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# "The Dashing Subaltern" Sir Richard Turner in Retrospect

**Thomas P. Leppard**

When war came to Canada in August 1914, thousands rallied to the call to arms. Colonel Sam Hughes the charismatic and controversial Minister of Militia and Defence scrapped his department's meticulous plans for mobilizing the nation's militia and assumed control with amazing, albeit fortuitous, results. By September, 33,000 recruits were training at the hastily constructed Camp Valcartier, Quebec. A month later the first contingent of the legendary Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) sailed for England (the largest military force ever to cross the Atlantic up to that time).<sup>1</sup>

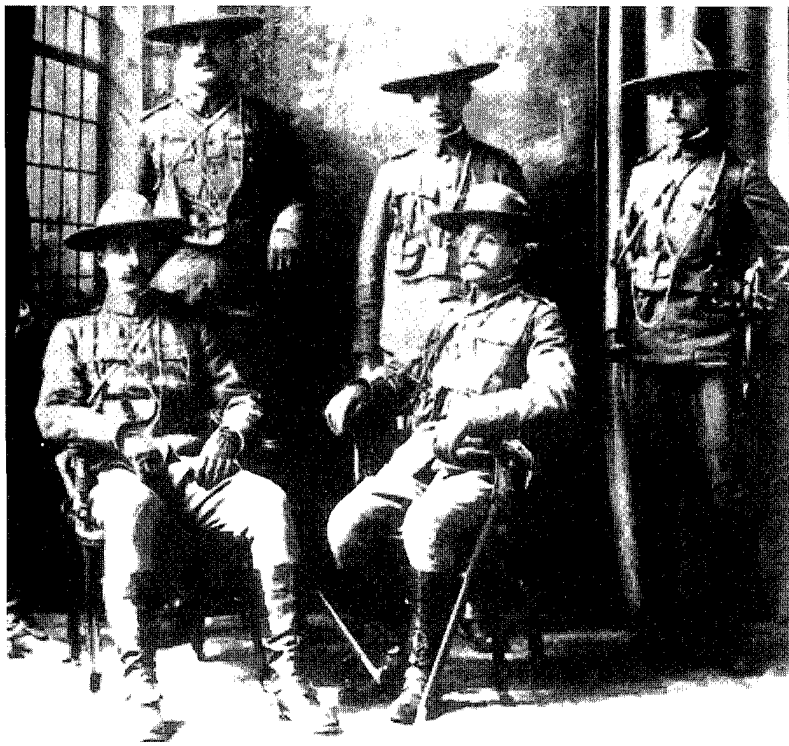
Hughes wanted a Canadian, preferably himself, to command the CEF but the British Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, told Hughes that the inexperienced Canadians needed a veteran General Officer Commanding (GOC) at the helm. To his credit, Hughes shelved his antipathy towards professional British officers and selected Lieutenant-General Sir Edwin Alderson from Kitchener's short list of British generals.<sup>2</sup> However, Hughes insisted that Canadians must command the nation's infantry brigades and Kitchener acquiesced. The Minister's first choice was one of Canada's best known soldiers – Richard Ernest William Turner; a successful Montreal business man, Tory hack and Boer war hero, where he had earned a reputation for reckless bravery and fiery courage in battle.<sup>3</sup> Turner commanded the 1st Canadian Division's 3rd Brigade at St. Julien in 1915, the 2nd Canadian Division at St. Eloi and the Somme in 1916 and, thereafter, Canada's Forces in England.<sup>4</sup>

Turner ended the War Canada's senior ranking general, yet his career has been overshadowed by another brigadier-general

Hughes appointed in 1914, Arthur Currie. From the start, Currie and Turner were the front runners to become the Canadian Corps' first indigenous GOC: a race the talented Currie won easily in June 1917. Currie's impressive battlefield record has made him the favourite of Canadian historians ever since.<sup>5</sup> Turner, however, has become a historical castaway. A peripheral figure in several histories, Turner has yet to be the subject of a single biography, thesis or article.<sup>6</sup> Considering his spectacular feats, defeats and memorable controversies, he deserves better.

