



THE RED TRIANGLE



CANADIAN Y. IN PALESTINE.

When the Great War was still at its height and, scattered as it was, all over the map, was making life both brief and intolerable for millions of suffering humans of all races and colours, a handful of Canadians left France to carry on in one of the earth's corners.

The men of this unit—it was the 1st Bridging Company of the Canadian Railway Troops, Egyptian Expeditionary Force—had little idea what was before them, but the call for their services was urgent and they were like men with a "message to Garcia" in response. Boarding ship at Marseilles they finally disembarked at the other end of the submarine-infested Mediterranean and headed out into the deserts of Palestine.

The Red Triangle went with them. Its representative out there was Company-Sergt.-Major J. M. Allen. He had been with the Y in France, and as the unit operated in Palestine was part of the Canadian Railway Troops, he was responsible to Canadian Y Headquarters, France.

How this Y Sergeant-Major served his unit away off there in the Holy Land, obliged all, nursed many, and even saved the lives of some, is a real story. It is told by Capt. C. T. Sharpe, the officer responsible for the Y work with the C.R.T., who gathered the details from the officers and men of the unit and incompletely from the Sergeant-Major himself. This story is only properly completed, and the value of his services correctly adjudged, by the statement that Allen was eventually presented to General Allenby and by him was complimented for his work.

When the original officer commanding the unit was evacuated ill the last man he asked for was Allen. He wanted to thank him for his help to the unit and his services to him personally. When the new O.C. took command the first man he sent for was Allen. He wanted to enlist a co-operation the value of which was evident.

This seems like estimating the help of the Y.M.C.A. and the services of one of its staff pretty high. But conditions appear to have justified it for, according to the opinions Capt. Sharpe collected, both the present O.C. and the second in command considered Allen's presence, the Y equipment he had, and the full and intelligent use he made of it, very largely responsible for the success of their work. The conditions were often nearly intolerable, and on two occasions Allen's advice—for to him the men's representatives had carried their grievances and plans—restored their spirits.

The company has by this time taken its place in the machinery of demobilisation, for it disembarked in Marseilles from Palestine March 7th, and was to proceed to England and home in its turn. Before leaving Palestine, when the war was ended, the Officer Commanding, Major A. P. Linton, addressed a letter to the Senior Y.M.C.A. Officer in France, in which he said:—

"Sir,—I wish to thank you for the splendid service the Canadian Y.M.C.A. has given this Company. A splendid outfit of recreational and sports goods was given us when leaving France, and your representative, 1006964 C.S.M. Allen, J. M., has done wonderful work.

I would most heartily recommend him for a commission in the Canadian Y.M.C.A. He has earned it. In the two months we have been in this country the Company has suffered very severely from malaria. All but twenty of us have gone into hospital. Sergeant-Major Allen worked day and night with the sick. His Y.M.C.A. hut was our hospital. He bathed men, he fed them—he loaded them on trains for evacuation to hospital. At all times he has done cheerful, unselfish work for this Company, and is a strong influence for good."

"MOBILE Y."

"Mobile Y" was no indefinite description. It was a definite unit for a definite purpose—a new purpose in this varied war. The Y.M.C.A. was always mobile. It had to be to keep up with the flitting Canadians. But this was a particular section of the Y, more mobile than usual.

With the armistice every military duty did not cease. Even with the retirement of the Canadians into Belgium from the Rhine there remained duties that could not be neglected. One of these, the guarding of ammunition dumps, entailed more isolation than is usually accepted by the soldier with smiling face. It meant lonesomeness, routine work and distance from entertainment and those luxuries which mean so much to the soldier.

It happened that some of the 4th Division were allocated to this work. At some sixty points between Namur and Charleroi small units were scattered about to see that some careless Belgian did not pause on a pile of shells to light his cigarette, or that a German prisoner, still imbued with his wonderful sense of destruction, did not indulge himself at the expense of a British dump.

