

## A SPLENDID ORGANISATION THAT HAS RISEN TO THE NEEDS OF CANADIAN TROOPS AT THE FRONT

To those of us who perhaps followed only with cursory interest the splendid institutional work of the Y.M.C.A. in Canada—but have been privileged from the early days of the arrival of the first Canadian forces on the continent to become intimately acquainted with its growth in a new sphere of activity—have reason for pride and thanks for this adjunct to Army life. Back home it was the social and religious work that made the "Y" a centre of influence in all the larger towns. In Flanders this is by no means neglected, but the Association mindful of other needs of Canadian fighters has embarked upon a career of merchandising that to those wearing the Maple Leaf particularly—though its canteens are open to all in British uniform—is unique. We have for many months been accustomed to having our wants supplied by the numerous Expeditionary Force Canteens at the Front, several of which have grown to large proportions, but now in what is described officially as the "Canadian Area" are to be found Canadian Y.M.C.A. centres with canteens carrying stocks to supply all needs. In brief the "Y" has kept pace with the growth of the Dominion forces until it became a part and parcel of the Army catering to our wants, both mentally and physically.

Generous recognition of its many activities are accorded by men of all ranks, and the purpose of this brief review is to outline the remarkable growth of the "Y" in some of its departments so that its friends at home may know how greatly appreciative we are of its work. When the First Division was formed there was a Y.M.C.A. officer attached to each brigade. Today the work is carried on by eighteen officers, assisted by about 100 N.C.O.s and men chosen from the ranks.

Its first venture in merchandising was started in March, 1915, at Merville. Here in an improvised reading and writing room space was provided by Captain H. A. Pearson for Sergt.—then Pte—A. A. Hayden to display a small stock of chocolates and smokes. The first day's receipts totalled 15 francs, and the goods were had on credit. The Association has now established in Flanders 34 centres and canteens having an approximate daily turnover of 20,000 francs, with a buying staff and depot in London

whose daily shipments average over 1,000 cases. When the Canadians moved up to the front a year ago April, a convenient centre was selected and a larger stock installed. But the good work had hardly been launched when fortunes of war necessitated a temporary evacuation and the precious stock lost and the building subsequently shelled. However, notwithstanding this temporary set-back, the need was there and had to be supplied. One after another new centres were estab-

lished in a building nearly as large as the old Toronto West End Y.M.C.A. From his office in this building Captain H. A. Pearson, business manager, directs the activities of the "Y" throughout its numerous branches in Flanders.

Summarizing the figures given me for an average day we find that 30,000 hot and cold drinks are served; 12,000 sheets of writing paper are distributed free with necessary envelopes; some 4,000 soldiers find amusement

and mental relief nightly with concerts, lectures and cinema shows, and over 3,000 magazines and other reading material are given out.

The work is not without danger when one realizes that of the thirty-four centres some twenty are within range of the German artillery, and some are actually within rifle fire of the enemy. Happily the casualties have been light. As brave a deed as can ever be recorded to the honour of the Association was that of the late Captain O. D. Irwin, of Toronto, who at the second battle of Ypres volunteered and led a company of men into action. The noble self-sacrificing work of Capt. Whiteman, of Quebec, who succumbed to pneumonia, and who if

he had lived would have been decorated, will not be forgotten, nor the death of Lce.-Corpl. J. Lumsden, another brave worker who "went out" when his canteen was wrecked by a shell.

All profits made by the "Y" are spent for the benefit of the Canadian troops in Flanders.

—P. F. G.



Old-Timer (directing new man): "H.Q.? Go down Oxford St. till you reach Suicide Corner and turn down Lover's Lane. H.Q. is the last dug-out in Rotten Row, and keep your head down in Lover's Lane or you'll be getting a hole in it."

lished in the Canadian area, until the number reached those quoted above, and plans are always being formulated for more, and yet more. In these centres are five standard sized huts 30x100, seven are 30x90 tents, six in 20x50 tents, six are in buildings erected by the army, and others in battle-worn, deserted houses or barns, and five are underground. The premises at present occupied as a Central branch, headquarters and supply de-