

In the Catholic Army Hut.

We knew the engineers could do it if they put their minds to it. It was only the infantry who said that the Sappers were on the job "for the duration," to which the engineers retorted that the digging of that trench and the laying of those gas and water pipes entailed not only spade work but severe brain work too.

Howsoever, thanks to the jeers of the infantry and soft words from the hut (plus a few soft drinks judiciously applied) the work was successfully carried through.

On one occasion when handing out some refreshments to the said "diggers," we suggested—the sun being high in the heavens—that they must find it hot work digging. Hard work is it, said one of them reflectively. "Well, I reckon we try and make it as easy as we can," and he continued to gaze at the landscape. They were born artists, every one of them, which may have accounted for the time they took.

But, nevertheless, we are grateful to them, for it is thanks to them that we now have a few gas rings with an urn sitting on top of each. In fact, we are getting on. "Gee Whizz," said a man on coming into the hut last week, "got your electric lights fixed. Why, this outfit gets more like home every day. What do you say, boys?"

"It's jake," said one of them.

"Bet your life," said another.

"Best thing in the works," said another.

"Well, I don't know," said a fourth. Give me those first few weeks, with just a light glimmering here and there. It looked picturesque-like, and then romantic, and then when a bunch of the boys put up those choruses in parts, it used to sound real good." "Tell you what," said one who had not spoken before, "but when you get fixed up proper, this is going to be a dandy hut all right. The boys feel at home in this joint."

And so they drift in and out, knowing they are always welcome, and some bring their songs, and some their love affairs; and some bring their tragedies, but more often their comedies, and as each differs from each in feature, so each one is different in character, and the place teems with a living interest which only humanity can give. For in truth:—

"We are no other than a moving row

Of magic shadow shapes that come and go."

Meanwhile, there is a constant buzz of talk carried on in French and English. "Look here," said a man to me one night, "you shouldn't be slinging French like that in this hut." "Why not," I asked. "Why, on account of the shell shock boys. They'll be figuring they are back in France."

Serving behind the counter is never dull. No matter how great the rush, the boys always find time to say things.

Someone asked recently for something that

had to be fetched from the kitchen tent. "Do you mind waiting?" asked the worker. A distinct pause followed. Then said the man with slow deliberation, "Well, I reckon I don't, if only you'll keep on talking to me." Having delivered himself of this opinion, he stared mournfully into space. Behind the counter the workers tried to equal his composure, but failing, with one accord they all laughed together.

Sometimes, among our clients comes a boy from the guard-room, a prisoner on parole, so to speak. Parole, after all, or whether he merely beat it, while the Sergeant was stirring his tea.

It was soon after this that it occurred to some of us that it might be a work of mercy to visit "those that were in prison." Not wishing to go empty-handed we obtained permission to take something with us. Accordingly, we made our way somewhat timidly to the guard-room, with the idea of depositing our offerings on the doorstep in testimony of our visit. But the inmates of the "clink" received us in a body, and the Sergeant, being busy studying the V.A.D. Unit over the palings, we were invited in. Fearing this was against regulations, we hesitated. "Come right in," said the bugler who was doing the honours. "Sure," echoed the clink, and in we went.

It was the first time we had ever been in the clink, and we looked round with interest. It seemed almost too tidy for comfort, and I thought a few art prints would have enlivened the walls and an Eastern rug or two would possibly have improved the floor. But in spite of these omissions, the Company didn't seem unduly depressed. In fact, they were all tails up. So much so, that when the Sergeant Major passed along that way ten minutes later, and saw the victims of the clink drinking lemon squash and swallowing buns, he stopped short and said with conviction:

"I often thought it before, and now I'm sure of it. This place isn't a clink at all. It's a home."

It is on this home-like note that I wish to conclude these jottings, but before doing so, I want to make a definite statement. In the last number of *Pat's Post*, I sought obscurity. Now, I don't. For if there was one boy, there was a dozen boys who came to me and said, "There's a piece about this Hut in *Pat's Post*," and forthwith he read that piece to me. Now it is bad enough having to write these notes, but to have them read aloud to me is more than I can bear. So will the boys please take notice, that it is I, and no other, who has perpetrated these notes; and to prevent any further risk, hereby sign my name

—May Quinlan.

Editor's Note.—We regret that, since this copy was sent to the printer, the high winds have done very serious damage, necessitating the removal of the tent. A sectional hut is now being placed on the same spot, and endeavours are being made to open it at a very near date.