It was very lonely work. But the worst of it was that there were no friends near, no entertainment, no canteens at which to purchase the Canadian titbits that made life worth living. So the Canadian Y.M.C.A. stepped into the breach. And that was where the "Mobile Y" had its inception.

The "Mobile Y" was merely a lorry—but it was a lorry chuck full of a purpose. It began its career at the Y stores in Namur. It followed a pre-planned route that included every one of those sixty lonely spots. It was manned by a competent lorry driver and a Y N.C.O. Two or three times a week it paused long enough at each of those spots to supply the wants of the isolated men on duty there. It left Namur loaded with chocolates, biscuits, fruits, vegetables, cigarettes, matches, candles, soap, towels, salmon, writing paper, envelopes, magazines, a good loan library; checkers, chess, playing cards, quoits (indoor and outdoor), baseball supplies, boxing gloves; and so on through the list of things that would take the sting from the location and work of unfortunate Canadian soldiers. It worked west towards Charleroi, returned for another load, worked south, returned for replenishment, and then eastward towards Liege.

It never rested save late at night; but it had a satisfaction more gratifying than rest, a gratitude more pleasing than leisure.

Far in advance of the movement of the 4th down to Havre the Division Y.M.C.A.

had its plans completed for co-operating in the movement. As had occurred with the other Divisions, Corps Headquarters requested that the Y be allotted a car on each train in order that the troops on board for the long trip might be adequately supplied with the necessaries for their comfort—a twenty-four hour service.

In addition to the canteen the Y—as usual—planned to provide free tea at any hour of day or night. Reading and writing material, games, athletic equipment, gramophones, etc., would be carried for the use of the troops when the trains might be held up en route. You can see the picture of the Canadians alighting eagerly from the delayed train to snatch a game of baseball, or write a letter home, or sup the unlimited free tea. Anyone who has travelled on troop trains knows the irritation of those long halts for no evident reason. Many a soldier has wished he knew the way well enough to walk.

For this extension of service the Y personnel is insufficient, and so each unit is allotting men to assist the Y workers. This augmented staff will accompany the Division to Havre, to England, in camp in England, and on the boat to Canada.

TRAMP STEAMERS.

Why are some ships dubbed "tramps"?

Well, they are tramps just as some individuals are tramps. They go here and there, just as circumstances may dictate looking for employment.

But there is this difference—the tramp we meet on our roads says he is looking for work, but often enough he is secretly praying very hard that he may not find it. The ocean tramp simply has to find it. If she doesn't there is trouble. More although some ocean tramps are dishevelled in appearance, by far the greater proportion of them have not the slightest suggestion about them of the untidiness of the tramp on which the policeman has to keep such a wary eye.

As a matter of fact many modern cargo boats are of huge dimensions bearing comparison with the liners which quite a few years ago were regarded as prodigies of size. A tramp of six thousand tons is quite an ordinary vessel in regard to its dimensions. There are many much larger, and, of course, hosts much smaller.

They go anywhere. Where there is cargo to be found there is also the ocean tramp. She is bound to no particular port of call. She may be in the Orient one voyage, and in a short time may be nosing round the ports of, say, South America. Then freights from Mexican and American ports may show greater profits, and forthwith our tramp is off on a series of voyages between the Old and the New Worlds, until perhaps more profitable work offers elsewhere.

INDUSTRIAL AWAKENING

In the realm of national finance Canada underwent another transformation. From the beginning of 1915 she raised in domestic loans a sum exceeding by more than four times the amount of her debt in pre-war days. In food she also paid her tribute to the common store of the Allies which she augmented in generous measure. Even on the sea Canada developed. Her fleet—if the term is permissible in the circumstances—consisted at the outbreak of the war of two cruisers, but she extended her shipbuilding yards to a great degree and her launching total attained remarkable proportions. In mine sweeping, patrolling and other guarding duties, Canadian vessels rendered valuable services.