



# THE RED TRIANGLE



## THE "Y" AMONG THE FORESTERS.

By MAPLE LEAF.

### Timber Counts!

Scotland has done more in this war than furnish the kilties whose prowess made them among the Germans the representative cartoon of British terrorism. It has also provided many of the forests from which the Canadian Forestry Corps have been cutting submarine defeat. Those little centres of Canadian activity, Canadian methods, Canadian energy, are splashed all over the land of the thistle, irrespective of population centres. Only the timber counts. That was why the operations of the Forestry Corps possessed an unusual interest for me—where the gregarious Canadians were not only far from home, but far from homes and amusement and recreation.

### Other Camps.

One camp stands on the rugged west coast where railways have not yet found it practicable to operate within twenty-nine miles. The nearest hamlet is four or five miles away, the nearest village providing any of the diversions of life many times that distance. And here and there are other camps from which the nearest village or town is almost inaccessible on foot.

### The Reason.

In these camps one might expect to find men itching for the excitement of inhabited centres, almost sullen under the isolation of their work, yawning with the ennui of the unbalanced life. That I did not find them so, introduced an element worth further examination. The reason for it, apart from the interest the officers take in their men and the housing and feeding conditions, is purely the Y.M.C.A.

### Cairngorm Hills.

On a misty afternoon in December I visited a camp at Loch Morlich. In the best of weather the nearest town is eight miles away; when the Scotch "softness" gets into the roads—which is nine months of the year—it is a few miles further. In to the very heart of the Cairngorm Hills, the highest cluster in the British Isles, the Ford car banged and bumped its way—via the short road. The camp lay in the shadow of a cloud-crowned range, with a hunting lodge of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon peering down on it and the beautiful lake a sheet of reflected glory.

### The "Y" Sign.

It felt like the beginning of a holiday to be spent deep in the arms of nature. But to picture it as the week-after-week abiding place of energetic, full-blooded men who worked from dawn to darkness, and then could sleep or rest only in the same silences and isolation was different. But the conspicuous sign of the Canadian Y.M.C.A. over the largest building gave an inkling of the conditions that made the life possible.

### Laughing Eyes.

All the evening I spent in the Y Hut. It was there I met the men most intimately; there I saw revealed the feature of camp life that retained the laugh about their eyes, the ready joke on their lips—and partially, I

believe, the health and roundness of their bodies.

### Books and a Fire.

Work must cease in winter time in that far north land hours before the Canadian workmen at home studies the clock. The sun sinks early, and the persistent rains and mists of the season lower the darkness in mid-afternoon. So that the Y Hut, the only amusement and rest centre in reach, fills early. At six, when I returned from the officers' mess, the hut was comfortably filled with men who might now be termed lumberjacks, but before the war may never have worked in a lumber wood. Most of them, indeed, had seen service in France and had been discarded for this other branch of warfare. Some were examining the library of books, a large ring lounged about the huge fireplace with its crackling slabs, a line stood before the canteen, and a group was interested in the billiard table. In the silence-room behind the stage a half-dozen were writing. It was a tight little room, with a Quebec heater at one side and three long tables filling the rest of the space.

### Drinks!

But it was the canteen interested me most. There the boys expressed themselves most freely, in sentiments and appetites. The Y sergeant knew them all by name—seemed to know their individual wants and peculiarities. A stove behind the counter was buried beneath great boilers, one each for coffee and cocoa, and third for disinfecting the cups. The disinfection was a matter of ordinary precautions, not alone against the influenza which has attacked many of the camps, but also in consideration of the diverse humanity which makes up the personnel of the camps. I met music teachers and bank clerks, Russians and Danes, ministers and lumber contractors. And, of course, some had established ideas of sanitation while others would drink trench water on a pinch.

### Interesting.

There were sawyers and setters who drew down big pay envelopes as skilled workers, and men whose only experience of an axe before the war was where the chicken got it. There were men who had travelled over Canada in their business and had attained the ease of manner and fluency of conversation that comes to the traveller. There was at least one American whose stories were the talk of the camp—I heard many of them as I leaned over the counter beside him—and I can commend them for interest more than for veracity.

### A Cup and Snack.

One and all made for the canteen first for a cup of coffee or cocoa, with an average of two buns or pieces of cake to wash down. The bill was threepence. I could live in a camp like that on soldier's pay and buy a town lot at the end of the year. The food was good and ample on the camp tables, but nothing in that line takes the place of the steaming Y cup and snack during the long evenings.

### Empty Wood Box.

Library books came over the counter and were checked off, while others were selected from the shelves and entered. From a pile of blank paper the men were taking sheets

for applications for leave. On request, writing paper and envelopes were given out, though the supply of paper is so limited that waste must be discouraged. A couple of C.B. men were shown the empty wood box by a corporal, and during the next half hour heat was assured the hut for the following day, the two who were supposed to be undergoing punishment by the work grinning at the Y sergeant as they entered with each armful.

### Checkers!

On that night there was no organised entertainment, but it was all the better for my purpose and did not seem to pall on the boys. The billiard table was never out of use, the stove and fireplace never alone, the reading tables never deserted. And the foresters supped their mugs of cocoa as they played checkers or chess.

### The Whoop.

About nine, when the hut had cleared out a little, Jock's feet began to worry him. Jock was no Scotchman, and my name is by way of compliment, for he had so well practised the art of camouflage that he looked, dressed, talked, acted, and danced like the original Scot. Principally he danced. The Y man felt the atmosphere and started the gramophone. A stag eightsome was not long in forming. It was the most Scotch dance I ever saw—or heard; for the whoop was an essence of it. Yet the personnel of the eightsome was thoroughly Canadian in its cosmopolitanism.

### The Local Dance.

There was a Bohemian—the camp vegetable raiser—who hailed from a farm in Saskatchewan twenty-nine miles from the nearest village; a Russian of heavy boots, whose share of the performance was largely noise; a clerk from the offices who kicked off his shoes, but in agility and sheer obvious enjoyment lost little thereby; a foreigner of some kind whose whoops were more lusty than timely; Jock, who was just all right, except for one squint eye, a hairy chest from which both shirts had been thrown back, a series of holes in the back of his sweater, and a wad of energetically manipulated chewing gum; and two others who were practicing for a local dance at Kingussie on the following night.

### Gifts for the Sergeant.

It was an hour of vivid, noisy, joyous life—and I knew why stagnation and sullenness never came to the camps. Of that Y sergeant I have distinct impressions that centre round a general understanding of the men and a desire to make it useful. It was no surprise to me that, hearing he was to leave, the officers and N.C.O.'s had collected a nice purse for him, but the privates, conscious of a personal gratitude too deep for sharing with the officers, had sent an envoy away up to Inverness where they had purchased an American gold watch "on their own" for the man in whose hands had rested for a year the bright spots of their existence.

### AT VIMY RIDGE.

Cheers for three, O tall Canadians!  
Effect as the ever green spruce trees,  
Strong as the withes of oak and birch sprouts,  
Light in your step as the bark canoe  
Skimming the waves of Lake Nipigon;  
Swift as the red deer, brave as the grizzly,  
Lithe as the panther—lean, too, and tawny;  
Impetuous as the north wind over Saskatchewan.

Driving all foes before in resistless advancing.  
Oh, valorous victors of Vimy!  
To you on the hilltop  
Lift we our cheers.

—DON C. SEITZ, "In Praise of War."