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FOR THE EMPIRE'S CAUSE.

IN MEMORIAM.

MEAGER.—In loving memory of Private William Charles Meager, who died of wounds 2nd Australian General Hospital, Wimereaux, France, on December 18, 1917.

You are lying now dear Will, in a sad but honoured grave,
Your name is often spoken in the home you died to save;
But our hearts are all united with the same fond love for you,
And loving thoughts are cherished of one so kind and true.
Father in Thy gracious keeping
Leave we now our loved one sleeping.
—Inserted by his loved ones. 4688

BLANCH.—In loving memory of Private Walter Blanch (9th Reinforcements), who died at Auckland, on December 21, 1916, of wounds received in France, dearly beloved son of Mrs F. Blanch, Herbert street, Invercargill.

You are lying now, dear Walter, in a soldier's honoured grave;
Buried with military honours for a home you died to save.
And our hearts are all united with the same fond love for you;
While loving thoughts are cherished of one so brave and true.
—Inserted by his loving mother, sisters, and brothers. 4819

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

TO SUBSCRIBERS, ADVERTISERS,
AND OTHERS.

OWING to the XMAS HOLIDAYS the next issue of—

"THE DIGGER"

will be on FRIDAY, JANUARY 7th, 1921.

"The Digger."

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1920.

CHRISTMAS 1920.

Once more, with the near approach of the time of peace and goodwill, we would take the opportunity of extending to our readers and Diggers everywhere, the warmest greetings and good wishes for this Christmas season. Another year has passed us by, "Borne from us on the wings of time to the dim realm of the past." We find ourselves again on the eve of Christmas—the third we have now spent apart from the more harrowing associations of war—the droning of hostile 'planes—the howl of 5.9's, and the deep-voiced thunder of guns uplifted in the grim anthem of hate.

We have, in the interval, passed through the transition period of reverting from things military to things civil and

social, and we cannot but feel that it is a matter for the heartiest congratulations that the thousands whose stamina was so severely tested on active service, have so quietly and industriously taken their places once more in civilian community life. In the strenuous days of 1914-18 we took pride in the manner in which "our boys" responded to the challenge, and, forsaking the fields of peace, became in the face of a great necessity a fighting force of the first order in the fields of war. In many ways we felt it to be a matter for ever greater pride, that, with so few exceptions the same men have so speedily and so wholeheartedly returned to steady labour and the quiet life.

Christmas is ever the season of memories, and especially will this be so for the men who have come back from overseas. To the quiet fireside of many a returned man, memories will at this time come crowding from the other scenes of past battles on the various fronts. The stinging frost, the driving rain and sleet, the eternal mud of Flanders, the slippery duck-walks, the shell-sprayed road over which the rations had to be brought up, the pitiful attempts to remember Christmas peace and cheer, while Fritz was pitching the tune and raising Cain with high explosive and poison gas. Some padre's honest but oftentimes hopeless effort to prove to fellows "fed up" beyond words that it wasn't God's fault that men had lifted the lid and let Hell loose on the earth. Memories of strafes and raids, of dugouts and billets in a hundred different places will paint their pictures in the fire for many a returned man this Christmas. Those "other Christmases" will speak to him again out of the past. From the first to the last of "the piece" he will have them all in mind—those in France or elsewhere and that one that found us at length on German soil—keeping out watch on the Rhine—the time when we had to drop at last the well used: "Je ne vous comprends pas" of France, and learn to express the same thought, and difficulty in the less elegant: "Ich verstehe sie nicht," of Germany.

But the most sacred memories of all must ever be the memories of the "mates" we left behind—the undying dead. These have a place among the things that remain. Already "out here" the shell holes are being obliterated and overgrown with grass and flowers. War battered cities—Phoenix like are rising from the ashes of their former beauty. Barbed wire entanglements—those cunningly spread spider webs of the devil, are being rolled away from miles of quiet countryside. All is being changed! It is well that it should be so! But the memory of these comrades of ours does not change; it remains! We can scarcely think of them as dead, the men we knew. We see them still as they marched with us over the cobbles of France. We hear their voices as they called their laughing thanks to Madame as she wished them "Bon chance" from her open door as they passed. We see them in the summer-time resting on some green bank at a wayside shrine as they "moved up" towards the line. We see them coming back from a swim swinging their towels and singing at the top of their voices. They did not return; but in some mysterious way we feel that we are one with them still.

