

## A Y.M.C.A. HUT SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE.

BY AN OBSERVER.

TEN-TWENTY a.m., and the men smoking outside in the sunshine look through the open windows into the big hut, watching with interest and an occasional smile and nod of recognition the few workers, especially the ladies in their blue overalls, as they hurry to and fro, opening up counters or bringing in those gay bunches of flowers, poppies, lilies, tall blue campanulas, grasses, and wild things of the fields and woods, so good to see on coming in from the glare and dust of the camp into the welcome cool of the hut.

10.30, and in come the men with a cheerful rush, the supreme excitement for the time being who can be first at the billiard tables, at the tea-urns, at the tobacco counter, or the library.

Even the hut workers feel the contagion and recognise the vital importance of the moment, serving with all possible promptitude and with a willingness that stands by them to the end of the dusty day.

A blue-overalled lady may be a bit too doubtful of the Tommy who wants unlimited boxes of matches for imaginary "chums over there" (with a jerk of the thumb over his shoulder), but I fancy she is a bit sorry for the hot, perspiring fellow who comes in for a cup o'tea, and is forthwith sent by a cruel fate down the length of the hall for the indispensable 1d. ticket. Those tickets! Yes, life is not a bed of roses, even in a Y.M.C.A. hut, but I fancy there's little if any cause to quarrel with the good folks serving under the aegis of these four well-known letters. They are out to give such help and cheer as they can, and they both "can" and "do," and leave no path untried.

Is it books or papers to read that you want? Or a quiet place in which to write to someone at home? Or a game of billiards, chess or chequers? Or something to eat, drink, buy, or smoke? Or do you want something in the educational line, French, English literature, shorthand? Or, by way of a change, a lecture, a cinema, an entertainment? Or is it perhaps something in the more serious line? Then come along. All sorts come. There's "Jock," there's "Canada," there's the boy from the north, from the south, from the east and the far west. Even "Chinky" has a way of blowing in, to the amusement of all, and with his infectious grin, and in spite of all rules and of his ignorance of the English tongue, he emerges