

First Impressions of a New Blue.

Dear Chas:—

"One more trip in a Red Cross lorry," I muttered, as the dozen of us lurched out of the train, and piled, bag, great coat and crutches, into the palpitating motor van that presently honked out of the station, slipped down some macadamised dips, and grunted up the corresponding rises, until it suddenly came to a stop, apparently "all in," and the driver called back, "all out!"

We weren't feeling so comfortable, that we wanted to remain there with our knees interlocked, and our canes and crutches forming very palpable lines of protusion, obtrusion and intrusion. Besides we were superlatively hungry. So we wearily disentangled what Fritz and the doctors had spared of our respective anatomies, and cautiously made the descent to the pavement.

A whiff of salt air smote me in the nostrils, as I picked up my kit bag for the two dozenth time that day. And there, right in front, were the Straits with all their memories of Shorncliffe, Boulogne, and Hospital ship. "One more stage nearer the front," I sighed resignedly as I followed the party through a very unimposing brick doorway.

I caught a glimpse in the office of blue shoulder-straps, and Charley Chaplin badges, a whiff of boiled onions, as the rear door opened, and a rattle of military typewriters. Ah! What wouldn't I give to see the white shirt-waist, the elaborate coiffure, and the daintily manicured fingers of an old-time Canadian typewriter girl! I was just thinking of pretty, scented, Flossie Keys in our old office in the C.P.R. building, when I heard a voice that was certainly not Flossie's, calling out—"Private Blighty."

I became aware that a sergeant at the table was looking my way. (How many sergeants have looked at me and how few have ever looked pleased.) I feebly admitted my identity, as I had done at six previous hospitals, and made the usual personal and vital confessions.

But suddenly an unexpected question flashed out, "What is your occupation?" I wasn't quite as flustered as the 79th Jock, who when graciously asked that question by Sir Sam on an inspection, responded, "I'm a Protestant, Sir." But just for a moment I was taken back. I had been doing nothing for so long in hospitals, and doing everything for so long before in Sam Hughes' Army, that it took several seconds to get my experiences traced back far enough to answer reminiscently—as Flossie's image recurred to mind—"Bookkeeper, I believe." Yes, there was once upon a time when I wore a crease instead of creases in my trousers, and filled ledgers instead of sandbags.

I was just thinking of my last row with the boss, when it was forced on my notice that my party had again got in motion, and was once more following the sergeant. Only that sergeant knows