

SOLDIERS INTO CIVILIANS

"THE LISTENER" has given its readers various accounts of soldiers coming home. We have met hospital ships and described emotional scenes on the wharfsides, interviewed wounded men and given the stories of some of the heroes among those who have come home, whether on leave or for good. Most of our stories, like most novels, have ended leaving the reader to assume that they all lived happy ever after. The other day we decided to find out whether they all did. The obvious place to start tracing their stories was in the Rehabilitation Department, and from this source we obtained the case histories of 10 men.

Three New Farmers

CASE A is a Maori, unmarried. Before this war he was a worker in a sawmill. He went overseas—Greece, Crete, Libya. Shrapnel wounds made him unfit for further service, put one hand out of action. He was returned to New Zealand by hospital ship, and sent to the hospital at Rotorua for wounded men. His hand could not be used, but he was given a rubber ball. He tried to grip it, struggled with the mere idea of getting his fingers round it, and they began to yield. The rubber ball was taken away, and he was given an axe handle. He clasped it in his hand over and over again, and exercised the muscles, swinging it round and getting used to having two hands again. Soon he said he wanted to go farming—no more sawmills for him. He applied for employment on the Rehabilitation Department's training farm, and was approved. He completed the course to the satisfaction of the department and was graded "A" by the farming sub-committee. He has a job now, but is looking for a farm somewhere in his own part of the country. If he finds one that suits him, he can borrow, under the Department's loan scheme.

CASE B was an electrician before the war, but he had had some experience on his father's farm. However, if it had not been for the war, he might not have been able to contemplate farming on his own account. He went overseas, served in the Middle East. Gunshot wounds brought him home again, and when the Rehabilitation Department first got in touch with him, his mind was not quite made up about his own future. He decided on farming, and was approved for a course of several months at Massey College. He went through it, and came out graded A. Then he found a farm—he was luckier than the Maori. A loan has

been approved to enable him to start out on his own account.

A DIFFERENT history again is that of **CASE C**. After leaving school he was a farm-hand. Then he worked in a dairy factory. He took one more step away from the land, became an insurance agent. When he came back from overseas—a married man now—he wanted to get back to the land. He knew there was a chance for him now, and applied for training. He began work as an employee of an approved dairy-farmer, under subsidy from the department. Then he left the farmer to join a course that was beginning at Massey College. While he was there, he received £4 a week, but his fees and his books were paid for, and his board was provided. His wife,



BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE: A soldier returns

training course—he wanted to learn carpentry.

Four months after that, there was a report on his progress, with four headings for marks relating to his work, Diligence and Attendance, Intelligence, Skill with Tools and Progress. **CASE D** got four "Very Goods," with the comment, "Making good progress in all branches," and the recommendation "Continue Course."

Two months later he got one "Very Good" and three "Goods." Two months later the same. Two months later, three "Very Goods." In a few months, the report was "Likes his work. Is doing a good job." Finally, he was classified as "A good outside finishing and framing hand," and the latest report, some months after the man finished his course, was that he had accepted a contract to build a house, which would take him some weeks.

Opportunities—And Pluck

CASE E is an amputee—one leg had to be taken off while he was overseas. Before the war he had acquired a taste for farming—had had five years' experience of it. He came home with a draft of wounded, and in due course was discussing his case with an officer of the Rehabilitation Department. He wanted a farming course, and intended to go through with it to be a farmer, in spite of his disability. The department's officers doubted his ability. They asked him to consider his decision very carefully. With all his willingness, would he really be able to stand up to the job, with only one leg of his own? So **CASE E** left the office and made up his mind to find some other one-legged men who were farming. He did so, and got in touch with them; he returned to the Rehabilitation Department and said he had made up his mind to go on.

But then he began to learn to use the artificial leg that had been made for him. While it was being fitted, he began to reconsider his decision. A Rehabilitation officer had written in his report: "Cool, calm, deliberate spirit," but **CASE E** had the wisdom to cast

What Happened To Ten Men

in the meantime, took on an important job—looking for a farm. She found one, without having to go very far away. Now a loan application has been approved.

A Tradesman Now

BEFORE the war, **CASE D** had been a farm worker, storeman, tramway employee. He was a married man. After leaving the Army, he was unwell, nervy. His war service made him the responsibility of the department. A field officer called, at his home, letters and telegrams were sent. Did he require the assistance of the Rehabilitation Department? No. The field officer reported to head office that this man had said he didn't want to have anything to do with the Rehabilitation Department or any other Government department, and would they please not send him any more letters or any more telegrams.

The branch office was instructed to advise the man that if he should require its assistance any time it would still be willing to help. Three months later, an application was received for admission to a trade



BACK TO SCHOOL: This photograph of a carpentry class, and the one on the next page, were taken by the National Film Unit

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