

Meeting to discuss the death of Howard Curtis, 1916

Around 1905 Sid Garrett and his family moved from the first farm in Douro Township and bought one with better soil in Otonabee Township. The Curtis family were neighbours and they were also from Warminster, England like the Garretts. Sid Garrett and Howard Curtis were in the local militia together, the Rangers, before the First World War. Stan, who had five years experience in the Peterborough militia and was a lieutenant in the Peterborough Rangers, enlisted on August 7, 1914, as a private three days after the British Empire declared war on Germany. His brother, William, enlisted in Moose Jaw on March 14, 1916. At the time, he was living in Fremington, Saskatchewan—possibly farming land that had been granted to his father.

Figure 1 Stan wounded, 1915



After a few weeks living in tents at Valcartier Quebec and receiving basic training, Stan sailed for England. For four months from September 30, 1914, to January 29, 1915, he lived in tents on the muddy Salisbury Plain. He embarked for France on February 7, 1915, with the 12th Brigade of the 2nd Battalion. He was wounded on the thigh and arm on April 24, 1915, in the Second Battle of Ypres, according to a typed hospital report—or on May 1, 1915, if you believe another document which seems to have been written in the field and is likely more reliable. An undated medical report of 1915 indicates that the membrane of his right ear was ruptured when a shell exploded. His wounds were reported in the *Peterborough Examiner* on May 6th, 1915, along with his picture and the names of eleven other Peterborough-area soldiers who were wounded. Stan was released from the hospital on October 31, 1915, and declared fit for duty. He was granted two months furlough on November 12th with permission to return to Canada. Although we have no confirmation that he took the leave, it's possible that he spent Christmas of 1915 with his family in Canada.

On February 24, 1916, Stan was examined by a medical board and the report states that he was unconscious for three to four hours after a shell exploded in his vicinity in April 1915, leaving him with headaches and a full feeling in his head. On September 9, 1916, Stan was back in hospital, this time with a wound to his eye. On October 2, 1917, he was in hospital with a “mild” case of diphtheria, and October 8, 1917, his record indicates he was “seriously ill with diphtheria.” Stan was hospitalized with diphtheria until April 1918, and a medical board report of June 30, 1918, concluded he had “a partial loss of function of heart.”

The story told here is built around Stan's service record, recollections of my mother, various publications including the *Heritage Gazette* of Trent Valley Archives and twenty-three letters written from the front by William Howard Curtis. Three times these letters drew me to the Archives of Canada, where I held

them in my cloth-gloved fingers and felt Howard's emotions. As I studied the letters, I came to understand Howard's compassion for his fellow soldiers, his courage, and his very strong connection with his family and his Otonabee roots.

Pages were missing from many of Howard's letters, most likely evidence of censorship. Several letters were undated; and, in what I think was the last letter Howard wrote, ending with “WRITE WRITE WRITE,” his handwriting was sloppy and my guess is that his nerves were frayed. Pages one to four of that letter are missing, and I imagine that

Howard, who was now a machine gunner—always the first target of German sharpshooters—poured out his anxious soul in those censured pages.

The box containing the Curtis letters stored at Archives Canada holds two versions: the originals in various shapes, sizes, and colours and a transcribed collection packaged with a cover and beginning with a poem penned by Rupert Brooke. The poem, one of several by Brooke that inspired soldiers, sheds light on the patriotic fervour of the time and it also suggests one way that the person who created the compilation dealt with her emotions.

Comparing the original letters of Howard Curtis and the transcribed versions, I was intrigued to discover several differences. Not only had grammar been corrected, but also words and meaning had been changed. And the biggest difference was that Howard appeared as a cautious person in the transcribed version, whereas he was more of a risk-taker in the originals. In a letter dated August 14, 1915, the transcribed version states, *I am going out on an expedition in front of the lines to-night. Wish me good luck. We never take risky chances.*

The original included the following text, missing in the transcription:

I had a successful expedition last night and I had a bit of fun on the side. A chum and I left our trench about six o'clock last night and we crawled out a ditch to some old buildings which are just in front of the German barbed wire. . . .

