particularly keen about a commission, unless it comes to him through promotion by merit. On the other hand, my mother, whose health is not of the best, is most anxious for him to get one and only this morning asked me to see the Minister personally...⁸

Bassett also received requests from family members to have an already commissioned son or brother promoted or "placed" in a suitable position. These were in many cases forwarded to Hughes for his attention:

I am in receipt of a request from Mr. Tache, the King's Printer, concerning the son-in-law of Mr. Justice Tellier, of Quebec, who is an old friend of Mr. Tache's, and who has written him concerning the matter. His son-in-law is Captain Norbert Morin, doctor of the 41st. regiment in camp at Valcartier. Judge Tellier is desirous of having his son-in-law made a Major of the regiment before going away to the war.⁹

⁸NAC, John Bassett Papers, MG 30, E 302, vol. 1, [unidentified] to Bassett, 2 February 1916. Bassett had an impressive network of contacts amongst senior military officers, and certainly made full use of them. In one case he wrote a brigadier-general to have a university graduate commissioned, as the man in question was connected with a firm in which Bassett was a Director. Ibid., vol. 1, Bassett to Brigadier-General Benson, 23 March 1915.

⁹Ibid., vol. 4, Bassett to Sir Sam Hughes, 4 October 1915. Bassett was also appealed to by NCOs whose applications for commissions had been stonewalled. He was urged to intervene on behalf of a sergeant who hankered after a sergeant-major's appointment: "... I thought in your present position you might care to help me. Someone will get it and why not yours truly." Ibid., vol. 2, [unidentified] to Bassett, 3 February 1916.

In addition, Bassett's duties included transmitting Hughes' wishes regarding "crimed" officers. In one such case Bassett interceded with a staff officer on behalf of a young officer confined to barracks for an undisclosed misdemeanour: the punishment was to be stopped immediately and all mention of it obliterated from the lieutenant's record.¹⁰

The use of "pull" in securing commissions and appointments was widely recognised by officers and men. Charles Power, a lawyer when he enlisted in the ranks of the CAMC, was magically plucked from his lowly position as kitchen helper in a military hospital and quickly elevated to officer status:

One night my father was in his place as Opposition member in the House of Commons in Ottawa when Sir Sam Hughes ... came over to sit beside him and inquire about his boys at the Front. Father told him ... Chubby [Charles] was in the C.A.M.C. ... Within a few hours a cable came across the ocean to Canadian Headquarters to "find Chubby Power and give him a commission". ... In after years much has been said of my going as a private soldier and earning a commission the hard way. I should say that I can conceive of no softer path to honour than that which the fates and Sir Sam Hughes ordained that I should follow.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., vol. 2, Bassett to Major-General Carson, 31 August 1916. Bassett also received complaints about nepotism: a concerned observer wrote him about resentment of a twenty-year-old officer who had been appointed Instructor of Cadets as well as Garrison Adjutant by his colonel-father. The "youngster" received about \$2,000 a year in pay for his position. Ibid., vol. 5, 19 November 1915.

¹¹NAC, Charles Gavan Power Papers, MG 27, III B 19, vol. 1, typed MS, pp. 5, 7.

Lieutenant Magann, an RMC graduate, contemptuously dismissed Sam Hughes' boast that there would be no favouritism or influence as "nothing more or less than 'wind'."¹² A chum of Gunner Morison was confident of getting a commission as he knew someone who had a "strong pull with Sam Hughes."¹³ A sergeant, whose "only ambition on earth" was to get a commission, beseeched his parents to write to anyone who might have influence; he was eventually successful in getting commissioned to the PPCLI.¹⁴

The above NCO was immensely relieved when he finally obtained his commission:

It is a great pleasure to feel that I can meet any one now without feeling embarrassed on account of my rank. ... It is delightful to be "Mr. Wells" again; to wear comfortable underwear; to eat with gentlemen; to wear pajamas when I go to

¹²NAC, George Loranger Magann Papers, MG 30, E 352, vol. 2, Lt. Magann to parents, 2 September 1914.

¹³NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 2, diary entry, 26 July 1915. More than a year later, a private was talking of obtaining a commission via friends who were "very influential in the Govt & with Sam Hughes." *Ibid.*, book 7, diary entry, 9 August 1916. As Lt. Magann quaintly but aptly described it, Sam Hughes was responsible for manufacturing officers "as fast as Ford motor cars." NAC, George Loranger Magann Papers, vol. 2, Lt. Magann to mother, 16 January 1916.

¹⁴O. C. S. Wallace, ed., From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond (The correspondence of Lt. Clifford Almon Wells) (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1917), pp. 20, 29-32, 41. It should be noted that commanding officers were also besieged by family members eager for their soldier kin to receive a commission: "I get about 15 letters a day. ... Fathers write me. M.P.s write me and Mothers and Sisters, and in nearly every case the men are not worth considering..." NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, MG 30, E 149, vol. 6, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 4 March 1917.

bed.¹⁵

The notion that an officer was a "gentleman" was reinforced by the selection criteria for men applying for commissions from the ranks. In many cases, an ability to ride a horse was a basic requirement, but in others the preliminaries could be more demanding. For instance, one NCO (in Gunner Morison's unit) appearing before his commanding officer as part of the application process for a commission was apparently drilled in classical literature: the colonel tried to "trip him up on some Euclid" but was not successful.¹⁶ The procedures and interviews of Canadian soldiers applying for RFC commissions were perhaps more predictable:

The great day came when I had to go to St Omer to see the "Interviewing Officer". Had I ever driven a car? Yes! That was good! had i ever ridden a motorcycle? Yes? that was good or even better. With a sneer, I see you say you were at Ridley? Yes! Where is Ridley? St Catherines--that was a big surprise to him but he'd get me yet--where is St Catherines? In the Niagara Peninsula--that clinched it--I was a gentleman & I was in. Ha! Ha! You've got to be a gentleman to be burned to death in an aeroplane! Naturally I was very pleased--but the fellow that I had come down with, obviously not a gentleman, didn't get in & he was very upset.¹⁷

¹⁵Wallace, ed., From Montreal to Vimy Ridge and Beyond, pp. 64-65.

¹⁶NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 13, diary entry, 9 December 1917.

¹⁷NAC, George Victor Drew-Brook Papers, pp. 55-56.

The "fellow's" lack of gentlemanly qualities denied him access to an RFC commission, but was it also a handicap to becoming an officer in a Canadian unit? A cursory tally of the numerous remarks referring to individual Canadian officers as "gentlemen" would lead to the conclusion that these qualities were indeed necessary for admission to the Canadian officer cadre. There was, for instance, no doubt that "education" was of primary importance to those seeking commissions, and this applied equally to men already serving in the ranks as well as to those with no previous military experience.¹⁸ More to the point, there was a belief that education was the hallmark of a gentleman and thus entitled him to be granted a commission:

Having matriculated for university, we felt we had a certain college standing and education that [j]ustified us applying for something better than a common private of infantry.¹⁹

Joseph Frank and George Reaves, in their analysis of some 450 diaries and letters of recruit soldiers at the Battle of Shiloh, found that many of them described their officers as "gentlemanly".²⁰ These Civil War soldiers tended

¹⁸For instance, Gunner Morison judged that he could easily get a commission "with what education I have." NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 7, diary entry, 9 August 1916.

¹⁹NAC, Kenneth P. Kirkwood Papers, MG 27, III E 3, typed MS, "From Toronto to Taranto", p. 8.

