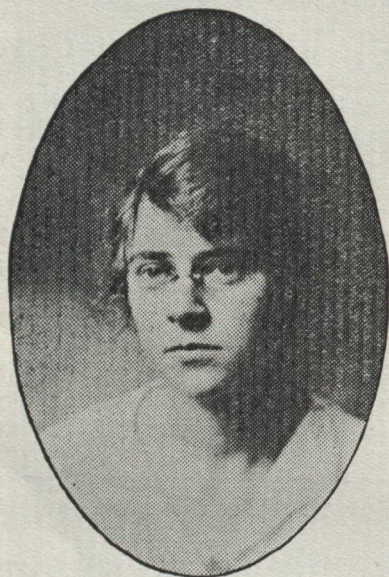


Our Soldier Women and a Camp

By Dorothy G. Bell



THE WOMEN OF CANADA—What has been their part in this great war? A very great and noble part, a part as courageously fought and as bravely carried on as the drive of our Allied men in France, a part without which our Canadian armies would have found it more difficult to gain the victory which is theirs today. That part has been to stay at home, to work, to wait, to watch and to pray, and to smile on through their tears, the while their nearest and dearest, their all in all, suffer, fight and die—they powerless to serve or help in any other way. How much easier to have given themselves! to fight side by side with their men and face with them the death and danger surrounding them on every side! Theirs is the harder way, yet they have fought on at home, their hearts as noble, their spirits as true, their sense of duty as keen, their love and patriotism as deep as that of our valiant men in arms. The heart of every Canadian woman is the heart of a soldier in France, and carried locked within it are sacrifices and sufferings to equal those borne by our men at the front, for they have given and lost and given and given again. The spirit of patriotism is strong within our women of Canada, and stronger in none is imbued that great spirit than in our soldier women of the Delta, a spirit which has bid them carry on with willing hand, though often heavy heart, a work second to no other small area in the Dominion.

So deep their sense of loyalty, so intense the longing to help, among the women of this little community, that before the war was a month old they had called together a meeting to decide how best they might render service in the crisis, the result of which was, that on September 4th, 1914, exactly one month after the declaration of war, an organized society was formed, known as the Delta Women's

Patriotic Society. From that day, over four years ago, they have worked faithfully and well, and we can pay them no greater tribute than to quote a soldier editor in the B. C. Veterans' Weekly, who says: "Few districts can boast a prouder record for untiring patriotic work and devotion to the sick and wounded than the Delta." The society, together with its branches, the Crescent Island Auxiliary and the East Delta Sewing Circle, has during its four years of existence raised the amazing sum of \$9,116.40, knitted 4,195 pairs of socks, contributed \$1,339.40 to the Prisoners of War Fund, \$611.30 to the Military Hospital, and \$356.80 to the Belgian Relief. Many more generous contributions have been made from time to time to the Serbian Relief, Syrian Relief, St. Dunstan's Hospital, French Red Cross, Lady Jellicoe Fund, Returned Soldiers' Club, Province Tobacco Fund, Chaplain's Emergency Fund, and the Canadian Red Cross; \$411,700 has been expended on material for the making of socks, pyjamas, shirts, trench caps, bandages, and a thousand and one other essentials to the comforts of a soldier on active service, which the society have been untiring in their efforts to produce. In addition to their ordinary work and many donations, they have set up two beds in the Military Annex of the General Hospital at Vancouver, which are known as D. W. P. S. beds. These are looked after entirely by the members of the society. A large share of attention has been given the Returned Soldiers' Club, and fruit, vegetables, jam, puddings, cake, tobacco and many other little luxuries have been contributed towards helping the wounded men to keep happy and bright.

In November of the following year, 1915, another branch of the work was taken up by some of the women in an earnest endeavor to keep in touch with every boy who enlisted from the Delta. The gallant little band, known as the Comfort Club—the most appropriate name possible, in the opinion of a Delta soldier writing recently from the front—has indeed done yeoman service, and there is not a Delta soldier who has gone through the trials of war who is not grateful many times over to the club for numberless and untold comforts which mean so much to them at such a time. From a small beginning, serving the first men who went overseas, these women have been able to keep pace with the ever-increasing number of men who have enlisted from their district, and last year over 1000 parcels were sent to some 200 local men, and hundreds of letters received by Mrs. Hutcherson, the secretary of the club, attests the appreciation of each recipient. Mrs. Hutcherson, in spite of the many calls upon her time and energy, never allows a letter to go unanswered, but to every word of gratitude a cheery, newsy letter, such as the boys love to get, is sent. This is no small part of the work.

But not alone for the overseas men did these Delta women work. Everything possible was done for those sent home, too badly crippled and wounded to be of further service on the field of battle. The most appreciated piece of work in this connection was the establishment and maintenance of a Returned Soldiers' Rest Camp at Boundary Bay, where some 80 men were sent to live an outdoor life of absolute freedom and ease, which after long months of hospital rules and regulations, did much to help them