

THE EXPERIENCES OF A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR. By "Sandbag."

At last I found myself near the front line. I was handed over to the tender mercies of a Canadian Battalion, the one from Edmonton. When they learned I had at one time been a correspondent of the "Daylight Mail" I was taken before the editorial staff of the "Forty-niner" and as good as ordered to write my impressions at the front.

This was quite to my taste, and I grew eager to get material. The Sergeant in charge of me smiled, and said he guessed I would soon get more material than I d—d well cared for. The men seemed greatly amused at something, and though, as I gathered, they were going on a dangerous expedition, there was no hint of it in their behaviour.

The night was so dark—you couldn't distinguish the sandbags from the clouds. I was often lost; often I fell off the narrow and crooked trench mats. Once I found myself walking aimlessly on the top of the parapet, stumbling over sandbags and empty cans. A big, brawny Canadian leapt up after me and shouted:

"Na, na, sonny, nane o' yer tricks here."

"What tricks?" I demanded, with a voice which, I am afraid, was a poor similitude of injured innocence.

"Tryin' tae licht yer pipe at a flare," he replied.

When he learned who I was he put me on my way with a tenderness which was touching.

Again I was with my party. The noise of the guns was terrific. We travelled on for hours. On, on, we went, slipping, slipping, splashing, spluttering. Though my knuckles were badly bruised I held on tightly to my staff. Alas, it got wedged in the woodwork underneath, and a party of men filed past me. Their backs were bent, their arms extended, as they carried or tugged their loads of deadly war material past me. I cautioned them about my cane, but every man banged into it, and went staggering through the blackness, muttering the most terrible curses imaginable. All the time they passed I was being crushed, mangled, ironed. I felt stunned and ex-

hausted, and, worse than all—I knew I was lost again. I didn't mind so much the rifles hitting my ribs, nor sandbags being stuffed into my mouth, nor tripods and bomb and ammunition boxes grazing my face. The physical pain was secondary to the mental anguish. Yet it was a relief when the last man kicked past me. I straightened my helmet, sorted my roll of manuscript, and proceeded to wrench at my recalcitrant staff. With a superhuman tug I released it, and it jabbed me full on the left eye.

The bombardment raged furiously, and the sides of the trenches rocked to and fro. I ran on blindly, twisting out and in through an interminable maze. Information, I found, is very scarce for the man who is lost in these basket-worked and sand-bagged alleys.

It was the editor, I believe, who came to my rescue. The air was electrified with excitement.

Hints of great deeds about to be enacted reached me. Phrases such as "when the guns lift," "leaping the parapet," with allusions to the landships "Creme de Menthe," the mysterious "tanks," were common.

With somewhat mixed feelings I tried to survey the situation.

I felt I was sinking into the vortex of the "Great Push." When the Editor told me that the real business of the night was about to commence my worst fears were confirmed. My questions were ignored. I was borne along helplessly 'midst a flood of men.

Above the roar of guns I could distinguish the palpitation of a powerful motor.

Was it the approach of the fateful "tanks"? I conjured up the vision of Modern Furies embodied in steel. I saw the Herald of Victory poised aloft.

All the waterspouts of the heavens seemed opened, quenching every light, save the momentary dazzling glow from a star-shell. The monster came to a standstill, but it continued to make the most weird and uncanny noises. Pandemonium seemed let loose.