

Archdeacon Cody's Tribute to the Y.M.C.A.

THE following reference to the Y.M.C.A. in its relation to the Church was written by the rector of St. Paul's Church, Toronto: "The Churches at home are keeping in touch with the men overseas through the chaplains, through the personal gifts and messages sent by individuals and congregations, and, not least, through the splendidly organized and ubiquitous work of the Y.M.C.A. The Red Triangle is a symbol of a great and efficient instrument of the Christian Church. Innumerable letters from the front and from

England, many of them enclosed in envelopes bearing the stamp of the Red Triangle, testify to the helpful social and philanthropic service rendered to our soldiers by the association. Its officials and its equipment are ministering to their material, social, intellectual and spiritual needs. Its organization of study classes behind the lines is a stroke of genius, for mere amusement finally palls. Whatever helps to give our fighting champions cheer, comfort, education and religious faith deserves and will receive the hearty support of the homeland."

Rev. T. T. Shields Speaks from Experience

REV. T. T. SHIELDS, pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, makes the following statement: "I visited all the principal Canadian military camps in England in the summer of 1915, and again in 1917, and am, therefore, able to speak from personal observation of the great ministry of the Y.M.C.A. to our military forces. "It is a ministry in a very real and effective way to spirit, soul and body. Under its auspices many of the ablest and most effective preachers of the world, of all denominations, have carried the gospel message of salvation and comfort to every soldier who would hear

it. By this means multitudes have been won to Christ.

"The value of the wholesome entertainment provided and of the educational work carried on in the camps cannot be over-estimated. In view of the monotony of camp life and the temptations which inevitably beset the lonely soul, such mental diversions as the Y.M.C.A. provides are as necessary as food, and as welcome as clear shining after rain.

"Only those who have tasted of camp life can properly appraise the value of the Y.M.C.A.'s physical ministry to our men. The canteen work alone would justify the

presence of this organization in all our military camps.

"As the pastor of about three hundred men overseas I am regularly in receipt of letters from France which assure me that the 'Y' is, if possible, still more appreciated in France than in England.

"I regard the military work of the Y.M.C.A. as being one of the greatest military enterprises, and one of the noblest philanthropies, in the world to-day. With all my heart I support its appeal for funds to enable this splendid organization to continue its great ministry to those heroic men who deserve the best that we can give."

Rev. Dr. W. H. Hincks' Warm Praise

REV. DR. W. H. HINCKS, LL.B., of Toronto, writes: "The amazing record of manly achievement by the Young Men's Christian Association overseas is the last word in muscular Christianity. It is also an outstanding example of the rapidity with which the Christian Church can adapt itself to abnormal as well as normal needs. These young men of the Christian Churches have upheld the best traditions of Christianity in their work for our soldiers, sailors

and aviators. Many hundreds of letters have come to me from France, Belgium, Great Britain and South Europe, from our soldiers. These letters reveal the glorious deeds of the Y.M.C.A., both at the battle-front and throughout the vast camps of France and Great Britain. As everybody knows, the world's best athletes organize the games; the world's ablest ministers conduct the religious services; and the leading talent in music and entertainment takes care of the

boys' desire for a good laugh. Words simply fail us in describing this work throughout its many ramifications. Of the religious work it is sufficient to say that it is a manly presentation of robust Christianity. The stereopticon views are used on Sunday nights. Canada's greatest preachers present the gospel in a vital way. Thousands of decision cards are being signed, and scores of thousands of men spiritually refreshed and toned up for the great task they have taken up."

Nearer to the Boys

An Interview with Ralph Connor — By Peter McArthur

I BEGAN with a straight question: "What do you think of the work of the Y.M.C.A. in the war?"

He hunched his shoulders slightly, and slipped down a trifle in his chair. From the expression on his face I was afraid that he was going to offer an unfavorable criticism. But his answer made it clear that that was not what disturbed him.

"It is doing a lot of work that the Church should be doing."

Now you can understand why my question caused him a shade of discomfort. The minister in him—a touch of the old Free Kirk spiritual guide that made him feel the responsibilities of his calling—made him regret to confess that a purely lay institution is carrying practical Christianity to a point that is as yet impossible for the Churches—"beating them to it," as the soldier boys would say.

"Don't misunderstand me," he protested. "The Churches and their chaplains are doing a wonderful work, but the Y.M.C.A., being without a propaganda or dogmas, is able to adapt itself instantly to any needs that may arise, either at the battle-front or wherever the boys may be located. It meets them at all hours and in all places with a spirit of good cheer, comfort and helpfulness."

"Then you are of the opinion that the man who supports the war work of his Church is not doing all he can to help the boys."

"Assuredly. The Y.M.C.A. is able to go a little farther. Though the work of the Church may be nearer to the ideal of what I want to

see done, the Y.M.C.A. gets nearer to the boys."

That struck me as a very important point, and I decided to question him from an angle that might not be pleasing to a clergyman.

"You know," I insinuated in a spirit of half confession, "that there are a lot of boys who would be inclined to look at a Y.M.C.A. at home as a sort of sissified institution, beneath the notice of young men of the world who like to affect a sort of manly wildness. Does the Y.M.C.A. get near to them?"

"Yes. The helpfulness of the Y.M.C.A. has won out over every obstacle. In the beginning the officers of the High Command had something of the attitude you suggest. But whenever there was anything to be done to help the boys the Y.M.C.A. was there to do it and do it well. By its spirit of unassuming helpfulness the Y.M.C.A. has won the hearts of both officers and men, no matter what their church connections may be or may not be. It gives, and it does not ask anything in return. Its sole reward is that it helps freely all who need help. The thing to emphasize about its work is that it gives—it is an organized spirit of giving, and it gives without a string to the giving."

"But I often hear comments—not always friendly—about the prices that the Y.M.C.A. charge for some of its supplies."

"Such comments have no justification. The prices are as near right as they can be made. If there is any profit on the sales to the boys in the camps or back of the lines, every cent of it goes to provide things free—absolutely

free—to those who are in the front line trenches. As a matter of fact, the canteens and other organizations under the control of the Churches and chaplains have pretty much the same schedule of prices as the Y.M.C.A."

Here I asked a concluding question: "Then I may tell the people that in its war work, especially in the matter of creature comforts, the Y.M.C.A. is nearer to the boys than anyone else."

"Yes. It stands nearer to them than anything else except the military organization under whose discipline they live—and die. You see, they are specially organized, trained and outfitted for this kind of work—and they are a mighty spiritual force, too."

When leaving him I stopped to talk to several other clergymen who appeared in the offing—it was a place of clergymen—and he stepped from the room. Shortly afterwards he returned with a copy of his latest book, on the fly-leaf of which he had written, in memory of the men we had known in our boyhood:

"There were giants in those days." It will be cherished as one of the most prized of a little collection of autographed first editions. And with it I shall cherish the memory of having spent a couple of hours with a well-known man who is doing a noble work himself and is not afraid to give the fullest credit to other men who are doing a noble work—such as the officers and field-workers of the Y.M.C.A., "who play such a great forward line to the Church's backing in the great, great game," as Connor said.