²⁰Joseph Allan Frank and George A. Reaves, "Seeing the Elephant": Raw Recruits at the Battle of Shiloh, Contributions in Military Studies, No. 88 (New York: (continued...))

to refer to their officers in terms of social attributes and characteristics rather than purely military and professional qualities. (This was normally applicable to pre-battle rather than post-battle correspondence.) In many respects, this also was the case with soldiers in the CEF. Many men (and officers) described a particular officer as a "gentleman". Others, while not employing that specific word, were clearly referring to a man who belonged to a "class" above that of a working man.

Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson, a Canadian-born officer and briefly CO of the PPCLI, was the most frequent user of the term "gentleman" in referring to various soldiers (officers as well as men). His regular correspondence with his wife Mabel included, in addition to sundry military details, a wealth of commentary regarding PPCLI officers and men. Individual officers were often described as "gentlemen" and, in some cases, this applied to officers who had been commissioned from the ranks. The many university students recruited to the PPCLI were also referred to as "gentlemen students".²¹ More interesting, however, were the remarks

²⁰(...continued)
Greenwood, 1989), p. 50. See especially pp. 49-53 for an interesting discussion of Civil War soldiers' perceptions of officers and their relationships. Common elements shared with Great War soldiers and officers were: officers tending to their men, visiting them in hospital, buying food for them, sympathising with them, etc.

²¹Adamson had no apparent love of Sam Hughes, especially when the latter witlessly offended some of the PPCLI men: "I
(continued...)

about noncommissioned men being gentlemen (or not, as was more often the case). Adamson confessed himself pleasantly surprised by the "number of gentlemen we now have in the ranks who are too modest to come forward."²² Be that as it may, some of the wounded men hospitalised in England who were to receive visits from Adamson's wife had been previously classified by Adamson: for instance, of one list of nine men to be visited by Mabel, only two were identified as "gentlemen", a sergeant and a lance-corporal.²³

The question of selecting men from the ranks for commissions was one which often plagued Adamson. His concern for the spirit of the regiment and the tone of the officers' mess was evident on at least three occasions:

²¹(...continued)

forgot to tell you yesterday, when Sam Hughes addressed us at his review he opened thus. "Officers, N.C.Os, men of the P.P.C.L.I. and young gentlemen of McGill" which has of course given great offense to the original men and those who do not claim any connection with McGill." NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 5, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 20 August 1916.

²²Ibid., vol. 5, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 2 August 1916.

²³"None of these men will take advantage of anything you do for them." Ibid., vol. 2, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 17 March 1915. Mabel was a busy woman. She visited many hospitalised men in England, after first having received detailed instructions and descriptions from Adamson. A letter sent on 18 April 1915 mentioned three men who were to be visited: one was a "gentleman" by virtue of having attended an English public school, the two others were categorically described as "not a gentleman". In some cases, Mabel was instructed to write to a particular man, in one instance a sergeant-major: "I wish you would get his address and write and ask if you can do anything for him. Address him Dear Sergeant Major Pritchard." Ibid., vol. 4, 13 May 1916.

The Corps Commander has seen 6 Sergeants and 3 men who I have recommended for immediate Commissions Our table manners may not be as good in future, but they have by long work earned their Commissions. [June 1916]

I have twenty Commissions to suggest today and find it very difficult to choose. ... I have decided to go on guts and not table manners, so we will probably have some queer fish, but the side will be the stronger for it. [January 1917]

The C.C. has allowed me to send in the names of 20 N.C.O. [sic] and men for Commissions... . It has been quite difficult to pick them out as Sahibs won't go round and there are more important factors to consider than Mess and table manners ... [March 1917]²⁴

While Adamson fully agreed with the practice of commissioning men from the ranks, his preoccupation was with selecting the appropriate candidates. The presence of a sizeable number of university students was no doubt a boon: "owing to the class from which these reinforcements are drawn, a large proportion of them are well fitted by their education and physical training to be nominated for Commissions."²⁵ They would also

²⁴Ibid., vol. 5, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 13 June 1916; vol. 6, 9 January 1917; vol. 6, 4 March 1917. Note that Adamson's fastidiousness did not diminish with time. At the end of 1917 he bemoaned the difficulty of selecting men for commissions "as one must not be guided by old prejudices, and yet there are limits, I feel." Ibid., vol. 8, 17 December 1917. The situation had seemingly deteriorated by September 1918. An officer who had been commissioned from the ranks had married a "common little barmaidish person": for this reason, Mabel was instructed to "avoid" her. Ibid., vol. 10, 7 September 1918.

²⁵Ibid., vol. 5, typed memo, Lt.-Col. Agar Adamson to 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 2 August 1916.

not be intimidated by the other officers of the regiment, such as "one of the richest men in Montreal" (a member of the Molson family) and the "St. James Club bunch".

Adamson was not necessarily a snob.²⁶ Described by one officer in the CFA as a "well meaning old duck but awfully fussy"²⁷ Adamson was merely reflecting social reality--a reality which dictated that officers for the most part came from a different background to that of the majority of rankers. Pre-war militia units had, after all, recruited their officers from the upper social levels of local communities; in effect, a militia regiment was perceived to have been little more than "an expensive private club for

²⁶For instance, Adamson did not object to an officer who had been a bar-tender in Edmonton, perhaps because he "looked cleaner than any of the other officers." Ibid., vol. 4, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Mabel Adamson, 5 February 1916. On the other hand, he did not wish his younger son to attend Wellington as it was well-known as a public school for officers' sons, and after the war "all kinds of Fathers who under ordinary conditions would never have been in the Army, will take advantage of their Army Commissions and send their sons there, who in themselves are bounders and of the wrong class and the tone of the School will in consequence go down." Ibid., vol. 9, 8 June 1918. (Adamson much preferred Harrow!) Adamson equally deplored the fact that his older son had consorted with "very common boys" in an RAF squadron. Ibid., vol. 10, 21 December 1918.

²⁷NAC, George Loranger Magann, vol. 1, diary entry, 16 January 1916. Magann was surprised to find Adamson wearing a monocle and a fur coat in the trenches. He was somewhat peeved by Adamson trying to "hand a little of the old soldier stuff to me." Ibid. A trooper with Lord Strathcona's Horse travelling in a replacement draft of 50 troopers en route to the South African War wrote that "Lieut. Adamson of Ottawa" "soon became very popular with his charge." NAC, Thomas Easton Howell Papers, MG 29, E 20, reminiscences, p. 2.

officers."²⁸ Military expertise was irrelevant: as Lieutenant-Colonel Flick expressed it, the Militia was regarded as a "colossal joke perpetrated by those anxious for social distinctions."²⁹ This relationship between socio-economic standing and officer status persisted into the early years of the Great War and, according to some participants, was never wholly abandoned.

Lieutenant (later Major) Peregrine Acland, 5th Battalion, whose father was Deputy Minister of Labour, was a prime example of an officer socially removed from the background and values of many of his subordinates. He showed little genuine interest or understanding of his men, and was above all concerned with his own status as an officer:

It might do no harm if it were stated in the papers that I am at Valcartier as a lieutenant in the 48th Highlanders, as otherwise a number of my friends will think I am here as a private in the Q.O.R. (No reference need be made to the latter at all.) I should be much obliged if you would have an item of the sort

²⁸Quoted in Daniel G. Dancocks, Sir Arthur Currie: A Biography (Toronto: Methuen, 1985), p. 15. See also Owen Arnold Cooke, "Organization and Training in the Central Canadian Militia" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Queen's University, 1974), pp. 21-22, 25. As F. A. McKenzie explained, the Militia was regarded as primarily a social organisation, membership in which gave a man "local standing". F. A. McKenzie, Through the Hindenburg Line (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), p. 118.

