

THE NEW ZEALAND PRISONERS OF WAR DEPARTMENT.

Under the new scheme adopted by the Central Prisoners of War Committee with the approval of the Army Council, the New Zealand Prisoners of War Department became, on the 1st December, 1916, the only association authorized to despatch parcels to New Zealand prisoners of war. The entire control of the Department referred to has been placed in my hands, and, except in cases where special subscriptions are received for particular prisoners, all expenditure is met by the High Commissioner's Comforts Fund. The scheme does not at present affect officer prisoners, but all parcels despatched from Great Britain to New-Zealanders who are either civilians or non-commissioned officers and men attached to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force must now be sent through the New Zealand Prisoners of War Department.

There are several New-Zealanders serving in other units who have been captured by the enemy, but the care of such men was placed under the charge of the Prisoners' Association connected with the respective regiments or units, and such men can only be "adopted" with the consent of the appropriate association or regimental committee. As it is the wish of the New Zealand Government that I should undertake the care of all New Zealand prisoners of war, steps have been taken to "adopt" those serving in units other than the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and with few exceptions no objection to this course has been raised by the associations concerned.

The object of the scheme of the Central Prisoners of War Committee is to prevent, as far as possible, the overlapping and waste which existed formerly as the result of the lack of co-ordination of effort, and whereby some prisoners of war received many more parcels than were necessary, whilst others received nothing at all.

The New Zealand Prisoners of War Department despatches to each prisoner of war in Germany three provision parcels per fortnight to the value of 10s. each, and to those in Turkey two provision parcels and 10s. in cash per fortnight. All prisoners receive a fortnightly supply of tobacco and cigarettes, and the full permitted supply of bread is sent to prisoners in Germany. Immediately upon notification of capture being received a complete shaving and toilet outfit is despatched, and an order is given for a complete outfit of clothing as soon as each man's measurements are ascertained. The measurements in the case of members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force are obtained from the Officer in Charge of Records, London. A small weekly money allowance is sent to prisoners of war in Germany, but in most cases the men write to say that money is of no use to them and ask that the remittances shall be discontinued.

A post-card of advice is sent as each parcel goes off, and every acknowledgment is checked and recorded. Each man's likes and dislikes regarding food, tobacco, and other comforts are carefully noted, and quite a number of letters have been received testifying to the excellence of the parcels and the satisfactory way in which the men's wants are being attended to.

The food parcel is varied from week to week in a series covering a period of four weeks, and the contents of the weekly parcels are set forth in Appendix B to this report.

All parcels addressed to New Zealand prisoners of war from overseas are delivered at this Office, where the contents are examined and full particulars of the sender and addressee are recorded. The parcels are carefully repacked if necessary, and the address checked, and the parcel is then redirected to the prisoner.

This has entailed a considerable amount of work, but has been willingly undertaken for the sake of the sentiment which is naturally attached to a "parcel from home." It is regretted, however, that in many cases it does not appear to have been realized by the senders that, as the amount of food which can be sent is strictly limited, our men need actual necessities rather than luxuries. A great deal of the food, too, has arrived in such a condition, due no doubt to the long voyage and the heat of the tropics, that it has had to be destroyed.

Advantage has been taken by the New Zealand Prisoners of War Department of the facilities for study offered to prisoners of war by the British Prisoners of War Book Scheme (Educational), of which Mr. Alfred T. Davies, of the Welsh Department of the Board of Education, is chairman, and every New Zealand prisoner of war is invited, as soon as his capture has been notified, to take up some form of study. The invitation is nearly always heartily accepted, and most of our prisoners have taken up a language or some other study.

A very considerable volume of correspondence is entailed in keeping in touch with the prisoners and with their relatives, and it is gratifying to know that the efforts of the Department in this respect have been appreciated. The work is bound to increase the longer the war lasts, and the clerical staff will doubtless have to be added to in consequence.

NEW-ZEALANDERS SERVING IN IMPERIAL UNITS.

A very considerable number of New-Zealanders who were in England at the outbreak of war joined Imperial units, and many more have since arrived in this country with a view of obtaining commissions in the Naval or Military Forces. It is estimated that the number of New-Zealanders holding commissioned rank in units other than the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and the Australian Imperial Force is not far short of 500, whilst there are probably between 1,200 and 1,500 serving in other capacities.

The branch is in constant correspondence with many of our officers and men in endeavouring to ascertain their next-of-kin, answering their inquiries upon a variety of subjects, forwarding their letters to them, &c.

At the request of the Government an arrangement has been made with the War Office whereby casualties and cases of serious illness among non-commissioned officers and men serving in Imperial