Richard Turner was born in Quebec City 25 July 1871 to Emily Marie Turner and the Honourable Richard Turner, a prominent Quebec businessman and Tory politician. Raised in middle-class Victorian affluence, Turner attended several private grammar schools before graduating from Quebec City High School in 1889. Two years later he entered the family firm of Whitehead and Turner, Wholesale Grocers and Lumber Merchants, which he inherited in 1928.<sup>7</sup> His military career began in 1892 when, like many affluent and ambitious young gentlemen of his generation Turner joined the Canadian militia, commissioning as a subaltern in the 10th Queen's Own Canadian Hussars. Aided by Tory patronage and nepotism Turner advanced rapidly. In 1895 he made captain and major in 1900. That same year he went to war.<sup>8</sup>

Within days of the outbreak of war between Britain and Paul Kruger's Boers, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier authorized the despatch of a volunteer force to South Africa.<sup>9</sup> Eager to "have a go" at the Boers, Turner could only secure a berth to the Transvaal by accepting a demotion to lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Dragoons



*Officers of "B" Squadron,  
Royal Canadian Dragoons,  
ca. 1900.*

*Seated (l. to r.): Major  
V.A.S. Williams, Captain  
H.S. Greenwood.  
Standing (l. to r.):  
Lieutenant H.L. Borden,  
Lieutenant C.T. Van  
Straubenzie and  
Lieutenant R.E.W. Turner.*

(NAC C 115280)

(RCD). On reaching the Cape, the regiment was assigned to Brigadier-General Edwin Alderson's Mounted Infantry Brigade.<sup>10</sup>

Turner served with great distinction in South Africa. He fought in at least eight major actions, was decorated twice, seriously wounded three times and was mentioned in despatches. This gained him a reputation for reckless bravery and made him a darling of the Canadian public.<sup>11</sup> His first decoration, the Distinguished Service Order, was won in May 1900 near Pretoria for "swimming the [Viet] river at a crucial juncture in the face of the enemy."<sup>12</sup> Turner along with fellow RCD officer Harold Borden (Robert Borden's nephew) and five men swam their mounts, under fire, across the river and drove off an estimated 30 Boers.<sup>16</sup> In September, while serving as an intelligence officer near Wonderfontein, Transvaal, Turner received the first of three serious gunshot wounds. Recovering quickly, he rejoined the RCD near Lillfontein in November.<sup>14</sup>

On 7 November 1900 Turner was part of a rear guard, that included two twelve pound field guns of "D" Battery, Royal Canadian Field Artillery, protecting General Smith-Dorrien's column when they were ambushed by 200 Boers. Badly outnumbered, Lieutenant H.A.C.

Cockburn, a brother RCD officer, reacted instantly and formed a skirmish line that momentarily deflected the Boer onslaught. Killed or captured to a man, Cockburn's sacrifice bought Turner enough time to extricate the guns. But the Boers were soon in hot pursuit. A fierce running fight ensued. Turner's Colt machine gunner, Sergeant E. Holland, courageously manned his limber-mounted weapon until surrounded. Showing great presence, he then calmly lifted the gun from its mount and, cradling it like a football, grabbed a riderless horse and galloped away. The jubilant Boers, believing at first they had captured the gun, swarmed the carriage. Finding the weapon gone, they resumed the chase.<sup>15</sup>

The rugged Transvaal ponies quickly closed the gap because the horses towing the Canadian field guns became 'blown' and slowed to a walk. With Boers swirling all about, Turner ignored a severe gunshot wound to his left arm and dismounted a dozen troopers for a desperate last stand.<sup>16</sup> Just then, he was hit again, this time in the neck.<sup>17</sup> Trooper A.E. Hilder, a member of the rear guard, vividly recounted what happened next:

The guns were in grave danger of being captured. Lieutenant Turner galloped up and shouted,

"Dismount and hold back the enemy!" I remember him distinctly saying "Never let it be said the Canadians had let their guns be taken." Again Lieutenant Turner galloped up, now seriously wounded in the neck and his arm shattered...But, the important thing was, the guns had been saved by the stubborn resistance of the R.C.D.<sup>18</sup>

The episode reads like something out of Kipling. The handsome young subaltern, fearlessly defying death and the Queen's enemies to rally his men and save the guns. A grateful British High Command, still smarting because of the guns lost at Colenso,<sup>19</sup> awarded Turner, Holland and Cockburn, the Victoria Cross.<sup>20</sup> Turner's citation reflected the High Commands' 'gun loss' angst;

On 7th November 1900, near Lillfontein, two guns of the British column, rear guard to a convoy, were attacked by an overwhelming force of Boers, Endeavors were made to extricate the guns but with Boers following in pursuit in large numbers, the horses of the guns became very exhausted and came down to a walk. Lieutenant Turner with a part of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, although twice wounded, gallantly dismounted his men and from his personal initiative, succeeded in saving the guns.<sup>21</sup>