About an hour after darkness set in I heard something crawling on the left of me. I waited till it got quite close so I could cover it with my revolver. When the object was about five yards in front of me I yelled out "hands up" and I thought I had a German, but to the contrary it happened to be our own corporal who was coming to join us. He sure stuck up.

The character of Julia in the story below is based on my assumption that she revised parts of her son's letters, and I have guessed she did this because she could face neither Howard's bravery nor his death.

One final word about the letters Howard Curtis wrote. Tim Cook, one of Canada's leading experts of the First World War, recently wrote an award-winning two-volume history of that war. His goal was to reveal the experience of front-line soldiers, and to do this he relied extensively on the letters of soldiers like Howard Curtis. Cook used a quotation from one of Howard's letters as the title for his chapter about the Somme. The chapter title is the type of message that Canadians hoping to see their loved ones again did not want to read: *You people at home can't realize how bloody this war really is.*

George Curtis and Sid Garrett, two main characters of the tale below grew up in Warminster-Bugley.

It was late November 1916, the wagon driver squinted to keep the icy snow out of his eyes. He squeezed the reins as he thought of his conversation with his wife at the beginning of the ride. "Don't get George upset again," she had insisted.

"George doesn't understand what's going on over there," he had replied.

She had warned, "His family has suffered enough. Our boys would want us to keep things on an even keel."

They rode in their open horse-drawn wagon, mesmerized by horse hoofs pinging on the frozen road, Sid and Emma Anne Garrett, thinking about the meeting ahead of them. Since seeing Julia and George at church that morning, they had been dreading this get-together. But instead of speaking about their concerns, they said little.

The road ahead looked like hundreds of white bed sheets spread as far as the eye could see. Two sets of lines resembling train rails dissected the sheets, with a line up the middle of each one dug out by horse hoofs.

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Rupert Brooke, 1914

A mile or so later, as they were nearing the home of their friends, Emma Anne broke the silence. “You have the letter, Sid?”

Sid removed his glove, snaked his right hand into the folds of his fur coat, and felt the familiar envelope.

“Yes,” he replied, patting the outside of his coat.

Emma Anne mumbled her approval in a voice that Sid found to be strange. He turned to make sense of her unusual voice. In their thirty-six years of marriage, he had seldom read such strong emotions on her mouth and chin. Was she angry, afraid, or sad?

They made their way in the frigid weather for another half-mile without speaking, while shielding themselves from the season’s first snowstorm.

Sid wrapped the reins around his hands, yanked back, and ordered Maud to halt. Once the horse had stopped, the elderly couple blew their icy noses, descended from the wagon, and turned to face the brick house. In their ankle-length beaver coats, they waddled forward looking like giant beaver that lived in North America over two million years ago. In front of the veranda steps, they stomped their feet to shake snow from their coats and boots.

Emma Anne said, “You know, Julia and George might want to be alone.”

“We gave our word this morning that we’d arrive at three.” Sid paused and added. “It’s for Stanley and Howard.”

“I’m still worried we’ll be intruding.”

“It’s gotta be done.”

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With the mention of her soldier son’s name, Emma Anne’s chest tightened and her mind filled with muddled images of letters from Stan over the last two years announcing that he was either in hospital from wounds to his leg and arm, or gassed, or knocked unconscious from an exploding bomb. The day before, she had received a note from her son saying he had influenza again. She hoped he would write a long letter soon to say he was better.

Sid and Emma Anne felt rudderless when it came to the Great War. It was as if it were a gale buffeting their daily lives. *The Examiner* made them worry when it printed articles about the deaths of Peterborough lads. It seemed like their boys were in another world when strange names came up like Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, St Julien, Langemark, Gheluvelt, Kitchener’s Wood, Mouquet, and the Somme. These place names were becoming part of everyday life, but the Garretts did not know where to find them on a map and on any day they had no idea where their sons were—or if they were alive. Letters from Stan and Bill blew the parents off course with words like Whiz-Bang, Jack Johnston, and potato masher: all killing devices. Letters from other Peterborough boys published in *The Examiner* about death, imprisonment, and injuries further upset the couple. Conversations with friends and family in Peterborough, Otonabee, and Douro were filled with words such as diphtheria, influenza, trench foot, gangrene, firing squads, mustard gas, and chlorine gas. Their lives were filled with fears, doubts, and confusion. They knew that the main thing was to stay calm and not let fear capsizes their lives—and that was difficult to do.

