

## I. The Montreal Volunteers

**Y**OU are met just inside the door by "Billy, the policeman"—not a bluecoat, but the office nickname of one of the remarkable group of Montreal volunteers, members of the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, who, since August, 1914, have put in two days a week, three days a week, some of them six days a week without let-up or vacation, on the work of the Montreal Relief Committee.

You have crossed the threshold of what she calls the "room of smiles and tears," or, if you will—for human nature is much the same in war time as in peace time—of "damns and blessings." On an average day you are one of a hundred such callers; one of 500 on a crowded day. In February, 2,678 came, old women and young, children, babies in arms, soldiers in khaki with a limp or a cough from "gassing." There in the long room, covering half of the entire floor of a large office building, with the business-like system of a life insurance company, and with the human insight of modern social work, 10,301 individual applications have been handled since the outbreak of the war. And that, in more ways than one, is only the beginning of the story.

On either side of the aisle are rows of chairs where the English-speaking on the left, the French-speaking on the right, await their turn to go to the little tables and tell their stories to the interviewers.

The afternoon I sat near the door there was a flurry among the people filling the chairs, so that a young Scotch girl who burst out crying reached the refuge of the corridor almost unnoticed. The flurry had to do with Kitty, who was all smiles. Her mother had brought her, a little six-year-old, with straw-colored hair under a round blue sailor's cap with "H. M. S. Grampian" done in gold lettering on the front. Kitty carried her father's swagger stick for a cane, and once half-way down the aisle turned and waved back at "Billy, the policeman." The gesture almost cost her her balance, for this was Kitty's first visit on her first pair of legs.

Kitty's father is an English immigrant who was a private in training at Amherst, when word reached him that Kitty had been run over by a Montreal street car. One leg was cut off near the hip, the other near the knee. There was no