Invalided home, Turner arrived in Quebec City to a hero's welcome. On 17 September he received the Victoria Cross from the heir apparent, Edward, Duke of York. The investiture, part of a royal review of 5,000 militia troops, took place during a torrential downpour. Undaunted by the weather, thousands of Quebec City's grateful citizenry attended the ceremony and presented their famous son a privately subscribed gilded Sword of Honour.<sup>22</sup> Though not yet 30, Turner seemed the apotheosis of the pluck, courage, and tenacity that Canadians believed made their militia the world's best fighting men.

A decade of promotions, awards, and honours followed his return to the peacetime militia. In 1902 he was breveted Lieutenant-Colonel, received the Queen's medal with six clasps, and commanded the King's Royal Colonial Escort at Edward the VII's coronation.<sup>23</sup> Command of the 10th Hussars followed in January 1903 with his colonelcy confirmed in 1905; from 1907 to 1912 Turner commanded the 3rd Eastern Townships Cavalry Brigade. On 25 October 1911 he became Honourary Aide de

Camp to His Majesty King George V, and in March 1912 Turner ended two decades of militia service transferring to the Reserve of Officers. It proved a short – lived retirement.<sup>24</sup>

On 1 June 1914 Turner returned to the active service list retaining his previous rank of colonel at the behest of his friend, Sam Hughes.<sup>25</sup> As early as 1912 Hughes had predicted that war with Germany was inevitable and that Canada must be ready to stand with Britain. In the spring of 1914 he publicly declared that war was imminent. Events soon confirmed his prophecy.<sup>26</sup>

On 6 August 1914, two days after Britain declared war on Germany, Sam Hughes made Turner the CEF's first brigade commander. Sam's son Garnet, Turner's close friend, was named his Brigade Major. Hughes patronage notwithstanding, Turner's credentials were impeccable. Of the Canadian brigadiers who Hughes appointed, Turner alone had experience in both combat and brigade command.<sup>27</sup> At the age of 43, Turner was embarking on the challenge of his life, not as an adventure-seeking militia subaltern fighting Boer kommandos but as the brigadier of four thousand raw recruits about to face the world's foremost fighting machine – the Germany Army.<sup>28</sup>

When the first contingent reached England in October 1914 they were an army in name only. Guided, once again, by Lieutenant-General Edwin Alderson' patient tutelage, the 1st Canadian Division began to take shape, but not without some growing pains. Enduring a winter of unprecedented misery on Salisbury's sodden plain was made worse by the constant meddling of Sam Hughes and his worthless Canadian-made equipment. The division was eventually issued British kit and shipped to France in February 1915. On the eve of his departure for the front Turner broke several ribs in a car accident. Fearing that he would be replaced if he reported the injury, Turner told no one and shipped out in considerable pain.<sup>29</sup> A month later the division made its immortal stand at St. Julien during the Second Battle of Ypres. As things turned out, Turner's first battle was almost his last.<sup>30</sup>

While Turner's personal courage and skills as a soldier were never in doubt, it quickly became apparent to his superiors that he was



(NAC PA 7907)

*A pencil sketch of Major-General Turner by K. Strathroy around the time he was commanding 2nd Canadian Infantry Division.*

ill-suited to command large formations in the field. This became evident at 2nd Ypres. On two occasions during the battle he had misinterpreted Alderson's orders and moved his brigade to the wrong position thereby exposing the left flank of Currie's 2nd Brigade. After the battle Alderson wanted Turner removed but Sam Hughes would not allow the British to sack his protégé. Like Turner, Currie had preformed nervously in his first action as well. During a critical phase of the battle he had left his command post to search for reinforcements from the 27th Division. On reaching the 27th Divisional headquarters, he received a severe tongue-lashing from the division's GOC, Major-General Snow who demanded Alderson remove Currie for leaving his post. But Alderson, recognizing Currie's potential, refused. In fairness to Currie and Turner, few generals win their first battle. In time, Currie learned how to command, but not Turner. However, in the meantime Hughes had even greater ambitions for Turner. In August 1915 he was promoted to

major-general and given command of the 2nd Canadian Division, the largest field force yet to be led into battle by a Canadian.<sup>31</sup>

