

A MILITIA UNDER ARMS: SAM HUGHES'S ARMY

'You are not going across, Frank, are you?' said Ethel.

'If I can. There is very strong competition between both officers and men. I have been paying little attention to soldiering for a year or so ... But now things are different. If I can make it, I guess I will go.'

'Oh, Frank, *you* don't need to go,' said Ethel. 'I mean there are heaps of men all over Canada wanting to go. Why should you?'

'The question a fellow must ask himself is rather why should he stay,' replied the young officer.¹



Canada went to war on August 4, 1914, buoyed by an enthusiasm and dutiful sense of responsibility much like that Ralph Connor described in his hugely popular novel *The Major*. There was no separate declaration of war, for the dominion, as a colony, was bound by Britain's decision to fight Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Few dissented, and, almost everywhere, there were cheering crowds and genuine displays of enthusiasm. Other than the sure belief in a British victory, no one knew what to expect. The sole reference point for Canadians was the South African War.²

The man who was to define and shape the Canadian war effort was Sam Hughes, the Minister of Militia and Defence in Sir Robert Borden's government. Hughes was an Ontario Orangeman, newspaper publisher, businessman