And perhaps it is just because of Christmas that this thought comes home to us all the more strongly. The message of Christmas is a message of hope. We have just come through hell and have not yet recovered from the scorching, but the smoke is beginning to rise around us—we begin to see more clearly. We are coming again to understand what truest wisdom has ever known,—that back of all the madness of men—behind the smoke of battle and the clash of arms, one still remains who though He permits such things as men in their blind folly commit—never wills them. One who is still God though clouds and darkness are round about Him; and if the whole of Revelation is not a lie and if Christmas means anything at all that One came to earth to share man's burden—born in a manger nineteen hundred years ago, in Bethlehem on the world's first Christmas morning. The Prince of Peace they named Him. We cannot understand it yet, but in spite of the difficulty the world shall see at last and be glad, for the things that perplex us are but of to-day—He remains and tomorrow is bright with hope.

Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be. They are but broken lights of Thee, And thou, O Lord art more than they.

A live store, brim full of Christmas novelties. See windows and all departments for exceptional values at H. and J. Smith, Ltd, Tay street, Invercargill, and Main street, Gore. Phone numbers: Ladies' Showroom, 1162; Fancy and Children's Departments, 1163; Clothing and Manchester Department, 1164; Office, 288.

EVENTS OF THE WEEK.

To those of our community who were privileged to be "over yonder" during the latter part of the war; it was very apparent that the security and effectiveness of the aeroplane as a means of transport would be turned to commercial advantage after the war. This was not long in doubt in Britain and in Europe; and to-day aeroplanes are a regular feature in passenger work and as a link in the general post mail services. New Zealand, though far removed from the "hub of the universe," is nevertheless not behind in realising the value of the latest advance in the means of communication; and Southland, in particular, is at present receiving considerable attention as a possible headquarters for a company to operate between Timaru and Invercargill. When one considers that a business man could leave Timaru at 6.30 a.m. and be in Invercargill in time for office work one is struck by the contrast with present methods of travelling when a dusty and uncomfortable train journey of nine hours' duration is needed to accomplish this same operation. No doubt the novelty of an aeroplane journey from Invercargill to Timaru or to Christchurch would for the first two years; handsomely pay the promoters of the scheme, but by that time the value of the rapid means of transit would be so well recognised that a large fleet of 'planes would be necessary to cope with the traffic. At present there is afoot a scheme to establish locally a "hangar" with its staff of pilots and mechanics, to form the terminus of the Timaru-Invercargill aerial service. In Timaru, in Christchurch, and more particularly in Auckland, the sight of a 'plane overhead is no longer regarded as a novelty; and if those of us who live to the south of Dunedin are to keep abreast of the times, we must see to it that we do not lag behind in this latest commercial venture so popular in the north, but so far almost unknown in Southland. That the commercial utility of the 'plane is realised in Timaru was well proved on Friday last when the arrangements made by our local representatives to fly from Timaru to Invercargill were forestalled by an enterprising party who took advantage of the fast aeroplane service to connect with the ferry service.

The annual musical examinations, this year conducted by Mr Schilsky, were concluded on Monday, the talented examiner expressing himself highly pleased with performances of the local candidates. Special mention was made by Mr Schilsky upon the performance of Miss Marjorie Manson, who was awarded highest marks in the Dominion. It speaks highly for the interest displayed in music in Invercargill, when we consider that 150 candidates presented themselves in Invercargill, while in Dunedin, a town four times the size of our southern capital, there were only 300.

During his tour of New Zealand, Mr Schilsky has examined 3000 candidates, and speaks very highly of the standard of work it has been his pleasure to examine.

A party of "Diggers" mindful of long marches, bad food and bivouacs are evidently suffering a relapse. Not content with all the comforts so fondly thought of while abroad, they propose penetrating the "Unknown" that lies to north-west of Hauroko. Some of the party in pre-war days had experienced the intermingled pleasure and hardship that the Fiord country affords. Bush dripping with water, tired limbs, short rations, supple jack entanglements are the inevitable accompaniments of such excursions. During a notable trip from Manapouri to Doubtful Sound one tall member of the party expressed a determination to spend his next holiday in a consumptive sanatorium by way of contrast. Yet the spirit of the explorer has triumphed, and he is making enquiry at the Defence Office for a valise, the "Diggers' portmanteau," in which he was accustomed to carry upon his back all his worldly possessions. The campaign is to last about two weeks and we shall welcome an account of their trip in a later issue.