²⁹Lt.-Col. C. L. Flick, "Just What Happened": A Diary of the Mobilization of the Canadian Militia 1914 (London: privately printed, 1917), p. 4.

inserted.³⁰

Acland's faith in the connection between socio-economic status and a commission was duplicated many times in officers and men of the CEF. Although a claim has been made that the Canadians recruited officers from a somewhat broader social spectrum than the British,³¹ the fact remains that many soldiers (officers as well as men) associated money and social standing with the commissioned ranks. Diaries and correspondence frequently referred to officers in terms of "well to do", "well bred", "of very good family" or "sons and relatives of prominent men". Corporal Will Bird thought that

³⁰NAC, Peregrine Acland Papers, MG 30, E 222, Lt. Acland to family, 3 September 1914. Acland's confidence in education as a prerequisite for a commission was obvious: "The educated men will be those most easily to be qualified as officers as well as most respected by the men and most acceptable at the officers' messes." Ibid., Lt. Acland to parents, 19 August 1914.

³¹John Swettenham, To Seize the Victory (Toronto: Ryerson, 1965), p. 241. Swettenham's claim disregards the fact that only one Black Canadian soldier was ever commissioned, and this was an honorary appointment to the chaplain of the No. 2 Construction Battalion (a Black labour battalion). The officers of this unit were all White. See Calvin W. Ruck, Canada's Black Battalion No. 2 Construction 1916-1920 (Halifax, N.S.: The Society for the protection and preservation of Black culture in Nova Scotia, 1986), pp. 22, 59, and the entire book for an interesting study of a wholly neglected field of Canadian military history. The role of native peoples in the war has been better documented: it is known that at least two Indians were commissioned in the RFC, as well as an undetermined number in various Canadian units. See James Dempsey, "The Indians and World War One," Alberta History XXXI, No. 3 (Summer 1983): 1-8; Fred Gaffen, Forgotten Soldiers (Penticton, B.C.: Theytus Books Ltd., 1985); and Canada in the Great World War, 6 vols. (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada Limited, 1919), Vol. 3: Guarding the Channel Ports, Appendix I, "The Canadian Indians and the Great World War", pp. 285-328.

most of his officers came from "finer homes" than the other ranks,³² and Private Thomas Smith was interested to learn that one of his officers was a shareholder of Moir's chocolatiers.³³ It was assumed that the senior management personnel of companies would obtain commissions, as well as those practising the middle-class professions. The heavy preponderance of those in the banking profession who received commissions should also be noted (see Appendix B).

Class and social distinctions were periodic topics of interest, a surprising feature considering that Canadian society was supposedly far less class-ridden than that of Britain. George Drew-Brook, son of a "gentleman farmer" who had immigrated to Canada in 1911, somewhat mistakenly thought that Canada was a "classless society" as "they all seemed to dress well & there was no such thing as "County" accents."³⁴

³²Bird, And We Go On, p. 144. Bird reminds us that the author of Merry Hell! A Dane with the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, s.d.), Lt. Thomas Dinesen, was himself a "Blue-blood" whose wealthy family had a coat of arms. Ibid., p. 295.

³³NAC, Thomas Brenton Smith Papers, MG 30, E 31, typed MS, "Clearing: The Tale of the First Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, British Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919", p. 39.

³⁴NAC, George Victor Drew-Brook Papers, p. 20. This is certainly at odds with Charlie Rose's statement that "you used to have to call everybody "sir" those days ..." NAC, War and Canadian Society, MG 28, I 246, interview transcripts. On the other hand, Arthur Lower argues that before the war, with very few exceptions, no one addressed anyone else as "Sir". (This is difficult to believe.) See Arthur R. M. Lower, Canadians in the Making (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958), p. 403.

Be that as it may, there was certainly a definable social hierarchy operating in civilian and military society, the rigidity of which amazed even Lieutenant-Colonel Adamson. Commenting on his sojourn with the "Canadian Colony at Folkestone", Adamson wrote that:

Everybody hates everybody else like the very devil, all the good wives think their husbands ought to be Brigadier Generals, give you there [sic] reasons why, which in many cases would seem sound if they did not base their whole argument on comparison with the other fellow's worth or voting ability. The ... question of the order of precedence at Buckingham Palace is child's play to that of the seniority of the officer's lady in the Colony. Even Sam Hughes is afraid to tackle it.³⁵

The snobbish squabbling among the members of the officer-dominated "Canadian Colony" suggests that an inflexible code of social conduct was practised before and during the war. The extent to which this percolated down to the noncommissioned ranks is questionable. The claim that a Canadian officer (in the RFC) could "eat his Christmas dinner with an artillery general, and have supper with one of his gunners three days later, with no sense of the class consciousness which obsessed the British"³⁶ belies the fact

³⁵NAC, Agar Stewart Alan Masterton Adamson Papers, vol. 3, Lt.-Col. Adamson to Maude Cawthra, 17 November 1915.

³⁶Brereton Greenhous, ed., A Rattle of Pebbles: The First World War Diaries of Two Canadian Airmen, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Monograph No. 4 (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987), note on p. 11.

that in many circumstances this would not have been socially acceptable. For instance, a letter sent in July 1916 to Major-General W. G. Gwatkin, Chief of the General Staff, transferred a complaint about a (British or Canadian) military order forbidding a private to dine in the same premises as an officer. The complaint had initially been made by a minister, and was sponsored by other individuals such as the Minister of Parliament for South Toronto (who also happened to be the brother of General Macdonell). Gwatkin's reply was significant:

If you approve, I will send the Chief Staff Officer at Bermuda a copy of the accompanying correspondence, and ask him to consider whether at a time like the present it is advisable to emphasize social demarcations.³⁷

The extent to which social hierarchy concerned Canadian soldiers is difficult to determine. Nonetheless, remarks found in diaries and letters contribute to an impression that "class" and social standing were by no means unimportant, and that men and officers felt themselves to be two distinct social as well as military groups. For example, Corporal O'Brien was reluctant to purchase a twelve-shilling ticket for a vaudeville show at a London theatre: the issue was not money (as he had plenty of it) but rather his conviction that

³⁷NAC, Willoughby Garnon Gwatkin Papers, MG 30, E 51, Gwatkin to Sir Joseph, 7 July 1916.

"N.C.O.'s don't fit into box seats."³⁸ This argument appears to have been supported by civilians. Lieutenant Sinclair's cousin, Deborah, seems to have been leery of the practice of commissioning men from the ranks, but as he explained: "I don't suppose that you agree with the idea of giving commissions to the ranks but it is different in our case to that of the regulars, as lots of our privates are as capable and of as good family as any of the officers."³⁹

Civilians are usually more blood-thirsty than the soldiers who have to do the actual killing; in many respects they also tend to be more rigidly devoted to the outward trappings of military hierarchy and to the officer-man distinction. For instance, if one selects forty-one novels published during and after the Great War in which the war and the CEF are discussed, one finds that thirty of them have principal characters who become officers or, at least, deal at some length with officers as a group. As Crawford Kilian explained, writing specifically of Canadian war novels published before the 1930s, "there are no proletarian heroes ... though a number of working-class characters assume the

³⁸NAC, William Joseph O'Brien Papers, MG 30, E 389, typed diary entry, 10 February 1917, p. 223. Oddly enough, O'Brien had many personal acquaintances in the commissioned ranks, including a colonel and a major. O'Brien was himself commissioned late in 1917.

³⁹NAC, Ian Sinclair Papers, MG 30, E 432, Lt. Sinclair to Deborah, 27 April 1915.

role of squire to the hero."⁴⁰ The hero, it may be noted, is frequently of a wealthy or intellectual family. This may all be viewed as a pro-officer bias: with the exception of Charles Harrison's Generals Die in Bed (1930) Canadian authors have apparently not been able or willing to produce any notable novels featuring the other ranks. (Even the latest, much-acclaimed novel The Wars features an officer as the central character.)

