Letters home from the Western Front

Sharon Slater
email: sharon.slater@limerickleader.ie

ON the outbreak of the First World War a great number of Limerick men and some women enlisted to help fight for the cause as they saw it. Some of those who enlisted would also have done so for the guaranteed pay check.

It would take a few months before the horrors of war began to be reported in both the Leader and the Chronicle from 1914 to 1918. These would often take the form of lists of the fatalities.

Occasionally, individual military men were profiled in the papers. These cuttings show just two of these profiles from 1915. Thomas Joseph O'Donnell, was born in 1858 the son of P O'Donnell, of Killeedy, Ashford, County Limerick. He trained to be a doctor. While still in his twenties, he entered the military serving in Egypt in 1881. After twelve years' service, he became Major, Royal Army Medical Corps. In 1901, he was created a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order for his service in South Africa. He also became a Lieutenant Colonel that year and was promoted to Colonel in 1910.

He served in both Europe and India throughout the First World War becoming Surgeon General in 1915. He was named in the King's Honours Role in 1916, becoming a Sir. He retired 18 January 1918. O'Donnell was fond of hunting, shooting and racing, and rode many winners in South Africa and India.

David Scanlon was the son of Michael and Margaret Scanlan, of Kingsland, Ballinleena, Bruree. Margaret Scanlan. In 1911, he was living with his parents and was an Army Reserve Pensioner. He emigrated to America aged 31, in 1913. He enlisted in the Royal Munster Fusiliers in Seaforth, Lancashire.

Sadly, he was killed in action at Aubers Ridge only eight days after this letter was published in the Chronicle. There were 139 members of the RMF 2nd battalion killed that day including 20 Limerick men.

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Surgeon-General O'Donnell

Again Mentioned in Despatches

A couple of months since, Sir John French, in his despatch on the opperations of the British Expeditionary Force, paid a high tribute to the initiative and organising powers of Surgeon-General T J O'Donnell, D.S.O. in connection with the motor ambulance convoys, etc. This distinguished officer, a County Limerick man, has been the recipient of farther praise from the Commander-in-Chief in his despatch relative to the battle of Neuve Chapelle, published on Thursday, 15th inst. Sir John French says:—

"Since the date of my last report the general health of the Army has been excellent. Enteric has decreased, and there has been no recurrence on any appreciable scale of the 'foot' trouble which appeared so threatening in December and January. These results are due to the skill and energy which have characterised in a marked degree the work of the Royal Army Medical Corps throughout the campaign under the able supervision of Surgeon General T J O'Donnell, D.S.O, Deputy Director-General Medical Services; bat much credit is also due to divisional, brigade, regimental, and company commanders, for the close supervision which has been kept over the health of their men, by seeing that the precautions laid down for the troops before entering and after leaving the trenches are duly observed, and by the establishment and efficient maintenance of bathing places and wash houses, and by the ingenious means universally employed throughout the forces to maintain the cleanliness of the men, having regard both to their bodies and their clothing."

May 11 1915

A COUNTY LIMERICK SOLDIER.

Tribute from American Firm

Private Daniel Scanlon, B. Company, Royal Munster Fusiliers, serving with the Expeditionary Force at the front, is a native of Banogue district, Co. Limerick. In September, 1913, he emigrated to New York, but on the outbreak of the war he crossed to Ireland and joined the above gallant corps. He has been through various engagements, and fortunately escaped unscathed. A correspondent has forwarded us a letter addressed to Private Scanlon from Mr James H Barnett, of the Consolidated Gas Company, of New York, where he was employed, and in which he says he showed a postal card received from Scanlan to a number of his fellow-workmen, "and all rejoiced to know that you were still in the land of the living, and apparently enjoying good health. Mr Kelley, our General Superintendent, was so much interested that he took the card to the general office, where he showed it to the President of the Company, Mr Cortelyou, and all the officers and high officials, whose best wishes you have for your future welfare. I sent you a copy of the 'New York Herald' containing an account of your services with this Company, how you stood with your fellow-workmen and employers, and your progress at the seat of war. In short, from this account, you would scarcely believe that you are the Daniel Scanlon referred to. It shows, however, the feelings of our superiors towards you, and the cause that you serve, when they take the trouble of having the incident of your sending a postal card published in the leading paper of the United States. The American papers, with few exceptions, are still pro-