

THE CANADIAN TOMMY ON LEAVE IN ENGLAND

How the Y. M. C. A. Solves His Problems

By JOHN MELDRUM.

CONSIDERABLE attention has been directed of late to the work of the Canadian Y. M. C. A. in France, and the public may be pardoned if they subconsciously arrive at the conclusion that in no other direction do the ramifications of the Association extend.

As a matter of fact, the fields of operation are four in number. In the training camps in Canada, on board the transports conveying men to Europe, in the British Isles, as well as in the immediate theatre of war, the Canadian Red Triangle "hangs out," and its officers and men "carry on" for the boys.

Unsettled Conditions.

In some respects the service rendered in Great Britain is the most important of all. It is there that the most permanent results of "Y" influence and service are obtained, because the conditions are very much less unsettled than they are in France. While the service to the boys in the fighting line stands unique, and is a contribution to the efficiency of the Canadian army, of which the Association is justly proud, at the same time the constant movements of the troops make anything like prolonged intensive work almost an impossibility.

It is no uncommon thing in a Canadian area in France for the labor of many months on the part of the Red Triangle staff to set up a complete organization to be completely upset. Owing to some suddenly arising military contingency, carefully laid plans have to be abandoned, and equipment dismantled and removed to another location. The result is that, although the Y. M. C. A. has all along rendered an ever-increasing service to the men, much that has been planned to be done has never seen accomplishment.

This unsettled condition of things does not apply to the work in London and Great Britain generally, or in Paris. The Canadian Y. M. C. A. covers Forestry units from the north of Scotland to the large training camps in the south of England, and it embraces in its care convalescent camps and hospitals, as well as hospitality and "on leave" problems in London and elsewhere.

In all of these centres men may come and men may go, but the "Y" keeps at it from sun-up to sun-down, from one year's end to another. Obviously under such conditions the programme of the Red Triangle in ministering to the mental, moral and spiritual welfare of our boys has a far better chance of reaching a high point of efficiency than it has in France, although it may not manifest itself in such striking and dramatic ways.

The Moment of Danger.

In dealing with the moral aspect of Y. M. C. A. work, it is important to remember that the moment of supreme danger to the soldier does not occur in Canada, or on the high seas, or in the hell of the trenches. Most men have sufficient moral stamina to resist the temptations peculiar to such surroundings. The hour of subtle temptation comes when the boys are released from the training camps, or from the trenches, and given ten days' leave.

The men are turned loose, strangers in a strange land, knowing nobody, unsettled in their minds what they are going to do with their time, and in the majority of cases quite unable to make the most and the best of the opportunity unaided. Right here the men of



Princess Patricia of Connaught and Princess Helena Victoria visit the London Y. M. C. A. centres for men on leave.

the Red Triangle turn up smiling with a proffer of service that may lack the dramatic appeal to the public imagination presented by the "Y" service to the boys in the trenches and elsewhere in the battle zone, but which unquestionably is a service for which thousands of Canadian parents and wives have cause to thank God. The "Y's

Men," as they have been christened, unobtrusively but effectively stand between the soldiers and those human sharks who regard every man in khaki as their natural prey.

How They See the Old Country.

As soon as the Canadian troops arrive in England they are placed in a Segregation Camp and kept there until all danger of disease is past. At the end of their quarantine the men are sent on leave for ten or fourteen days. Before their departure the boys are addressed by a Y. M. C. A. officer, who explains to them the arrangements that have been made for their convenience during the holidays. Copies of the illustrated booklet, "Seeing the Old Country Through the Red Triangle," are distributed. This gives an itinerary of tours in London, the beauty spots of England, Scotland and Wales. When a man has "signed up" for a particular tour he is given a folder containing a map of the route, train times, and other information. In connection with these tours an arrangement has been effected with the Co-operative Holiday Association whereby nine guest houses in various parts of the country receive Canadians on leave. Before setting out the boys know exactly the minimum amount of money they must spend, and the programme for every minute of their time is in their hands. As a rule the men proceed in a body to London, where they are met by "Y" officers who conduct them in groups to their respective railway stations and see them on board their trains.

London the Supreme Attraction.

London, is, of course, the supreme attraction, and the facilities for serving the Canadian Tommy on leave in that great City have been perfected to a high degree. In the Strand, the Beaver Hut, presided over by Miss Helen Fitzrandolph, of New Brunswick, has 200 beds and can serve 2,000 meals daily. The Little Theatre, Adelphi, serves 15,000 meals every month, and is a centre for Canadians and other overseas troops on leave. Millbank Hut, close to the Canadian Pay Office, serves 16,000 meals daily. At Grosvenor Gardens Kit-Store the men can leave their kits and any other impedimenta free of charge. At most of these centres a constant programme of concerts, piano recitals, lectures, etc., is put on for the boys, and at all of them there are facilities for reading, writing, resting and meeting friends. Each club is also an "Enquiry Upon Everything" Bureau.

The Hospitality League.

Many of the boys who do not care to tour under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A., and prefer to "do London on their own," generally come, sooner or later, into touch with the Hospitality League organized by the Red Triangle. They find the vastness and loneliness of the metropolis overpowering, and are generally glad to be taken in hand and receive an invitation from a hostess whose hospitable door is ever open to the men from overseas. Through this league several hundred hostesses from the best London homes extend a welcome to any who care to spend an evening under the happiest and best auspices. Many hundreds of Canadians take advantage of this opportunity, and one-third of all the men dealt

(Continued on page 39.)



Centre—The Lounge in Canadian Y. M. C. A. Hotel d'Iena, Paris.

Left—A Canadian party leaving the Hotel d'Iena.

Right—Canadian Boys in front of Y. M. C. A. "Little Theatre," London.