Now in front of the Curtis home, Emma Anne walked to the steps and grabbed the handrail with her gloved left hand. Sid followed. They crossed the veranda painted as smooth as tooth enamel. Emma Anne rapped on the screen door and listened for footsteps. She calculated the time it would take her friend Julia to come from the kitchen to the front door, and when Julia did not appear Emma Anne turned to her husband.

Sid looked at the unanswered door and shrugged his shoulders as if to say—just keep knocking.

Emma Anne turned back towards the bevelled glass and saw Julia approaching. Julia had her eyes glued to an Oriental runner as if trying to avoid treading on the delicate patterns. She wore a navy dress protected by a sky blue apron. Julia bit her lip while she adjusted her hair and reached to open the door.

“Thank you for coming,” Julia said, yanking the heavy door towards her with two arms and stepping back. “The tea’s ready. I’m afraid I’m . . .” she paused, turned away, rubbed her neck, and turned towards her husband, George, who stood close behind.

“Not her normal self,” George added. “Thanks for stopping by, it’s . . . the tea’s ready. Your feet must be frozen!”

Sid replied, “Thank God for buffalo robes. Life savers.”

George shook Sid’s hand, “Good to see ya. Should we put Maud in the shed?”

“No. She’s got her blanket on. A little cold won’t kill her. I’ll check later.”

George took his guests’ heavy coats and hung them up on brass hooks in the dark oak hall, brushing off a few snowflakes. Julia took Emma Anne’s hat and ran her index finger along the edge of the long brown feather. As Julia admired the plume, Emma Anne observed the sadness in her eyes and trembling chin, sighing to herself, there but for the grace of God go I.

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Without a word, Julia turned towards the parlour and the others followed. The hostess sat in front of her silver tea service and clasped the heavy teapot. Halfway through pouring the first cup, she set down the elegant heirloom, looking uncertain of what to do next. The room was silent for an uncomfortable time, except for the grandfather clock beating out a reminder that life is counted in seconds.

Julia looked at Emma Anne and tilted her head as if to ask what she took in her tea, knowing full well the answer. “Black,” Emma Anne said. “I like my tea black, like our horses.”

The Garrett’s sat stiffly on the upright burgundy couch. Their backs rested against the intricate doilies pinned at shoulder level. They steadied themselves against armrests on opposite ends of the sofa, and Sid’s fingers stroked the wooden insert that ascended the entire arm like a giant brown rose.

Julia held a delicate china cup with a red flower in her piano-playing digits and passed it to Emma Anne’s stubby fingers.

After tea was served, everyone became engrossed in drinking and arranging their cups on their saucers, glancing about the room, avoiding each others’ eyes, and steering clear of what drew them together.

Sid put down his beverage and fiddled with his cup in the middle of his saucer. He was a striking man, conscious of his appearance, with a neatly trimmed large grey moustache, thick hair combed into place. But this appearance of law and order was flawed by the renegade circle imprinted on his hair where his hat had rested. He rubbed his knees and started.

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Figure 2 Howard Curtis, 1916



“Such bull! Be home by Christmas. My eye.” Sixty-four year-old Sid paused, thought about his words and rubbed his chin as if searching for inner wisdom. “How long has it been?” He looked at the others and found an answer. “Third Christmas will be here soon.”

George interrupted, “Don’t you remember they was ’ome the first year? In England. Your Stanley and our Howard were bivouacked a few miles from where we grew up. Up there on the Plain above town. Came down. Spent Christmas with our family. That’s home enough, I’d say.”