Reinforcing this literary emphasis on officers are remarks concerning "gentlemen", "class", and social distinctions in general. For instance, Ralph Connor's The Major (1917) mentioned "class" or the "classes" on no less than four occasions; and in J. Murray Gibbon's The Conquering Hero (1920) the main character is described by another as a "good Canadian with a proper respect for titles."⁴¹ Bertrand Sinclair's The Inverted Pyramid (1924) featured a central character whose dilemma lay in loving a girl who had been born outside the "unyielding rigidity of his own class."⁴² The immutability of class distinctions was a dominant theme throughout the novel, in a civilian as well as a military context: one character, a working-class man, "passed up a

⁴⁰Crawford Kilian, "The Great War and the Canadian Novel, 1915-1926", unpublished MA dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1972, p. 68.

⁴¹J. Murray Gibbon, The Conquering Hero (Toronto: S. B. Gundy, 1920), p. 26.

⁴²Bertrand W. Sinclair, The Inverted Pyramid (Toronto: Frederick D. Goodchild, 1924), p. 102.

chance at a commission in '15 because I was still too class-conscious."⁴³ Sinclair's hero encountered much the same hostility as did the wealthy Dennison Grant in Robert Stead's novel, Dennison Grant (1920). Grant's relationship with his secretary was condemned by society leaders as a treason against the class system: the secretary lived "in a different world. She has no standing, in a social way. She works in an office for a living."⁴⁴ In Basil King's The City of Comrades (1919), the central personality, Frank Melbury, could not "open my lips without betraying the fact that I belonged to another sphere."⁴⁵ The son of a wealthy man, educated at McGill and Paris, Melbury had abandoned his family and subsequently met with bad luck. As a derelict he eventually teamed up with a fellow unfortunate who, once Melbury had picked himself up and found a decent job, insisted that they could no longer be "buddies" but had to be instead "master and man".⁴⁶

Many historians credit the Great War with uniting the

⁴³Ibid., p. 241.

⁴⁴Robert J. C. Stead, Dennison Grant (Toronto: Musson, 1920), pp. 239-240.

⁴⁵Basil King, The City of Comrades (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1919), p. 14.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 114. See pp. 378-379 for an idealised description of a colonel and sergeant dying in each others' arms.

various social classes in a common fight.⁴⁷ But what happened in Canada? Did the war establish a "new equality, based on heroic values" for Canadians, as Lieutenant Coningsby Dawson claimed?⁴⁸ Did it remove the prejudices of officers towards the "common and unclean men" usually found in the ranks?⁴⁹

Private Thomas Dinesen, before his eventual elevation to officer status, often reflected on the inferior social position of the Canadian private. During his stay in Montreal in the summer of 1917, he observed how poorly regarded the average soldier was:

... it is a beastly nuisance having to walk about in a big city like a poor recruit! I have always reckoned it to be one of the great experiences of war, that we were all one big, socialistic brotherhood--learning to understand the feelings of all the different strata of society; but here, in this everyday place of a town, a private is decidedly a sort of a pariah, hopelessly outside the pale of good, decent society. He is regarded

⁴⁷See Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 26-27, 42-43, 81-89, 92-93. Leed argues that differences in class and rank were not actually abolished by the war, but merely "set aside by the feeling of fraternity and the sentiment of rationality." Ibid., p. 43. Leed calls attention to T. E. Lawrence's belief that "except under compulsion there is no equality in the world." Quoted in Ibid., p. 26, 56, 200.

⁴⁸Coningsby Dawson, The Glory of the Trenches (Toronto: S. B. Gundy, 1918), p. 102.

⁴⁹Ibid. "Until I became a part of the war, I was a doubter of nobility in others ..." Ibid., p. 103. Dawson in his Living Bayonets (New York: John Lane, 1919), p. 191, went even further: the other ranks were composed of "coarse men, foul-mouthed men--men whose best act in life is their manner in saying good-bye to it."

in a contemptuous, half-pitying light and only thought fit to frequent the cheapest restaurants and places of amusement.⁵⁰

Despite Sam Hughes' stated belief that privates and officers were not to be made into two separate classes,⁵¹ the fact remains that the two were perceived by civilians as two exclusive groups. For example, volunteers with the first South African War contingents had received sums of money commensurate with their ranks, \$25 or \$30 for privates and \$100 for officers.⁵² This difference in monetary encouragement was certainly repeated during the Great War by various local communities such as Orillia, which presented its first volunteer privates with \$10 each and officers \$15.⁵³

⁵⁰"In a big city ... an officer is the gentleman and the private soldier only a poor wretched pariah." Thomas Dinesen, Merry Hell! A Dane with the Canadians (London: Jarrolds, s.d.), pp. 48, 84. Dinesen also observed that "sweet, pretty and kind-hearted French girls" didn't go for mere Canadian poilus. Ibid., p. 185. This and the fact that "a private soldier is moved about like a tethered cow" reinforced Dinesen's ambition to earn a commission. Ibid., p. 206. Dinesen's remarks are echoed in those of A. Y. Jackson, who wrote home in 1916 that "a private is nothing, unless he disobeys an order, then there is a big fuss made over him, and he probably gets shot." Quoted in Maria Tippett, Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art and the Great War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), p. 67.

⁵¹Quoted in Alan R. Capon, His Faults Lie Gently (Lindsay, Ont.: Floyd W. Hall, 1969), p. 43. This was from a speech presented in 1905 to the Empire Club in Toronto.

⁵²Carman Miller, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Socio-economic Composition of South African War Contingents," Histoire sociale/Social History XII, No. 16 (November 1975): 234.

⁵³Leslie M. Frost, Fighting Men (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., Ltd., 1967), pp. 24-25.

Canadian civilians entertaining soldiers at their homes throughout the war were also conscious of the difference between the commissioned and noncommissioned ranks:

... soldiers of all ranks were entertained at various houses throughout the town [Pembroke] ... In many homes, there was 'open house' on Saturday evenings for young soldiers, gunners, and officers ... The matter of rank was handled by the men themselves. For example, a group from one battery, consisting of the commanding officer and several NCOs, came to our house all one summer, they planned their visits for alternate weekends, so there would be no embarrassment to the hostess.⁵⁴

The civilian conception of the officer-private division was no doubt reinforced by the portrayals of Canadian soldiers in battalion histories and general narratives of the CEF. Many of these lent credence to the impression that officers were the focal individuals upon which the spotlight of battle constantly shone. J. Castell Hopkins' study of four company commanders in a "typical Canadian fighting battalion" was a representative sample of pro-officer bias. These officers were "lords of their own domain, wielding with even hand the sword of Justice--the high, the middle, and the low among their subjects."⁵⁵ The OC of "A" Company was "a young giant with the face of a boy", who carried himself "with the careless swing of an Irish D'Artagnan" and whose men swore by

⁵⁴Grace Morris Craig, But This is our War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 61.