The rapid expansion of the CEF from one to two divisions with a third division in the wings set the stage for the formation of the Canadian Corps in September 1915. Hughes wanted to command the Corps himself and keep his portfolio, but Prime Minister Borden told him to pick one or the other.<sup>32</sup> To the relief of Borden, the British High Command, and a growing number of Canadian (mainly Hughes appointed) officers disgruntled by his incessant meddling, the Minister kept the portfolio. If Corps command was not to be his, Hughes then wanted Turner to be the Corps' first Canadian GOC.<sup>33</sup> Despite the Minister's persistent lobbying, this too was not to be.<sup>34</sup> Alderson got the Corps, Turner got the newly-formed 2nd Division and Currie replaced Alderson at the 1st Division. This promotion only served to further expose Turner's shortcomings as a field commander. During the 2nd Division's baptism of fire at the St. Eloi craters in April 1916, these deficiencies were largely responsible for "...the first and worst Canadian setback of the war."<sup>35</sup>

Turner took command of the 2nd Division in England on 17 August 1915. In September they shipped to France where, after a two week apprenticeship, the division took over a section of line south of Ypres, alongside the 1st Division. The 2nd Division's first winter passed in quiet misery: there was too much rain and too little action. The winter's major operations were a series of successful trench raids. One raid received British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig's, endorsement as a model operation.<sup>36</sup> However, the inactivity was about to end.

On 2 March 1916 Turner was summoned by Sir Herbert Plumer, GOC 2nd British Army. He informed Turner that his division would support then relieve Major-General Alymer Haldane's 3rd British Division in a mining operation designed to excise the 700 metre St. Eloi salient from the southern rump of the Ypres salient. Turner protested. He wanted his untried division to lead the assault but Plumer replied that there was not time to train his men. The operation would proceed as planned.<sup>37</sup>

At precisely 0415 hours on 27 March British engineers detonated six mines with a combined charge of 31,000 kilograms of ammonal directly beneath the German line. Debris and bodies were hurled skyward 50 metres obliterating a company of Bavarian jagers and several old landmarks. Trenches on both sides collapsed and trench drains backed up flooding thousands of shell holes and old craters. Ypres' few remaining windows rattled and the blast was heard in far off Folkestone, England. Before the first clods of earth had settled two fusilier battalions from Haldane's 9th Brigade sprang to the attack. In 40 minutes they secured the craters, advanced 200 meters, occupied the third German line and commenced consolidating.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the apparent good start, the left hand battalion had become confused and reported securing craters 4 and 5 when in fact they had misidentified crater 6 and another old crater (later christened crater 7) as craters 4 and 5. Atop the Messines-Wyschaete ridge the Germans spotted the error, filtered one hundred men through gaps in the British line and occupied crater 5 on 30 March. It took a week of desperate fighting before Haldane's under-strength battalions managed to capture crater 5.<sup>39</sup>

In front of the craters things were a mess. Haldane's men held a series of disconnected water-filled shell holes and the shallow flooded remains of the German trench line. There were no dugouts. The German artillery had quickly found the range and pounded Haldane's exposed infantry inflicting heavy losses. Haldane had to relieve the survivors each night which proved to be a gruelling undertaking because the ground was a quagmire, the Germans shelled everything that moved, and the craters had been blown so close together that it made resupply, reinforcement and communication with the forward infantry companies virtually impossible.<sup>40</sup>

On 1 April Plumer accelerated Turner's relief of Haldane's exhausted division by 48 hours. The relief was complicated by the Canadian Government's request that its Corps remain intact. Thus Plumer had to relieve Fanashawe's V Corps with Alderson's Canadian Corps; the British Army's first corps-for-corps relief of the war. Turner relieved Haldane on the night of 3/4 April without incident.<sup>41</sup>



*A smiling Turner shown shortly after his promotion to Lieutenant-General in mid-1917. The ribbon for Turner's VC is clearly visible above his left breast pocket.*

Turner had led his inexperienced Canadians into a tactical nightmare. The battlefield was a bewildering muddy moonscape, the artillery was short of shells, the infantry carried the temperamental Ross rifle, communications in front of the craters were erratic, the German artillery dominated the battlefield, and the incessant rain had backed-up drains, flooded trenches, craters, and shell holes. Yet, what disturbed Turner most was that he had received no orders or instructions from his superiors. His only advice had been Haldane's handing over report.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, displaying his trademark grit and steely determination, Turner put his brigades to work consolidating the forward line. He confidently reported to Alderson that, given enough time, they would get the job done.<sup>43</sup> But time was short.