The four friends chuckled at George’s wit and Sid’s mind filled with fresh thoughts. “Who would have thought? Our lads went to defend the Empire and met their next of kin in Warminster. Wonder what they thought of that?”

George leaned forward as if to answer Sid’s question, but before the host could speak, the guest continued. “Lot’s worth saving. Especially the simple life we had in Wilts. Glad both me sons were there and drank at the Cock, climbed Cley Hill, met family. Seems like yesterday when I left—almost 50 years ago.”

Emma Anne barged in to end Sid and Georg off-topic stories, “Twenty-six months. We’ve been fighting Fritz for twenty-six months.”

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Julia swivelled her svelte fifty year-old body towards Emma Anne’s rotund sixty year-old form; met her eyes across the room, and nodded as if emphasizing that twenty-six months was a long time to be away from home. Julia bit her bottom lip and smiled, revealing her fine teeth and delicate features.

Julia’s attention was drawn to the window and she turned to watch a canary yellow leaf parachute to the ground. She mumbled, looking at Emma Anne as she spoke, “Another one of our lads just fell in Flanders.”

Emma Anne said, “Such a difficult time for our boys.”

Julia interrupted, speaking like she was short of breath, “Em, it’s not just our boys; German mothers are losing their sons, too. And the French. The British. Australians. Austrians. Russians. Romanians. Everybody. Everything. Everywhere. They’re killing horses, cattle, ruining fields, towns, cities, houses, hotels, hospitals. Howard told us about it in his last letter before the Somme. He described a church at Mouquet. Not a brick in place. Rubble. That’s what they’re doing. Making rubble out of everything.”

Julia turned to George and they exchanged cold stares. George’s disapproval put another gust of wind in Julia’s sails.

“Buildings, towns, factories, horses, children, old folks, and young folks uprooted, gone. For George it’s all about the Rangers. Isn’t it, dear? He’s not wrong. We must remember our boys, especially . . .”

Julia paused, sniffled, and wiped her nose on a lace hankie.

The hostess fished in her teacup as if stirring up tea-leaves to change her fortune. Eyes locked on the bottom of her cup, she said, “You have to see it to believe it. I want to read you something. I’ll be right back.”

Julia went to her mahogany desk in the hall. She screwed on the lid of the ink bottle. She placed the bottle in the middle of a pink blotter stained with blue-black ink. She screwed the lid on the family fountain pen and stored it and a brass letter opener in a small drawer in the middle of the desk which she slammed shut, and lastly she did what she came for, gathering up a pile of pages with a rustling sound.



Figure 3 The tombstone of Howard Curtis is in the third from the right in the back row

2. Letters of Howard Curtis, 1914-16

Julia returned to the parlour with a handful of coloured pages: blue, green, beige, and white—some short, others long. Some flimsy, other more substantial. She sat down while the others watched, Took each page and one-by-one and spread them on the coffee table in front of her, admiring each page, some written with pencil, most in ink and one was typed.

Julia selected a beige page from the pile and she pressed against the creases as if she were smoothing a wrinkled tablecloth for a Christmas dinner. “Listen to this,” she said.

It’s quiet here just at present so I’ll write a few lines. We are in the front line again, just to the left of the First Battalion. The trenches are only forty yards from the Germans. Yesterday both sides got quite friendly for a few hours. They talked to each other and then suggested going out between the trenches and exchanging souvenirs.

“Imagine that,” Julia said looking into Sid’s eyes, “close enough to speak to a man you are sent to kill.”

She continued reading the letter, *One of our men yelled over and said if the Germans would come half way we would go out and meet them.*

Julia now seemed to be recalling from memory, *A sergeant and two privates accepted the challenge and climbed over the parapet. Then three of our men went out to meet them. They shook hands and exchanged cigarettes and small gifts. It was like declaring peace for a little while.*

“I bet,” she said, “if you left it up to our lads and Fritz, they would have declared the war over long ago.” Julia’s voice was stronger than it had been for days. Her eyes had new life, do you believe it? Our Howard writing about war like it’s kids’ play? I’m sure the soldiers on both sides would be friends if they weren’t enemies. Julia hesitated and seemed to be trying to grasp the meaning of her own words. “You know what I mean.”