⁵⁵J. Castell Hopkins, Canada at War (Toronto: Canadian Annual Review, 1919), p. 381.

him. "D" Company's officer, "the Count", was a "paragon of Romance", was rumoured to have a palace in Petrograd and an estate in the Crimea, and had a distinctive walk which every "lance-corporal on leave endeavors in vain to imitate."⁵⁶

Colonel W. Murray's portrayal of an officer of the 2nd Battalion in action ("he was wounded as, on the parapet, he stood like some flaxen-haired Ajax defying the fires of the enemy")⁵⁷ typified the bias in favour of officers, a genre which was prevalent in many books published about the CEF. Capt. (Hon) Alexander Ketterson's On Active Service, published in the last year of the war, was an unparalleled example of a book devoted exclusively to officers. The author's preface belied the contents of the book. Although he wrote that

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have met so many of our brave officers and men on active service. There is a wonderful spirit of comradeship among them--a real fraternal spirit which none but those who have been in the trenches can fully understand.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 380-381. The Count's exploits certainly can raise a chuckle from the modern reader: "'You shoot my men?" he shouted to a "Kamerad" [i.e. German] who had worked his machine gun to the last minute and was now clasping his captor's boots. "You shoot my men? Yes? No?" The narrator gave an ominous "click" to signify the end of the interview." Ibid., p. 381.

⁵⁷Col. W. W. Murray, The History of the 2nd Canadian Battalion (Ottawa: The Historical Committee, 2nd Battalion CEF, 1947), p. 201.

⁵⁸Hon. Captain Alex. Ketterson, ed., On Active Service: Ideals of Canada's Fighting Men (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1918), p. viii.

every one of the 778 submissions (quotations, parables, etc.) in this 215-page volume were by officers. This neglect of the other ranks and similar omissions in unit histories have led one ex-corporal to suggest that some of the books should have a warning notice "For Officers Only" inserted at the beginning of them.⁵⁹

One strongly suspects that the pro-officer bias in literary and historical published material did little towards establishing a "new equality" amongst returning veterans. Certainly the initial discriminatory approach towards pensions and disability compensation augured ill for relations between ex-other ranks and ex-officers. Said one blinded veteran:

That an officer with an arm off should get twice as much pension as a private with an arm off ... is unfair, unjust, unsound, undemocratic, unreasonable, unBritish, unacceptable, outrageous and rotten.⁶⁰

Whether officers themselves (as well as civilians) were willing to embrace wholeheartedly the concept of equality was questionable: Arthur Lower actually credits the war with having endowed Canadian society with "some residual deposit

⁵⁹Will R. Bird, The Communication Trench (Amherst, N.S.: The author, 1933), p. 131. See the section "War Books for the Veteran's Library", pp. 131-133, for a brief discussion of some of the published material referred to in this thesis.

⁶⁰Quoted in Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein, Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919 (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), p. 255.

of class distinction that had not been there before."⁶¹ That class distinction had not quite disappeared with the war was an idea which surfaced in literary works such as Douglas Durkin's The Magpie (1923). At a political dinner, Craig Forrester, the well-off businessman hero of the novel, was seated beside a cynical but perceptive fellow businessman:

"Nice little picture, this," Croker observed. "No garlicky nobodies in this crowd. . . . These are the city's respectable citizens. . . . [sic] the men God has blessed. . . . [sic] the men who used to slap Tom Jones and Bill Smith on the back when they were going out to fight. . . ." [sic]

"A lot of these fellows went out to fight, too," Craig protested.

"Sure they did. . . . [sic] sure they did. But I haven't seen them fraternizing with Jones and Smith since they came back. And I haven't heard of either Tom or Bill getting an invitation to this little party, either."⁶²

"Croker" was indeed perceptive. His observation that post-war business and political leaders were shunning the working-class men they had so enthusiastically packed off to war presaged the industrial unrest of the 1920s and 1930s.

Major Talbot Papineau unfortunately did not survive the

⁶¹Lower, Canadians in the Making, p. 404.

⁶²Douglas Leader Durkin, The Magpie (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974 (c. 1923)), p. 203. See also p. 131 for dialogue by a society matron who believed that the war had encouraged fraternisation between men who had "forgotten themselves" and who had "made friends with each other no matter who they were before they entered the army. . . . Democracy is all right in its place, but--after all--we're not all born equal, or if we are we don't all remain equal, do we?"

war; had he done so, he would have had ample opportunity to test the veracity of one of his observations regarding social relationships:

Certainly life in the trenches break [sic] down certain artificial barriers and makes strange comrades. There will be a beautiful influence in that respect but oh dear how we shall be bored some times!⁶³

Lieutenant Baldwin was not quite in agreement with Papineau: the men he encountered during his military service led him to conclude that the war had made him even more "snobbish" than ever before. His friend Joan confided that "after the war she is going to prick [sic] everyone she meets and sample their blood before she speaks to them."⁶⁴ However, as officers and men arrived home from an unnatural, traumatic experience, they no doubt found little scope for the official

⁶³NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, MG 30, E 52, vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 11 November 1916. For a discussion of the change in one British upper-class officer's view of the working classes see G. D. Sheffield, "The Effect of the Great War on Class Relations in Britain: The Career of Major Christopher Stone DSO MC", War & Society, VII, No. 1 (May 1989): 87-105. Professor Sheffield has co-published the letters of Major Stone with G. I. S. Inglis, From Vimy Ridge to the Rhine: The Great War Letters of Christopher Stone DSO MC (Ramsbury, Marl.: Crowood, 1989). Professor Sheffield has gathered evidence to support the theme of a "social awakening" amongst upper-class officers. Private communication, Professor Sheffield to author, 30 July 1990.

⁶⁴NAC, Harry Warren Baldwin Papers, MG 30, E 65, Lt. Baldwin to mother, 24 February 1918. Baldwin presumably included officers in his condemnation of his fellow soldiers: "... now [sic] I can admit that most of my companions in France were savages--common, common little [sic] people who proved a far greater trial than the real [sic] horror." Ibid., Lt. Baldwin to mother, 30 July 1918.

rank and class distinctions sanctioned by the army. As a mate of Gunner Morison put it, officers would be looking for jobs from privates in peacetime,⁶⁵ and the roles would thus be reversed in some but by no means all cases. Nonetheless, for most men, military service had indeed acquainted them with the rules of a rigid hierarchy; on their return to Canada they doubtless found (if they had not already known) that the military hierarchy they had just left had a healthy counterpart in civilian society.

⁶⁵NAC, W. R. Morison Papers, book 5, diary entry, 28 March 1916.

CONCLUSION

... taken all in all the Canadian Corps was magnificently officered and the men knew it. They took the measure of those who led them and because they honored and even loved their officers--they never let them down. ... I speak to many who were officers. You know far better than I, how your men claimed and won you. They trusted you; their lives were daily in your keeping. ... Discipline was of necessity imposed by authority but it was effective chiefly because it was accepted by men whose officers won their respect.¹

I hated taking orders ... I liked the fighting, but I didn't like the officers too much.²

There is a vast difference, in tone as well as time, between the two above quotes. George Kilpatrick, the author of the first, had many supporters such as A. B. Tucker and Private Harold Peat, who both concluded that a bond of "good fellowship" had existed between officers and men.³ Detractors of this opinion were just as plentiful: Arthur Beriault's

¹National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), George G. D. Kilpatrick Papers, MG 30, E 158, "Response to the Toast", Armistice Day Banquet, The Sir Arthur Currie Branch of the Canadian Legion, 1938, p. 4.

²Arthur Beriault, quoted in "The Van Doos", The Ottawa Citizen, 30 June 1989, sec. E, p. 3. Beriault's comments are similar to those of ex-Signaller C. M. Sprague, who wrote to his nephew that he never wanted to "see an officer again in my life..." NAC, Sprague Family Papers, MG 30, E 523, C. M. Sprague to Eddie, 2 June 1968.