Just before sunrise on 6 April, following 48 hours of relentless bombardment, the Germans attacked with two battalions and routed Turner's

ill-prepared Canadians from the forward line capturing craters 2, 3, 4 and 5. With his phone line cuts, Turner had been out of touch with the front until he went forward at mid-morning. He immediately ordered a series of ill-advised, uncoordinated, and costly counterattacks. Without effective artillery support and uncertain where the Germans were Turner's men hurled themselves valiantly at the craters. They were shot to pieces. At midday on 7 April, Turner's men reported they had captured craters 4 and 5. In fact they had repeated the mistake made by Haldane's men and were actually in craters 6 and 7. This mistake went undetected until 16 April when the first aerial photographs in ten days revealed the truth.<sup>44</sup>

It is hard to understand why Turner and his staff did not discover the mistake sooner because the aerial photographs taken 8 April clearly showed that craters 6 and 7 were half full of water but not craters 4 and 5. Apparently no use was made of this obvious means of identifying the positions held by the Canadians.<sup>45</sup> All efforts to recapture the craters failed. On 19 April the Germans captured craters 6 and 7 and a week later Turner abandoned crater 1. The defeat cost the 2nd Division 1,400 casualties, the Germans 500.<sup>46</sup>

To what extent was Turner responsible for the defeat? The odds seemed stacked against him from the start. His division was inexperienced, they carried a defective rifle, the artillery was short of shells, it rained incessantly, the battlefield was a featureless quagmire, communications were unreliable, and the German artillery hit anything that moved. Still, a sure-handed tactician might have turned the tables or reduced the odds, but Turner was not that man. In fact, he made several mistakes that made matters worse, notably his failure to correctly interpret the 8 April aerial photographs. The poor showing at St. Eloi convinced the British High command that their earlier assessment after 2nd Ypres that Turner was marginal field commander was correct.<sup>47</sup>

Alderson asked Sir Douglas Haig to sack Turner but once again Sam Hughes, abetted by the timely intercession of the "Canadian Eyewitness," Sir Max Aitken (Lord Beaverbrook), saved him.<sup>48</sup> Aitken met with Haig on 23 April and they agreed that if Turner stayed Alderson

must go. A month later, on 28 May, Alderson was replaced by the capable and popular Julian Byng. Thus commenced a happy marriage between Byng and the Canadians that culminated a year later at Vimy.<sup>49</sup>

Nonetheless, St. Eloi was the turning point in Turner's checkered career as a field commander. The defeat so tarnished his reputation that not even Hughes could override British objections to his becoming the Canadian Corps GOC. He had been lucky to keep his division.<sup>50</sup> And then on 16 November 1916, Robert Borden fired Sam Hughes for insubordination. With Hughes out of the way, Canada's Overseas Minister, Sir George Perley, under increasing pressure from the British, told Borden that Canada must clean up the mess Hughes had made of the Canadian Army in England. The best solution, Perley continued, would be to appoint a "General Officer in command of Canadians in England with proper staff..."<sup>51</sup> Borden had little choice but to accept. Perley wanted Currie for the job but Currie was Byng's protégé and likely successor and had shunned Perley's advances. Turner also fit the bill and, as Perley indicated to Borden, his Tory connections probably would make him "more popular with our following."<sup>52</sup>

Like Currie, Turner was reluctant to accept the job. Perley asked Borden to write a cable which he could use to entreat Turner to accept the post.<sup>53</sup> Borden's persuasive note, Turner's sense of duty, a firm shove from Byng, and Perley's tacit agreement that he was still a candidate for Corps Command, proved irresistible.<sup>54</sup> Turner arrived in England on 27 November and assumed his new post on 5 December 1916. In June 1917, when Currie succeeded Byng as Corps GOC, Turner was passed over without being seriously considered. Sir Douglas Haig tried to soften the blow by making him senior to Currie when both were made Lieutenant-Generals on 23 June 1917.<sup>55</sup>

Despite his disappointment, Turner's record in England was impressive. Though at times his subordinates found him to be hot-headed, irascible, and condescending, he proved a capable manager of men and material, laudably disentangling Hughes' bureaucratic labyrinth with sure handed professionalism. His lumber business experience likely provided the

administrative skills he used to clean up the mess left behind by his friend Sam Hughes.<sup>56</sup> In short order he standardized and updated the infantry's training syllabus, sent home or to France a host of surplus officers, cleared out the log jam of reinforcements at the depot battalions, and mediated the medical corps' continual bickering.<sup>57</sup>