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George and the two guests nodded as if they understood Julia’s explanation, but raised brows showed they were confused. Julia locked her eyes on her husband’s face. She nodded as if to say, do you understand now why I’m suffering? George glanced at Julia and turned to the window. It seemed like nobody spoke for thirty tic-tocs of the grandfather clock. George eyed his guests, turned his stare towards the bright chandelier on the high ceiling, rubbing his hands together. His face flushed. In his mind, he started reciting names: Robert Anderson, Alphonse Bolin, Bert Carpenter, Tom Doherty, Robert Emery, Patrick Fitzgerald, Frank Girven, Harry Hastie, Roy Hawkins, John Hatcher, Harold Long and Howard Curtis. And there are lots more, he said to himself, Otonabee lads, our neighbours, killed by the Hun.¹

George and Julia’s eyes met in a short stare, and it was clear that they were unable to comfort each other with words or deeds.

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Julia turned away from George and her mind’s eye fixed on an image of the narrow column in the newspaper when the Examiner published her son Howard’s letter describing how Bert Carpenter was killed as he slept beside Howard. This thought of Howard made her feel dizzy and her stomach started to churn.

Julia fished in the pile for the original letter, extracted a sky blue page, rubbed her eyes and continued, “Listen to what Howard said about Bert Carpenter: *France, May 26, 1915. Bert Carpenter was lying asleep in his dugout when a shell exploded at the top of the trench. A piece of shell hit him on the head and he died without a murmur.*”

“It took over twenty years for that young man to get to where he was in life. Ready to take a wife and raise a family. In a second, his life was over. Gone.”

Julia looked at her friends as if asking what to do next.

There was a long pause filled by the sound of hard snow striking the window pane.

Emma Anne turned towards her husband Sid and nodded.

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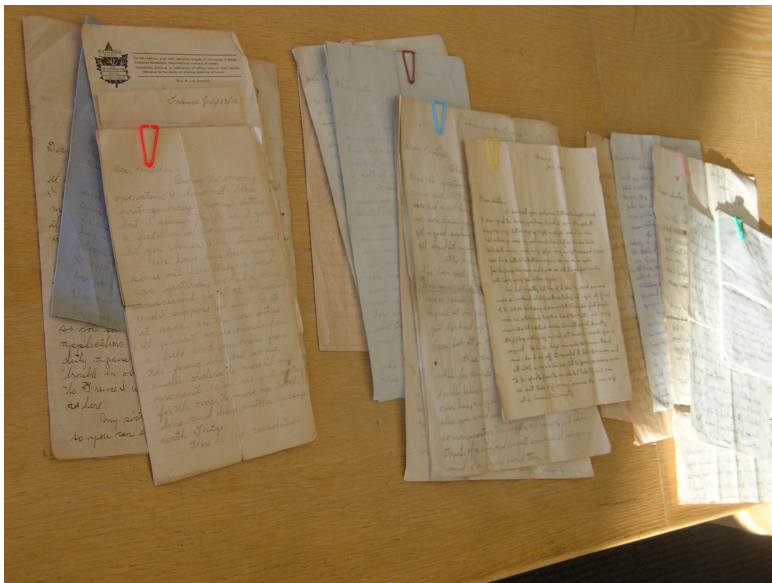


Figure 4 Letters of Howard Curtis on a table at Archives Canada

“Since we’re reading letters,” Sid started, “I have one from our boy. From our man. You’ll see what I mean.”

Sid suspected that George and Julia knew what he was about to say; nevertheless, conscious of the tension in the room, Sid assessed his hosts’ readiness to hear his message. He saw that Julia was still staring blankly, lost in her thoughts, while George nodded as if telling Sid to go ahead. Sid reached into his vest pocket, pulled out an envelope, withdrew a letter, and unfolded it like it was a treasure map.