³A. B. Tucker, The Battle Glory of Canada (London: Cassell and Company, [1915]), p. 50; Harold R. Peat, Private Peat (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1917), p. 76. Spence Walton also agreed: "... by and large I'd say that officers were great guys." NAC, War and Canadian Society, MG 28, I 246, Master Tape 5 transcripts, No. A-10.

comments were echoed by many soldiers who had "hated them all" or who had "hated the guts" of particular officers.⁴ Perhaps far more common were those, such as Will Bird and Arthur Hickson, who realised that like the other ranks, officers had been either good, adequate, indifferent or bad.⁵

Nevertheless, most men and officers agreed that some type of separation, often referred to as a "gulf", had existed between the two groups.⁶ This gulf was not necessarily resented by the other ranks as such, but it was certainly recognised as a physical barrier to free and unrestrained communication. While some soldiers claimed that the division of men and officers was an artificial one, in many respects it was one which reflected reality--a reality in which "class" and social distinctions played a significant part. "Democratic" origins aside, the Canadian soldier merely exchanged a civilian hierarchy for a military one when he enlisted in the ranks of the CEF.

Major Talbot Papineau once wrote that the relationship

⁴Quoted in Will R. Bird, And We Go On (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1930), pp. 142-143; NAC, War and Canadian Society, MG 28, I 246, Transcript No. D-9. Mr. Neil remembered having had some officers whom he "completely and utterly despised, some of them errant cowards." Ibid., Master Tape 13A, No. C-113.

⁵Arthur O. Hickson, As It Was Then: Recollections 1896-1930, edited by D. G. L. Fraser (Wolfville, N.S.: Acadia University, 1988), p. 55; Will R. Bird, And We Go On, p. 143. See also Wilfred Brenton Kerr's description of officer-man relations in "Shrieks and Crashes" being Memories of Canada's Corps 1917 (Toronto: Hunter-Rose, 1929), pp. 136-139.

⁶See for instance the interview with John Walks, NAC, War and Canadian Society.

between an officer and his men was "a curious thing--full of psychology."⁷ Many a young officer indeed learnt that leadership was not simply a matter of issuing the appropriate command at the appropriate time. Prejudices on both sides had to be overcome,⁸ and a tentative rapport established between the two. This involved a host of items, including overseeing the men's comfort and basic welfare and learning their names and backgrounds, an exercise which was increasingly difficult in the wake of constant changes in a battalion's composition. (The inadvisability of grouping thousands of men under unknown officers was apparent in some of the post-armistice demobilisation and repatriation disturbances.)⁹ The effort involved in getting to know one's

⁷NAC, Talbot Mercer Papineau Papers, MG 30, E 52, vol. 1, Maj. Papineau to Beatrice Fox, 11 November 1916.

⁸A common prejudice was that concerning Canadian officers being "good mascots". Louis Keene, "Crumps": The Plain Story of a Canadian who Went (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), p. 43. "Nothing could be further from the truth" wrote an outraged Max Aitken in Canada in Flanders, vol. 1 (London: 1916-1917), pp. 91-92. The editors of Canada in the Great World War (Toronto: United Publishers of Canada Limited, 1919) also protested: "This was unjust", vol. 4, p. 4.

⁹Currie warned about the danger of breaking up units and sending the men home under unfamiliar officers. One of the points raised in the report of the "Royal Commission appointed to inquire into and report on the treatment of the men of the CEF while on board the "Northland", December 1918" was the fact that the men had not known their NCOs or their officers, a situation which had led to a general "want of discipline". Nevertheless, the Commission did not find "any trace of ill-feeling between the officers and men." The Northland had been quarantined on its arrival at Halifax (on Christmas day) due to an alleged case of smallpox (which turned out to be chicken pox). Poor food and accommodation had been constant problems
(continued...)

men had many rewards, not the least being the conversations and meals that some soldiers shared with their officers during front-line duty.

There is no doubt that Canadian officers went to war "de luxe" as compared with the private soldier. An officer's privileges isolated him from the majority of his men, and were a constant reminder of his enhanced status in military and civilian society. His uniform, higher rate of pay, unlimited access to food and alcohol, better billets, leave and travel arrangements, all bespoke a prestige which eluded the common soldier.¹⁰ His ability to escape the dreary, interminable routine of cleaning and polishing,¹¹ and the

⁹(...continued)

throughout the voyage, largely a product of inefficient planning and indifferent officers. See NAC, Francis A. Carman Papers, MG 30, E 7, "Report of the Royal Commission..." For additional background on demobilisation riots, etc. see Desmond Morton, "'Kicking and Complaining': Demobilization Riots in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1918-19", Canadian Historical Review, LXI, No. 3 (September 1980): 334-360, and Dave Lamb, Mutinies: 1917-1920 (London: Solidarity, s.d.), pp. 20-27.

¹⁰The problem of prestige and status of the commissioned versus the noncommissioned soldier has certainly not been resolved, at least in the American forces. For instance, see the review of Bonnie Stone and Betty Sowers Alt's Uncle Sam's Brides: the World of Military Wives by Ann Banks in The New York Times Book Review, 8 July 1990, p. 29. Banks calls attention to the authors' claim that the rigidity of the "caste system" still "segregates officer families and enlisted families."

¹¹A gunner with the 43rd Battery CFA condemned the amount of "ridiculous eye-wash and brassoizing" that privates were forced to do: "For we have seen German prisoners splitting their sides laughing at our harness-cleaning operations and yet we thought ours a democratic army." F. A. MacLennan in
(continued...)

authority to send his own correspondence home uncensored also added to an officer's superior standing. In addition, war-time and post-war officer bias, especially in battalion histories and literary works, further ensured that the commissioned ranks received public attention beyond that accorded the private soldier.

However, that an officer had grave, sometimes crippling, responsibilities was a fact which many soldiers conveniently ignored. It was an easy matter to decry the officer's privileges without taking into account the concomitant duties, not the least of which was braving enemy (and "friendly") fire in leading one's men "over the bags". Officers were often scapegoats for the soldier's fears, inadequacies and physical frustrations:

When Sachs was killed, we felt as if someone far nearer than an officer had gone, just as if a brother had been lost. We would go anywhere for him, we would die for him. And yet when we were embittered at times against things in general, we would curse him as well as everything else.¹²

¹¹(...continued)

Hugh R. Kay, George Magee and F. A. MacLennan, Battery Action! The Story of the 43rd Battery CFA (Toronto: Warwick Bros. & Rutter Ltd., [1919]), pp. 184-185.

¹²Quoted in H. M. Urquhart, The History of the 16th Battalion (The Canadian Scottish) Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War, 1914-1919 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1932), p. 336. See Urquhart's "Appreciation of the Canadian soldier", pp. 331-346, for a rather unique (for the time) evaluation of Canadian soldiers and their behaviour in the field. There is also some truth to the psychologist W. M. Maxwell's claim that during the Great War, in the absence of frequent physical
(continued...)

One is tempted to attribute what seems to have been an inordinately high level of drinking activity amongst officers to the burden of their responsibilities. It is nonetheless difficult to justify the consumption of "three whiskys [sic] daily before breakfast":¹³ the copious alcoholic intake of Gunner Morison's officers reached staggering proportions in the comparatively responsibility-free days of the Armistice.

Historians (Canadian and otherwise) have been wont to view the Canadian Great War soldier as an independent, "free-spirited", naturally rugged and gutsy individual who by virtue of his "colonial" roots deferred to his officers only on pain of punishment. This is unfortunately not supported by the written testimony of the men themselves: while many Canadian soldiers did indeed demonstrate appreciable initiative in various facets of their military service (trench raids, for instance), they nonetheless seem to have looked to their officers for at least a modicum of leadership. The nominal respect tendered to their commissioned superiors might not have been wholly uncritical, but it was nevertheless in evidence, even amongst the more

¹²(...continued)

contact with the opposing forces, front-line soldiers often re-directed their (mental as well as physical) hostilities towards officers. Quoted in Eric J. Leed, No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 9.

