

# WAR DIARY

## FUN IN THE TROOPSHIP JOURNALS

(By N.Z.R.B.)

**C**OPIES of the magazines published on each troopship of the 1st Echelon have reached New Zealand from Egypt. Some of them are bright publications; all of them have their fun at the expense of authority.

The magazines are modest, type-written sheets of paper similar to those published on the troopships of the 1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force. From what I remember of those humble efforts of the last war, there has been little change in the style and still less in the brand of humour. Anyone holding rank above that of a lance-corporal is fair game; senior officers get what bridge players term a "grand slam."

"Z3: Front Line" and "New Zealand Abroad" are two typical journals, filled with references to the fun and games of those who went ashore at the various ports of call; senior officers are pilloried both in prose and verse, but always with a light and amusing hand. Any characteristic habit or failing of n.c.o. or officer provides the subject for an imaginary set of orders for the day.

One journal carries the inevitable "If," with apologies to Rudyard Kipling, and begins:

"If we can dine on caviare and gherkins  
(Without a visit to the dry canteen)  
If we were butlered by Chief Steward Perkins,

And can return from leave unheard, unseen,  
If we can weather storms without green faces  
And come through Army life without a crime . . .

That theme ripples on and on, brook-like, for almost a page.

Dark doings at ports of call have been fully chronicled, as, for instance, the mysterious story of a cat which had evidently been gathered up at one port

of call and taken aboard that particular ship. A "Sensitive Soul" has written a soliloquy, which sings the usual hymn of hate about censorship and the trials of military life, but one suspects that the author really rather likes it.

Much of the information contained in the journals refers to subjects which are mysteries to the ordinary civilian. One set of verses, which tells its own little story quite neatly, concludes on this sombre note:

"All our eyes are red and bleary,  
Faces thin and pale,  
Oh, Colonel, how our hearts are weary  
All through dat damn Tooth's Ale."

Two copies of "New Zealand Abroad" had appeared by the time the ship had been a month at sea. An editorial states that the voyage had been "without incident," but a column entitled "Incidents on Leave" suggests a different story. "From Bow to Stern," a page of secret history gathered from all quarters of the ship, suggests that "Crown and Anchor" boards are still in evidence unofficially. A bulletin of "Unofficial War News" has given the lads a chance to air their personal views on the present campaign and those engaged in it—with particular reference to Herr Hitler. I liked also, a polite version of a set of verses entitled "The Stationmaster's Daughter."

A few of the items would not pass the New Zealand censor, but these little papers have enabled those who wished to do so to exercise themselves in print. The artists have been busy, also, with caricatures of the officers, most of whom, I imagine, have been amused but never flattered. However, in years to come, these journals will make good souvenirs of stirring days.

## IN EXCELLENT HEALTH

**T**HE health of the troops is excellent." That old formula can be applied in all sincerity to the men of the 1st Echelon now camped in Egypt.

In a report received by the Minister of Defence, the Hon. F. Jones, reference was made to the fact that the camp buildings are almost completed, that a considerable amount of tar sealing has been done for car parks, and that lines of stones border the passage ways and roads, proving that the men are taking a personal pride in the appearance of their camp.

The canteens have been a great success and are well patronised by the men, and the food provided is giving every satisfaction. Meals are varied and there are no complaints.

Social clubs have been established, and the New Zealanders are taking full advantage of all facilities offered by the people who are conducting them.

One of the most interesting features of the report concerns the opportunities offered to officers and men to see the sights of Egypt. At Easter time 250 went on a trip to Luxor and to the Tombs of the Kings, which are among the marvels of antiquity to be seen in Egypt. Every week-end parties of New Zealanders go on sight-seeing tours to the Pyramids and other places of historical interest. Lectures on the history of Egypt and its tombs and temples are given regularly in the Y.M.C.A. huts, and are always packed.

Wherever they go the officers and men, by their conduct and smart appearance, are creating a good impression among the Egyptian people.