He started, Dear Father and Mother, Just a line or two in answer to your most kind and welcome letter which I just received. Well Mother, you have likely heard before now the bad news of Howard Curtis’s death. He was killed the last time we were in the trenches. We just came out now for a rest that we certainly will enjoy. Howard was my best pal. We stayed together like brothers ever since Bert Carpenter was killed. Howard and I were on pass together in England and we came back to France at the same time.

Sid added, “Sounds like these lads were fighting to keep each other alive. I’m not so sure they care about the Empire.” He looked around the room and sensed the others wanted him to read the letter and stop his preaching.

We buried Howard in a graveyard and he has a quiet resting place. I carved a small tombstone out of hard white chalk and placed it on his grave. I would write to Mr. & Mrs. Curtis but there is nothing I can say that would help. When you see them you can tell them their son died a hero. His bravery will never be forgotten in the history of our good old battalion and the glory of the Peterborough boys. Howard was well liked by his comrades. Now my brave pal sleeps peacefully, his duty done for his God and his country, free from danger and harm. May God rest his soul. – You will express my deep sympathy to Mr. & Mrs. Curtis.²

Sid brought the creased page close to his face and reread the last sentence to himself. He placed both pages on the table and folded them along the original folds, avoiding the stares of his friends.

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Sid grabbed the sofa arm as if anchoring himself to his seat.

He continued, “Imagine. Only twenty-two. Terrible age to bury friends. What’s going to happen when this mess is over? Remember the big parade before the boys left? Mayor Buller promised to care for the men’s families. But what about the men themselves? Who’s going to mend their broken bodies? Broken spirits? Ten dozen Peterborough lads signed up for a year or until the end of the war. Took just five days. They paraded in Central Park. Said goodbye. Do you think they would have signed up if they’d known they were going to bury their friends in the mud of Flanders?”

At this point, Sid looked at George’s frown. Sid knew that George considered him to be a dangerous pacifist and Sid glared back as if to say, you can’t stop me from thinking. Sid opened his mouth as if to speak when the clock rang out the hour.

Before he could say anything, Emma Anne moistened her lips and said, “Four o’clock, time to be on our way.”

Sid interrupted his wife, “What are these young men going to be like when they come home? Maimed? Crazy? Just plain lost? They signed up for an adventure. The Examiner told us the Hun was creating Armageddon. Truth is it’s the generals on both sides who are creating hell for their men by sending them head-first into hopeless battles. Cannon fodder.”

Sid saw images in his mind of the forlorn faces of wounded men he’d met recently at the train station. He felt their anger.

Sid checked out the faces of George and Julia and noticed their lips were thin and down-turned, but he continued.

“A returning soldier told me that just before sun up they heard a shrill whistle. He climbed a ladder, stumbled over the parapets, and charged across no man’s land, an open field of mud, corpses, and razor wire.”

Sid looked at the others and realized they had heard enough. He returned to his thoughts and recalled being told by the wounded soldier at the Peterborough station how sniper fire, machine gun spray, and shrapnel cut down Otonabee boys as they moved duck-like towards the enemy, hoping their tin hats would protect their skulls. Hit by stinging hot metal, they burrowed into the mud, and their wounded flesh started to rot.

Emma Anne looked at Sid—squinted, and he understood that she wanted to leave.

Nobody spoke and they avoided each other’s eyes.

“The victors in this war,” Sid continued, “are not people. Not the Hun. Not the Empire. That’s for sure. It’s the lice, fleas, and rats as big as cats that are winning so far.”

George cleared his throat as if to speak. Sid glared at him. The host backed off, stirred his tea, and remained silent, except for three pings of his silver spoon against the bone china cup. He took a sip and seemed to swallow without tasting the tea.

Figure 5 Report of Sid Garrett shooting himself

George blurted, "The war's not all bad. Look at all the jobs it gave us at the Quaker."

Sid stood up, his face now pink, and looked at Julia, "I better check on Maud. I'll take her a couple of your oatmeal biscuits. Oats and sugar. Two best ways to a horse's heart."