¹³NAC, Alfred Savage Papers, MG 30, E 472, diary entry, 19 December 1918. Capt. Savage was not shy about referring to his fellow officers in the CAVC as "animals wearing Sam Brownes." Ibid., 19 May 1918.

"democratic-minded" of men.

The majority of Canadian officers did not regard their men as friends or comrades-in-arms. Their "boys" were basically employees transplanted from a civilian to a military setting and as such were subject to a discipline which in many respects echoed that of a slowly industrialising society.¹⁴ While Canadian officers were perhaps not quite so tradition-bound as their British and German counterparts, they nonetheless retained enough of the practice and ideology of an officer class to impress upon the average soldier their seniority. This seniority entitled them to perquisites denied the other ranks (servants, alcohol, extra leave, etc.) but, on the other hand, it also obligated them to exercise a minimum of paternal consideration for their men. How well Canadian officers combined their privileges and responsibilities determined their degree of success as leaders, in a military as well as a personal sense.

¹⁴Desmond Morton and J. L. Granatstein also suggest this point: see their Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914-1919 (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), p. 52.

APPENDIX A

Chargeable Offenses

The following constitutes a partial list of offenses for which Canadian soldiers were charged and disciplined during the Great War. It was compiled from published and unpublished material: battalion histories and daily orders, memoirs, diaries, letters, etc. Punishment for these manifold transgressions took the form of fines (forfeiture of pay), confinement to barracks, demotion, prison sentences (with or without hard labour), Field Punishment (No. 1 or 2), or execution.

- drunkenness
- absent from billets
- 'stragglings'
- stealing from a comrade
- destroying government property
- carelessness in cleaning a rifle
- absent from tattoo/roll call
- neglect of duty
- overstaying a pass
- falling out of night work party without permission
- creating a disturbance in billets
- not in possession of a legal pass
- making a false statement to an officer
- absent from parade
- being in out-of-bounds area
- stealing a jar of company's rum ration
- breaking out of/into camp
- losing by neglect government property
- insolence to an NCO/officer (i.e. private asking a colonel to hold his horse while he mounted)
- being improperly dressed
- absent from church parade
- shouting and using obscene language
- malingering
- throwing snowballs at a pay parade
- disposing of iron rations without authorization
- being in a cafe during prohibited hours
- unshaven on parade
- defacing billeting sign
- erasing entry in pay-book

- falsifying pay-book
- trespassing in a private garden (forfeit 28 days pay)
- obtaining unentitled rations
- improperly dressed whilst on leave in Paris
- being in possession of a bottle of beer in a shop
- wearing sergeant's strips without authority
- failing to prevent a barrel of beer from being stolen
- lighting a fire for the purpose of cooking potatoes
- masquerading as a CSM (Company Sergeant-Major)
- making improper use of a camp police armband
- not wearing steel helmet & box respirator at the 'alert position'
- writing rude message on officers' latrines
- reporting sick without a valid reason (14 days CB & pack drill)
- talking after 'lights out' (2 days CB)
- galloping a horse on a hard road
- forging an officer's name
- failing to report a 'stifled' horse
- refusing to wash out a dixie when ordered to do so
- refusing to attend church parade
- missing spoon from kit (6 days CB)
- hands in pockets during a snowstorm
- self-inflicted wound (to be tried by Field General Court Martial [FGCM])
- striking a superior officer (FGCM)
- firing a shot & killing a fellow soldier (FGCM)
- assault on a civilian (FGCM)
- desertion (FGCM)
- asleep on sentry duty (FGCM)
- stealing or receiving civilian goods (FGCM)
- leaving listening post without permission (FGCM)
- consuming wine or other liquors with prisoners at an estaminet (FGCM)

APPENDIX B

Bank Employees

According to Donald Smith, author of a number of historical essays on Paris, Ontario, late nineteenth-century bank clerks enjoyed a relatively high social status.¹ Although comparatively low paid for their work, bank clerks nonetheless were considered eligible participants in activities sponsored by the leaders of local society: as most came from middle-class homes their appreciation of the social arts and graces suggested that they were fully at ease in polite society. Some of their social superiority might have started to dissipate by the early twentieth century,² but it is apparent that prior to the Great War (and after) bank clerks still occupied a somewhat privileged social position.³

¹Donald A. Smith, At the Forks of the Grand, 2 vols. (Paris, Ont.: Paris Heritage Committee, 1980), vol. 2, Chapter 42, "Bank Clerks", pp. 150-152.

²Ibid., p. 152. Smith quotes an interesting extract from the Brant Review (May 1885) concerning embezzlement by a Paris bank clerk: the gist of the article was a condemnation of the "false position" bank clerks then occupied in Canadian society. "They are elevated by the mistaken kindness of leading families into a sphere for which their salaries are totally inadequate. ... They give themselves airs which would suit them better if they could depend upon a private income instead of a miserable salary. To see these young swells lording it about town, one might mistake them for a new Canadian aristocracy ..." Ibid., p. 151.

³Basil King in The Empty Sack (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1921), p. 41, explained this rather well: "A bank clerk in Canada is a kind of young nobleman at the beginning of what may be a striking career, after the manner of a fledgling in diplomacy. The banking institutions being few and large, the employees are moved from post to post, much
(continued...)

It is significant that many bank clerks became officers in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Various published and archival sources drew attention to this fact: for instance, Private Russell described how a mate, a former bank clerk, received a commission through the intervention of a fellow banker "well up in Officer rank".⁴ Of the 1664 soldiers listed in the Canadian Bank of Commerce's biographical volume (all bank clerks or managers), 663 (21%) were either commissioned immediately upon their enlistment or were eventually commissioned from the ranks. A bank training was evidently regarded by many as an ideal precursor to military service: as Lieutenant Jones, former manager of a Canadian Bank of Commerce branch in Calgary explained it, banking experience taught men to respect their superiors and to do

³(...continued)

like attaches or army officers. As moves bring promotion, the clerk becomes a teller and the teller a cashier and the cashier a branch manager and the branch manager a wealthy man in touch with world-wide issues."

⁴National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Ernest William Russell Papers, MG 30, E 220, MS, "A Private Soldier's Views on the Great War 1914-1918", p. 43. Brig.-Gen. A. C. Critchley was a bank clerk with the Bank of Montreal some years before the war, an experience which was short-lived and "mentally stultifying". Brig.-Gen. Alfred Cecil Critchley, Critch! The Memoirs of Brigadier-General A. C. Critchley (London: Hutchinson, 1961), pp. 24-26. If a commission was not appropriate then promotion within the noncommissioned ranks was an easy matter for an ex-bank clerk: as Capt. Clements wrote, previous banking experience could "quickly lift a private to three stripes and a Sergeants [sic] rank." NAC, Robert N. Clements Papers, MG 30, E 156, MS, "Merry Hell, The Way I Saw It", p. 8.

