

*Ans'd  
Jan. 26/53*

447 Castlefield Avenue,

Toronto, Jan. 22/53

Thos. H. Raddall,  
Liverpool, N.S.

Dear Thomas,

Have just happened to notice your article in the Dalhousie Review fall number. I always glance through it, for Dr. Flemington is a brother of our church treasurer and a friend of our minister. Also a cross on our communion table (to another Flemington) reminds us old soldiers of the services and sacrifices in and since our time. He is a frequent visitor to Saint Columba's church and has under his wing a candidate for life service from our church in the person of Mr. Harold Hilder.

You will recall speaking to me on the phone some few years ago at the time the 8th Battalion was having a meeting but our mutual friend Capt. Whitehead had a prior appointment with ~~me~~ you. I was interested to learn of your childhood and its locale. To the boys of your Dad's regiment it was a training ground and a retreat between battles if one were fortunate to have a second call to service. My first respite was from Oppy Wood, after Vimy, Apr. 28/17. and from this location where you were born we trained prior to leaving for France in Dec. 1916. The martello towers and the other points mentioned in your article were and still are fond memories of those of us who are left to wield the pen.

My second packet on Aug. 9, 1918 was received a moment or so after we saw your Dad go down as he was leading his Battalion on to a flat place to capture two woods in front of us, which would then cause the retirement of the German flank and thereby obliterate the enfilade fire which was responsible for so many casualties, among them as fine an officer as any battalion ever had. His example at all times was of the highest quality.

On the evening of Aug. 7/18 we were playing poker in our billet across the street from the chateau which was our officers' HQ, and for fully 30 minutes he paraded arm in arm with Major Saunders around the garden paths, perhaps knowing, as many did, that he was nearing the end.

His pen was mightier than the sword, for his message less than 40 minutes prior to his death was relayed to groups of officers and NCO's, to tell the men, as I did my group, to get into the ~~XXX~~ trenches over the plain as soon as possible and to have our machine gun crews covered at all times. His heroic command that day earned 3 VC's for D Co. and other awards. I shall not forget him. I wish I could take you back to your childhood country in 1915, 16, 17, 18. Ross Barracks from where my own brother left to lose his legs and arms and life at Paaschendaale. To the familiar barracks you speak of where thousands of men during those years transformed the area from there to Dover where our special rifle and deployment work was learnt in battle formation across the farms.

The pleasant country roads we travelled to the little churches in the area you would know and I expect, since I have read your article, suggested by one who knew the area far more than we ever dreamed of. A gruff, kind, rigid soldier who inspired 19 and 20 year olds like myself to be men and do the impossible, still never asking anyone to do what he would not do himself.

I saw Bugs Saunders, as we knew him knew him, in Toronto Hospital just before he died, and we discussed this day in particular and he intimated your Dad wanted to take the boys over himself while Major Saunders was observing in the not too distant rear. That was the main discussion he told me, during their walk on Aug.7 which I shall always remember.

I was so pleased to have come across your article in the Leaside Public Library and I at once understood some of the thoughts in your mind in its preparation. It recalled many to me as in 1916 we were considered fortunate if we were put on mess duty at these same quarters to peel potatoes in line of duty and assurance of a good meal.

Intended to type this for you but if I do I may delete something I think you may not appreciate, so as an outstanding author and with a pen mightier than any sword, inherited from a mighty soldier who has left his strong pen behind in his illustrious son, you should be able to read my scribble which has been done At 1 A.M.

Sincerely,

A.J.Rawling

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(Corp.A.J.Rawling, D Coy. 8th Bn.)