There have been lately many indications that the Government intends shortly to tackle the important question of Forestry in a business-like way, and in the applications invited by the Public Service for men qualified for Conservators and rangers there is proof that the necessity of action is necessary.

Early in the year the N.Z. Government brought from Canada to this country Captain Ellis, a fully qualified expert, to make an exhaustive report on the country's timber resources, and to include in his report a plan to obviate the depletion

of the vast forests which once covered most of our mountain lands. Captain Ellis has spent most of the year inspecting our forests, and it is to provide the machinery to put his proposed plan into execution, that applications for men with experience in forestry are being called. Those Southland people, who a few months ago, met this Canadian lumber-man, recognised that he was one who would make good in the task he had undertaken.

That our natural forests were being rapidly cut down, without any really consistent effort being made to replace them, is a fact that has lately been only too obvious to the thinking man; but until the appointment of Captain Ellis, little had been done.

It is to be hoped that, under the control of this gentleman, the new Department of Forestry will be of real value in this country, and that before long we shall see efforts being made to get the most value from what is a very valuable natural asset, the permanency of which has only lately been growing more and more doubtful.

We hope to see returned soldiers having a chance in the new appointments to be made; and no doubt as Captain Ellis is an ex-member of the C.E.F., he will recognise that the arduous and exacting tasks of the Field made men who will be of use to him in his gigantic task.

Southland has been badly neglected in the matter of tree-planting; and the fact is the more remarkable when one considers the great need that exists in this Province, for shelter belts of trees to afford protection for stock against the wintry blasts of the prevailing south-west winds. Probably the early settlers had such an amount of fine timber within easy distance, or perhaps they overlooked the fact that sooner or later trees planted would be valuable; but whatever the reason, visitors to our district always remark on the absence of well-arranged belts of trees, such a common feature of the landscape in the north.

Our many soldier settlers in Southland should be made well aware of the fact that they are able to obtain from Tapanui Government nursery 500 trees for plantation purposes. They should, too, be instructed that there is no use planting trees unless fences to keep stock from the young trees are erected. Many men go to much trouble to plant trees; but neglect to take this precaution, with the result that the stock immediately ruin the trees put in. This important work of inducing farmers to plant suitable trees for shelter and later for milling purposes, will, no doubt, form a part of Captain Ellis' scheme.

The late Dr McNab was surely a pioneer in Southland in the realm of afforestation; and the trees planted some 16 years ago by that gentleman on his Knapdale estate, are now not only yielding immense benefit to the stock, but are already attracting considerable attention on account of the marketable timber in the belts. They have, at the same time, time contributed much to enhance the beauty of this fertile part of the country.

A number of our young men who after the armistice undertook a course of study under N.Z.E.F. scholarships, have devoted their time to the study of forestry, and on their return to this land, they should be very valuable to take their places in the Forestry Department, and to help to preserve our commercial areas of fine timber.

"Diggers" are reminded of the many thoughtful and kindly messages that were wont to be sent to them when "The Boys at the Front" was the first thought of friends at home. Send your Christmas greetings this week if you have not done so before.

Invercargill is to be well and worthily represented at the forthcoming Band Contest at Nelson, where the Hibernian and the 8th Regimental Bands are to try conclusions with the other crack bands of New Zealand. No stone will be left unturned by the respective conductors Messrs Wills and Siddall, to have their bands well trained to participate in the contest.

It will be interesting to watch the career of the Hibernian Band, especially when one considers the highly creditable position occupied by this enthusiastic young band at the recent Dunedin Contest.

The Band of the 8th Regiment, popularly known as the "Garrison Band," has behind it a fine record, and its band-room possesses trophies won in many contests not only in New Zealand, but in Australia as well. Recently reorganised and now under the capable baton of Mr Siddall, the son of the popular and gifted conductor of the old redoubtable Garrison, the Regimental, will, like the Hibernian, give a good account of it-