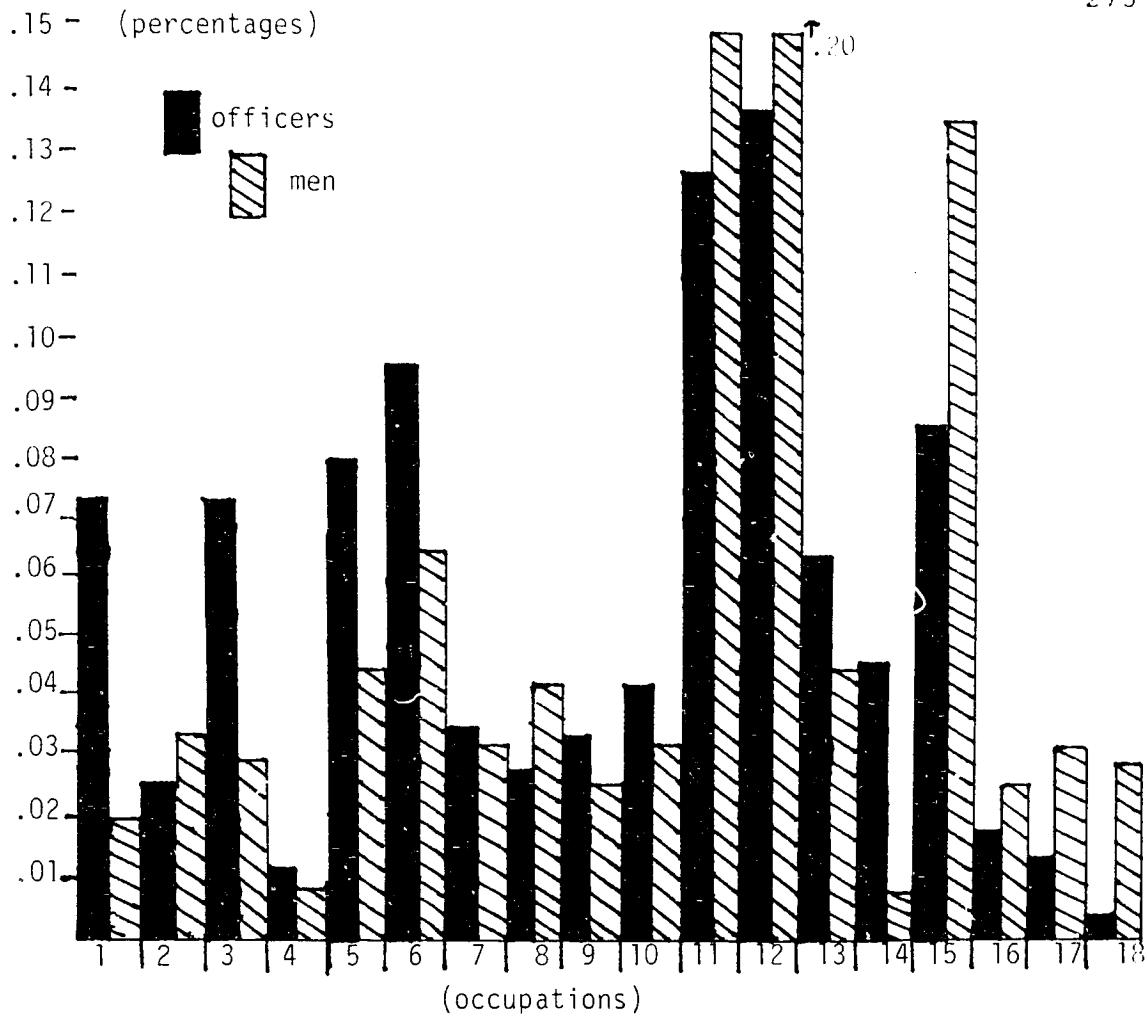
what they were told.⁵

In regards to the Canadian Bank of Commerce men who served in the CEF, it is interesting to note the socio-economic background of those who were commissioned as compared with those who remained in the ranks. The graph below presents an image of eighteen groups of readily definable occupations: these are the occupations of the bank employees' fathers plotted (in percentages) for 578 men and 435 officers.

EIGHTEEN OCCUPATION GROUPS

- 1 Bank managers
- 2 Managers other than bank
- 3 Physicians, surgeons, dentists
- 4 Chemists (pharmacists)
- 5 Lawyers, barristers, solicitors,
notaries, magistrates, judges
- 6 Clergymen, missionaries
- 7 Civil or diplomatic service
- 8 Engineers, all types
- 9 Accountants, architects
- 10 Professors, schoolmasters
- 11 Merchants, contractors, builders
- 12 Farmers, planters, ranchers
- 13 Regular forces, police, customs
- 14 President of own business
- 15 Clerks, secretaries, agents,
bookkeepers
- 16 Commercial travellers
- 17 Manufacturers
- 18 Foremen

⁵Letters From the Front, 2 vols. (S.l.: The Canadian Bank of Commerce, [1920-1921]), vol. 1, p. 180.



What is immediately apparent is that a greater percentage of officers' fathers belonged to the educated professions: for instance, officers had more than three times the number of fathers as bank managers than the men, more than twice the number of dentists, physicians, surgeons and vets, and almost twice the number of fathers in the various legal professions. This does not suggest that farmers' sons did not receive commissions during the Great War, but it does demonstrate how, in the case of these bank employees, middle-class backgrounds seem to have favoured those seeking commissions.

The remaining 651 officers and men had fathers who were either retired, deceased or (especially in the case of the noncommissioned soldiers) had occupations which fell outside the eighteen groups. It may also be noted that the delightful variety of the men's fathers' occupations was, for the most part, absent from the officers' fathers' situation. None of the officers' fathers were carpenters or plumbers, nor were there any weavers or boot makers in their midst. Surprisingly, two officers (but no men) had fathers who were actors; a further surprise was that of the 1664 bank employees, only one man had a father who was an undertaker.

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Hellmuth, Harold Isidore. MG 30, E 109. Microfilm reel M-827.
Hewgill, William Herbert. MG 30, E 16.
Hoerner, Sophie M. MG 30, E 290.
Holder, Gordon G. K. MG 30, E 203.
Houghton, Frank Llewellyn. MG 30, E 444.
Howell, Thomas Easton. MG 29, E 20.
Howland, Harry H. MG 30, E 204.
Johnson, John Merritt. MG 30, E 429.
Johnston, Thomas Dalton. MG 30, E 132.
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Kilpatrick, George G. D. MG 30, E 158.
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Lacey, F. MG 30, E 438.
Leckie, John Edwards, MG 30, E 83.
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Lee, Frederick S. MG 30, E 387.
Lessard, Francois Louis. MG 30, E 41.
Lighthall, William Wilkes Schuyler. MG 30, E 284.
MacDonald, Margaret Clotilde. MG 30, E 45.
Macdonell, Archibald Cameron. MG 30, E 20.
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Morgan, William Clement. MG 30, E 488.
Morison, W. R. MG 30, E 371.
Morris, Hubert M. MG 30, E 379.
Morrison, Edward Whipple Bancroft. MG 30, E 81.
Nanton, Herbert Colborne. MG 30, E 411.
Nelson, Ernest. MG 30, E 459.
Newberry, F. W. MG 30, E 525.
Newcombe, Edmund Freeman. MG 30, E 365.
O'Brien, William Joseph. MG 30, E 389.
Odlum, Victor Wentworth. MG 30, E 300.
Oliver, Edmund Henry. MG 30, E 25.
Papineau, Talbot Mercer. MG 30, E 52.
Parsons, Johnson Lindsay Rowlett. MG 30, E 117.
Paull, Francis Harold. MG 30, E 450.
Peck, Cyrus Wesley. MG 30, E 134.

Peterkin, Irene. MG 30, E 160.
 Pond, James Roy. MG 30, E 325.
 Ponton, William Nisbet. MG 30, E 96.
 Power, Charles Gavan. MG 27, III B 19.
 Pullen, Ernest F. MG 30, E 219.
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 Ross, Arthur Edward. MG 30, E 76.
 Roy, Archibald Carlyle. MG 30, E 47.
 Russell, Ernest William. MG 30, E 220.
 Savage, Alfred. MG 30, E 472.
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 Sharman, Charles Henry Ludovig. MG 30, E 29.
 Shrive, Frank J. MG 30, E 233.
 Sinclair, Alexander Gibson. MG 30, E 237.
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