Some problems remained intractable but things in England did better and consequently, so did things in France. Thus Turner made a significant contribution in the transformation of the Canadian Corps into "much the best Corps in the British Army..."<sup>58</sup>

Relations between Currie and Turner were another matter. Competitors for Corps command, the antipathy between the two men, which had never been far below the surface, resulted in several memorable spats. A slightly paranoid Currie believed that Turner and his staff were his real enemy, trying to usurp his command prerogatives. In fairness to Turner, Currie's charges were groundless and whatever he personally thought of Currie, Turner never allowed their animosity to interfere with the welfare of the Corps. In fact, he supported Currie on every major issue, most significantly the controversial break up of the 5th Division in early 1918. Even after the war Turner, on several occasions, publicly defended Currie's reputation.<sup>59</sup>

Turner's much publicized defeat at St. Eloi confirmed his shortcomings as a field commander. In battle, a divisional commander must be an imperturbable manager of men, material and chaos. Unfortunately he was never able to manage the chaos inherent in battle. Controlling this confusion over an erratic telephone system, deciphering a stream of conflicting reports, calming panicky officers, restoring order, and making the correct tactical decision more often than not, was beyond Turner's ken. In that sense Turner was the quintessential amateur soldier: a leader and a fighter, not the manager that modern war required. St. Eloi confirmed that Richard Turner forever remained the dashing subaltern whose fearless courage and fiery presence inspired men and made him one of Canada's most famous soldiers at the turn of the century.

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## Notes

1. Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War 1914-1919* (Queen's Printer Ottawa, 1964), pp.18-32.
2. A.A. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War 1-1919. Vol I* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1) pp 62-63. Hughes, an ardent teetotaler, believed British officers were, to a man, barium loafers.
3. National Archives of Canada (NAC) RG 24, 1815, Vol.2, Folder 4, File 40. Record of Service: Sir Richard William Everett Turner.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Currie's biographies include: Daniel D. Dancocks, *Sir Arthur Currie: A Biography* (Toronto, 1985); A.M.J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie* (University of Toronto Press, 1987); Hugh M. Urquhart, *Arthur Currie - The Biography of a Great Canadian* (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd. 1950); Ian Brown, *Currie and the Canadian Corps 1917 - 1918* (University of Calgary 1990, Unpublished MA thesis).
6. The best treatment of Turner until recently is Desmond Morton's *A Peculiar Kind of Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); a prescient analysis of Canada's Overseas Ministry and its baffling wartime administration of our forces in England.
7. NAC RG 24, 1815, Vol.2, Folder 4, File 40. Turner's Service Record.
8. *Ibid.*
9. J.L. Granatstein *et al*, *Nation: Canada Since Confederation*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1990), p.133.
10. NAC RG 24, 1815, 4-40, Folder 16, File 2. Alderson quickly earned the respect and admiration of the Canadians and the British high command; the Canadians because he treated them fairly and was a cool hand in a tight spot; and the British high command for his adept handling of the "wild colonials." these factors contributed to his selection as GOC 1 Canadian Division in 1914.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Dagg, p.64.
13. J.L. Granatstein & David J. Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping: From South Africa to the Gulf: Canada's Limited Wars* (Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd., 1991) p.77. Harold Borden was killed in action 21 July 1900.
14. NAC RG. 24, 1815, 4-40, Folder 16, File 2.
15. George C. Machum, *Canada's V.C.'s* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd. 1956), pp.28-29.
16. NAC. RG. 1815, Vol. 4-40, Folder 16, File 2.
17. John Swettenham, ed., *Valiant Men Canada's Victoria Cross and George Cross Winners* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), p.23.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*. (London: Sydney Macdonald & Co. 1979), Chapter 20, pp.224-242, recounts the British defeat and loss of ten field guns at Colenso, 15 December 1899. Pakenham's pithy observation that "[British] courage [was] matched only by stupidity," explains the defeat in a nutshell.
20. Sweetenham, p.23. One of the guns Turner saved is on permanent display at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.



