

"V.C." Heroes

And There Are Others Whose Records Are Yet to Come.

FOR valour in the face of the enemy the highest gift in the British Empire is the Victoria Cross. It is awarded only where the circumstances surrounding the bravery of the soldier, whether he be officer or man, are such as to pick him out of fighting ranks where heroes are the order of the campaign. Since its introduction to the British Army during the Crimean War it has been the most coveted of all decorations, and even in a conflict of armed millions like the Great War, comparatively few are presented.

British Columbia sent a record breaking proportion of its able-bodied men to the war, leading all the provinces of the Dominion in that respect. All units returned with glorious records.

CORP. FILIP KONOWAL, V. C.

IN the long list of heroic anecdotes of the Western battalions the story of Corporal Filip Konowal's bravery is one of the most remarkable. Corporal Konowal was a 47th Battalion man, and the 47th was, in the earlier part of the war, a British Columbia unit. The corporal was an old veteran of modern battlefields, having served with the Russian army. A Russian by birth, he sprang to arms when his adopted country called for his military services, and fought in some of the heaviest fighting along the western front, particularly on the Somme. His great feat of killing, single-handed, 52 Germans and wiping out a machine gun nest that had held up his battalion's attack occurred in the heavy fighting around Lens.

LIEUT. HANNA, V. C.

WHEN the 29th Battalion came back to Vancouver it brought Lieut. "Bob" Hanna, the winner of the Victoria Cross, regarded by his comrades in arms as one of the greatest of them all. Lieut. Hanna comes from County Down, in Ireland, and he joined the 29th at Hastings Park in November, 1914.

The glorious feat for which he was given the highest award was performed on August 21, 1917.

He was at the time Sergeant-Major of the 29th (Vancouver) Battalion. He had enlisted as a private, and had won his way through the ranks by steady bravery. He fought at the Somme and St. Eloi. All told, he had been over the top twenty-two times. Hanna not only

killed a score of Germans; he saved a battalion, perhaps two.

LIEUT.-COLONEL "CY" PECK, V. C.

THE culmination of a splendid military career during the war came with the awarding of the supreme honour to Colonel "Cy" Peck of Prince Rupert, officer commanding the famous 16th Battalion, Canadian Scottish. Colonel Peck joined the overseas forces on the day Britain declared war, and was away with his men just as soon as the government could send him across. It was said by General Currie that Colonel Peck "lives for the 16th Battalion," and that "no braver or kinder heart ever beat in the breast of man"—eloquent praise from Canada's foremost soldier and the leader of the brilliant Canadian corps in France.

SERGT. W. L. RAYFIELD, V. C.

THE story of the feat of arms for which Sergt. W. L. Rayfield, of the 7th Battalion, was awarded the Victoria Cross is told in the following official despatch:

"For most conspicuous bravery, devotion to duty and initiative during the operations east of Arras, from September 2nd to 14th, 1918. Ahead of his company, he rushed a trench occupied by a large party of the enemy, personally bayoneting two, and taking ten prisoners.

PTE. M. T. O'ROURKE, V. C.

THIS gallant soldier had distinguished himself in many personal encounters with the Germans and had a wonderful record even for the 7th Battalion. The official record is: "For three days and nights Pte. O'Rourke, who was a stretcher-bearer, worked unceasingly in bringing in the wounded into safety, dressing them, and getting them food and water.

"During the whole of this period the area in which he worked was subjected to very severe shelling.

"Seeing a comrade who had been blinded stumbling around ahead of our trench, in full view of the enemy, who were sniping him, Pte. O'Rourke jumped out of his trench and brought the man back, being himself heavily sniped at while doing so. Again he went forward about fifty yards in front of our barrage under very heavy and accurate fire from enemy machine guns and snipers, and brought in a comrade.

"On a subsequent occasion, when the line of advanced posts was retired to the line to be consolidated, he went forward under very heavy enemy fire of every description and brought back a wounded man who had been left behind."