

AN INCIDENT ON A STREET CAR

A few days ago I was the unintentional spectator of a very interesting incident. I had boarded an Avenue car and was homeward bound, tired and uninclined to notice anything about me.

At a street corner the car stopped and a man got in—a returned soldier I concluded, as one sleeve hung empty. Otherwise, he was as fine a specimen of Canadian manhood as one would meet anywhere in the Dominion. He sat in the seat across from me with his empty sleeve to the wall and began to read a newspaper he had brought with him.

At the next stop two young girls entered the car. Both were very well-dressed, and were really pretty in a "curls-and-eyes" sort of way. They arranged themselves in the seat in front of me and began to talk in an animated way of some very commonplace subjects that could have been dismissed in a few words. "A trifle too self-conscious," I thought, as I watched them.

"My dear," began one, "I have been simply rushed to death. I'm due at an afternoon tea to-morrow, and Grace and I are going to the theatre on Friday—Marguerite Clark, you know. She's pretty, don't you think?"

"Charming," agreed the other. "I am as busy as you are, dear, I am going to Stella's little dance on Wednesday, and then Thursday I am going tobogganning. Friday, I also am going to the theatre. Saturday, I wanted to go out, but you know it is Red Cross day and I have to do my monthly collecting. Really, it's an awful nuisance. You may be thankful you aren't in for it every month."

"It must take up a lot of time," sympathized the other.

Then both drifted to other subjects, and I went on reading my paper.

Soon, however, their conversation

again interested me and once more I found myself listening.

"Oh yes," one was saying, "Art went over at the very first. He's no slacker. He has been over there ever since, and really sometimes I'm so worried about him I hardly have heart to drag through the days."

She did not look that way to me, but of course I knew nothing about her. Her companion looked sympathetic and said something in a low voice, where-upon the patriotic one—she who monthly dragged herself through the wearisome collecting of Red Cross money said, "Yes, that's just how I feel about it too. It makes me sick"—here she raised her voice and glanced back at my soldier friend—"to see young boys, strong and able to fight sticking around just as if there were no war. It's a shame, I think." "That's just what I have often said," agreed the other, with a most expressive look right into the soldier's eyes. I glanced at him. He was looking at the girls with a rather amused look on his face. They continued their conversation on the war until they left the car a few blocks further on and as they left they could not resist throwing a glance of scorn at the, to them, slacker.

Catching my eye, he smiled and I moved over into the seat with him. "So they think you ought to be at the front," I said. The boy smiled and looked rather wistfully down at his empty sleeve. "As you see," he said, "I have been there."

"Didn't you think," I went on, "that they were rather inconsistent? They evidently did not consider the doing of their bit important."

"They are thoughtless," he replied rather wearily, "I have seen plenty of their kind in Canada. I wouldn't mind going back in a way." He went on dreamily. "The French women are