21. *Ibid.*
22. NAC RG. 24, 1815, 4 - 40, Folder 16, File 2.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Dagged, pp.3-4.
27. Dagged, pp.62-63. Arthur Currie joined B.S.'s 5th Garrison Artillery in 1895 and took command in 1909. In 1913 he took command of the 50th Infantry regiment (Gordon Highlanders) and completed the Militia's staff course. Currie also considered Garnet Hughes a friend; a relationship he lived to regret. M.S. Mercer, a Toronto lawyer, joined the 2nd Regiment (Queen's Own Rifles) in 1885, becoming its colonel in 1911. He also passed the Militia staff course.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Daniel D. Dancocks, *Welcome to Flanders Field: The First Canadian Battle of the Great War: Ypres 1915*: (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), p.76.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Dancocks, p.117. Turner's already legendary bravery was witnessed again at 2nd Ypres. With enemy bullets whining off the brick buildings at Mouse Trap Farm (Brigade Command Post), Turner buckled on his revolver and declared that "he was quite prepared to die there, but surrender, he would not." His staff stopped his headlong dash to join the firing line.
32. Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War: 1914-1918*. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1964), p.113.
33. *Ibid.* p.114.
34. Dagged, p.541.
35. Dancocks, pp.238-239.
36. Morton, p.72.
37. NAC MG 30, E 46, Vol. 2 File 10. R.E.W Turner Papers.
38. Sir James Edmonds, *History of the Great War: Military Operations - France and Belgium, 1916*. (London: MacMillan & Co. 1932), pp.177-179. For a detailed discussion of the St. Eloi battle, see Tim Cook, "The Blind Leading the Blind: The Battle of the St. Eloi Craters," *Canadian Military History*, Volume 5, Number 2 (Autumn 1996), pp.24-36.
39. Edmonds, pp.177-179. Nicholson, p.139. In February, two of Haldane's brigades had been mauled at the Hooge crater fight. Replacements had not yet arrived when they fought at St. Eloi and the situation was made worse by 600 cases of trench foot.
40. Edmonds, pp.183-184.
41. NAC MG 30, E 46, Vol. 2, File 10. Major-General Richard Turner's Report on 2nd Division's Operations at St. Eloi. 3-16 April 1916.
42. NAC RG 9, III, C3, 4098, Folder 42, File 3. Haldane's Handing Over Report to 2nd Division, 3 April 1916.
43. Turner's Report on 2nd Division Operations at St. Eloi 3-16 April 1916.
44. Thomas Leppard, *Richard Turner and the Battle of St. Eloi* (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 1994), pp.43-57.
45. Nicholson, p.142.
46. NAC RG 9, III, 3835, Folder 25, File 4. Daily Intelligence Summary: 2nd Canadian Division 19-30 April 1916.
47. Leppard pp.97-101.
48. Nicholson, p.142.
49. Morton, p.74. Alderson was made inspector-general of the Canadian Forces in England. An embarrassment to the Canadian Government he was removed in September. He bore the shame to his grave.
50. *Ibid.* pp.97-98.
51. NAC. MG 27, II, D 12, Vol. 7, File. Borden Papers. Perley to Borden 22 Nov. 1916.
52. *Ibid.* Perley to Borden 22 November 1916.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Morton, *Peculiar Kind of Politics*, p.98.
55. *Ibid.*
56. Leppard, p.116.
57. Morton, pp.189-190.
58. Denis Winter, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment* (London: Viking Press, 1991).
59. A.M.J. Hyatt, *General Sir Arthur Currie: A Military Biography*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp.137-146. Garnet Hughes, Sam's son, was GOC of the disbanded 5th. Sir Sam never forgave Currie and criticized Currie's generalship in the Commons on many occasions.

A native Calgarian, Tom Leppard received his MA in Canadian Military History from the University of Calgary in 1995, under supervisor Dr. D.J. Bercuson. He teaches history, social studies and coordinates the prestigious International Baccalaureate Program at John G. Diefenbaker High School. He is a senior history examiner for the IB program and in that capacity gives workshops to IB teachers across North America on how to teach IB history. He is a frequent guest lecturer in Canadian Military History at the University of Calgary and teaches a continuing education course on Canada and the two world wars.

### **"Stick to the Guns!"**

A Short History of the 10th Field Battery,  
 Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery,  
 St. Catharines, Ontario.  
 Softcover, 150 pages, 13 illustrations, 19 maps.  
 Author Colin K. Duquemin, 56 Highland Avenue, St.  
 Catharines, ON, L2R 4J1. \$17.45 total cost.