George said, "Sid, nobody is perfect." And his eyes sent daggers towards his friend.

Sid's face went red and he made for the front door, coatless, and the screen door slapped behind him.

George took a deep breath, ran the fingers of both hands through his hair and began, "Loose lips will lose this ruddy war. The boys need our support. There is no room for slackers."



George pointed at Emma Anne. "I don't like to say this to a good friend, but you know it's true. Your Eva's Tom, he's the first one that should have signed up. Being from Northern Ireland. Instead he got a job at the Quaker and now he's a father of a wee girl."

Emma Anne stared at George and nodded slightly. George interpreted this as if she were saying she knew he was right and in her heart wished that her new son-in-law had volunteered for the army and shipped out before he had met her Eva.

George looked at Julia and she shook her head, fingered a large clipping and started to talk, "George, we know that Sid's embarrassed about what happened last fall. Anybody could have made the same mistake. Trouble is the newspaper blew it sky high."

Julia held up the clipping. "Listen to this for a title. *Shot by gun he had prepared as a thief trap. And then in big black letters: Mr. Sydney Garrett of Otonabee seriously injured when he walked into the trap set for chicken thieves.*"

Julia smiled softly at Emma Anne and said, "Must have been hard on you, dear, to have your husband in hospital and all this talk in the newspaper. Your son was wounded in France. And the newspaper didn't miss that either. Ended the article with, *He's the father of Private Stanley Garrett who was injured at St Julien.* I bet they were mocking Sid with that line."

Julia looked at Emma Anne and she could see by her distracted look that she was reliving her husband's incident in her mind. Julia also read in Emma Anne's face that she felt tired and wanted to return home.

"Wonder what's keeping Sid? Excuse me," Emma Anne said as she stood up and went to a window. She watched Sid as he finished his conversation with Maud and turned to enter the house. She saw him veer towards Parkhill Street, put his hands on his hips and wait for a young lad to arrive and hand him a brown envelope. He took a pen from the lad and signed a register.

"Looks like Sid's got a telegram," Emma Anne said. "Must be for you folks." The story of Heber Roger filled her mind and she felt her throat pumping as she recalled how the *Examiner* had written that Heber was killed one day, and several days later had to retract the article with the news that Heber was discovered in a German prisoner of war camp.

Sid entered the room and handed the telegram to Julia. "It's addressed to you, Julia," he said, eying George.

Thoughts of Heber Roger surfaced in Julia's mind, too. No. It's bad luck to get your hopes too high she said to herself.

Figure 6 Military Medal awarded for bravery and devotion under fire



Julia opened the message and read aloud.

Dear Madam,

On September 9, 1916, I recommended your son for the Military Medal for his untiring efforts in taking in wounded men from the front line at Mouquet. Your son will never be forgotten. He was awarded the Military Medal some weeks ago. No doubt the medal will be forwarded to you in due time.

Regretting that I can do no more to alleviate your sufferings, I am

*Respectfully yours,
P.A. Alexander - Captain*

Julia slouched in her chair and began to weep as if she had just learned of her son's death for the first time. "I wish Howard hadn't been so brave!"

Emma Anne, who was still standing, tilted her head and looked at her friend now shaking in her chair. Emma Anne took three steps to Julia's side, placed her arm around her friend. "Makes no sense. It must stop. It's not Christian."ⁱⁱⁱ

¹ These eleven names are from the fifty-three listed on the memorial in Keene, Ontario, with the following inscription: IN MEMORIAM DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE MEN OF OTONABEE WHO SERVED, FOUGHT AND DIED FOR FREEDOM'S CAUSE IN THE GREAT WARS, 1914-1918.

² In this picture Howard's tombstone is in the back row and second from the right.
http://www.cwgc.org/search/cemetery_plans.aspx?cemetery=67808&mode=1, Date accessed: 31 August, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a discussion on the war viewed by Canadian pacifists see Socknat, Thomas P., "Canada's Liberal Pacifists and the Great War," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 18 (4) (1983-84), p. 30-44.