The new swimming bath was opened on April 7 and is proving to be a great success. Showers have now been erected in the camp and add to the comfort of the men.

## THIRD ECHELON COMPLETES THE DIVISION

**W**HEN the units of the 3rd Echelon leave New Zealand at the end of their period of training, the Main Body of the 2nd New Zealand Division will be complete. After that all units leaving the Dominion will be reinforcements to keep the Division to full fighting strength in the field.

Men of the 3rd Echelon are at present going into the three mobilisation camps—Trentham, Burnham, and Papakura. Ngaruawahia will no longer be used as a training centre for Artillery units. These will in future go to Papakura, which will also be the training centre for all Maori reinforcements.

As the 3rd Echelon will do its training during the winter months very few officers or men will be under canvas. The new huts at Trentham have been completed and were ready for the men when they entered camp. Officers of the infantry battalion will be under canvas, but only until their permanent huts are ready. Hutments which saw service in the last war and many in the older parts of Trentham have been re-conditioned and now house various training units and reinforcements.

Everything was ready in the camps to receive the various units of the 3rd Echelon. Before going all the men had been X-rayed and were able to go immediately into the organisation and training.

## FOOD CONTROLLERS New Zealanders in Britain

**T**HE men who control Britain's supply of food and clothing range from a retired Lieut.-Colonel to a philatelist, and include three New Zealanders. Although they are not in uniform, these controllers fight a battle every bit as important as any on land or sea. Here are the men:

Sir Harry Shackleton is head of the wool supplies. With a deputy controller and eight other men he directs the buying, rationing, and selling abroad of all British wool stocks.

Sir Percy Ashley, younger brother of the late Sir William Ashley, the Birmingham economist, controls all supplies of cotton. He has a famous collection of stamps.

Mr. H. E. Davis, born in Otago, has control of Britain's butter supplies. He was London manager of the New Zealand Dairy Sales Division when war broke out. In normal times 32 per cent. of Britain's butter imports comes from New Zealand.

Mr. H. S. E. Turner, once manager of the New Zealand Refrigerating Company and later Director of Live Stock and Home Produced Meat, and Mr. R. S. Forsythe, Director of Imported Meat, are the two men who control Britain's meat supplies for the duration of the war.

## Personal

Captain R. W. Harding, M.M., of the 21st Auckland Battalion, has been promoted major. He served in the last war, and gained his commission in the field.

Lieut. J. L. Duigan, of the 5th Field Artillery Regiment, a son of Major-General Duigan, Chief of Staff, has been promoted Captain.

Lieut. J. R. S. Sealey has been appointed to the headquarters staff of the 5th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Echelon. He has specialised in foreign languages.

The Rev. J. Hiddleston, of Auckland, and formerly of Canterbury, is with the units of the 2nd Echelon, with the rank of Major.

The Rev. J. W. McKenzie, M.M. of the Epsom Presbyterian Church, Auckland, has been appointed senior chaplain of the Presbyterian Church with the 2nd N.Z.E.F. overseas. He served in the last war as a stretcher bearer with the Field Ambulance, and won his Military Medal at Passchendaele.

## N.Z. Division Complete

Sufficient men are available to fill the 3rd Echelon, plus the 3rd Reinforcements and the special Reinforcements which will accompany it.

The military authorities are now recruiting for the 4th Reinforcements, for which 1,800 men are already available.

As the 3rd Echelon will complete the Division when it arrives in Egypt, recruits will be required to keep all future reinforcements to their full strength.

Sir Hubert Winch, an ex-managing director of a Calcutta tea firm, controls Britain's £120,000,000-a-year tea supplies.

Colonel Francis Balfour has control of the sugar supplies. Four years ago he was appointed chairman of the International Sugar Commission. At the end of the last war he was Military Governor of Bagdad.

All the controllers are directly responsible to the Minister of Economic Warfare.

NEW ZEALAND

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