

THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

Personal Message From The Minister



Spencer Digby, photograph

THIS personal message to the officers and men of the New Zealand Forces has been supplied to *The Listener* by the Hon. F. Jones, Minister of Defence (whose photograph appears above):—

"At a date not possible to make public, though it may be soon, you will be leaving New Zealand for service overseas. I cannot meet you all personally, however much I could wish to do so, but I would like to take this opportunity in the pages of *'The Listener'* to tell you how gratified I am at the splendid spirit which prevails among officers and men throughout the whole of our forces. That speaks for itself. It is an inspiration to see such a genuine spirit of comradeship and enthusiasm. May it always exist. Only recently have I had the opportunity of visiting our Army camps, the Naval Base and our Air Force establishments. Conditions existing in all of them were a source of great personal gratification to me.

"Personally I feel that New Zealand can take pride in the conditions under which her soldiers and her airmen are undergoing their training. As far as is humanly possible, the Government has endeavoured to provide for those who have enlisted, accommodation as

comfortable and as attractive as possible. We believe that the camps and stations should be worthy of the men who have volunteered their services in this time of stress.

"I have been particularly impressed with the physique and keenness of the men. There is a genuine desire to acquire military knowledge, however arduous the conditions. And here I should like to pay a tribute to your instructors, for you have obviously been true to them.

"An officer of outstanding ability, General Freyberg, V.C., has been chosen as your leader. He is a man with an inspiring military reputation. You are fortunate to have such a leader and, I have no hesitation in saying, General Freyberg is also fortunate in having volunteers of such a splendid type to lead.

"The first New Zealand Division gained a high and enviable reputation, both on the field of action and while on leave. I am satisfied in my own mind that you will not allow that record to be sullied, but that you will further enhance the name of this Dominion. New Zealanders have established a great reputation not only as soldiers but as men of character. Personally I feel that there is no need to worry on that score. One and all, you will be anxious to preserve that reputation, in whatever country you may chance to find yourselves.

"The task you have set out to do is to aid in the defeat of the enemy. It will require all our courage, all our determination and all our resources in the combined effort to restore to the world a state of living in which right and not might shall prevail.

"Our Naval officers and ratings and our Air Force personnel have already been in conflict. They have shown such determination, courage, and the will to win that the whole world has rung with praise for them. Probably you are already looking forward to your own opportunity. I am sure you will achieve similar distinction.

"Soon you will be leaving what we believe to be the most peaceful and happy country in the world. Rest assured that your progress and your welfare will be watched and guarded with the closest interest. Many of you are leaving behind Mothers and Fathers; others are leaving sisters and brothers; others again are leaving their sweethearts. It is the inevitable result of war.

"My sincerest thoughts and best wishes go out to you all wherever you may be and in whatever circumstances you may find yourselves."

WHAT A RECRUIT THINKS OF MODERN MILITARY TRAINING

HERE are some extracts from the letter of a young recruit to his father. It was written from Narrow Neck on December 15.

"I am happily and comfortably established in camp after one week's adjustment to discipline, routine, different surroundings, etc. We are camped on a narrow neck of land about 100 yards from a glorious beach, facing Rangitoto. It is a healthy spot, warm, sunny, and always a fresh soft breeze from the sea. We are temporarily housed in a marquee, with electric light laid on. We sleep on comfortable bunks and mattresses, and have really luxurious bath and shower rooms. We are surprisingly well fed for a military camp — we get brown bread, lettuce, a fresh apple or pear daily, fish on Fridays, in addition to the basic military bread and butter, meat and cheese.

"The training is very rigorous. The day is divided into several periods —

small arms and machine-gun training, squad drill, bayonet drill, field tactics and physical training. Physical training is a different thing nowadays. Formerly we dressed in 'longs' and did boring, silly drill for perhaps an hour. Now we go out in shorts, bathing trunks, underpants — anything — but we must expose a maximum surface to the sun and air — and do a series of loosening and relaxing and speeding-up exercises. Next morning it is really delightful to wake up. Everyone leaps out of bed and laughs and talks and sings and whistles with great liveliness, just like a little boy. There is none of that sombre silence, bad liver, snarling and bickering before breakfast which I seem to remember.

"The officers and instructors are an exceptionally fine-seeming lot. They enforce a strict discipline, but it is not half so rigid or ridiculous as it used to be. Much scope is allowed for individuality in all things."