

NATIONAL LEADER: R. A. BUTLER



MR. R. A. BUTLER, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Mr. Churchill's Cabinet, is only 38 years of age, but he is well qualified to handle the work of

such an office. He was Under Secretary of State for India at the age of 22.

Mr. Butler is the son of a distinguished Indian Civil Servant and was born in India, where his father held office at various times as Secretary to the Government of India and Governor of the Central Provinces. He took honours in history and languages at Cambridge and immediately embarked on the political career for which he had fitted himself. After five years in the India Office he became Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, which he left to take his present office. Since 1929 he has represented Saffron Walden at Westminster.

Mr. Butler is a keen agriculturist and his farm in Sussex provides an outlet for surplus energy when he is not in the House. For years he has encouraged and helped the British farmer to increase production. At the age of 24 Mr. Butler married a daughter of Samuel Courtauld, chairman of the famous firm of fabric manufacturers and a Trustee of the Tate and National Galleries. They have three sons.

MERSA MATRUH AGAIN IN THE NEWS

(By O.A.G.)

TWO hundred miles west of Alexandria lies Mersa Matruh, a comfortably-sized and sheltered dent in the Mediterranean coastline which, since the last war, has become one of the strongest fortifications against an attack on Egypt from Libya. During recent weeks it has become an objective for Italian planes, whose bombs have dropped there almost daily.

Mersa Matruh appeared in the news for a brief period during the last war when the 1st Battalion of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade was "blooded" there in action against the Senussi on Christmas Day, 1915. At that time falling bombs would have done little damage. Not one wharf or jetty broke the even line of the sandy, shelving beaches; only one airplane took the air—and that was on our side; only on rare occasions did more than one small ship anchor in the mile-wide harbour. Apart from our tents there were only a few humble buildings

which formerly did duty as a barracks for the Egyptian coastguards. Except for the harbour (which was as richly blue as any of the products of Mr. Reckitts), a tiny mosque and a few ancient date palms, Mersa Matruh was a grim and desolate spot.

From the crest of the line of low hills which encircles the basin of the harbour stretches a vast panorama of the same sort of country over which British units must now be fighting as they attack Italian forts along the Libyan frontier. Those hills, by the way, make an admirable defence line. There is little vegetation. Tiny clumps of salt-bush, greenish grey and brown, cover some of the flat stretches of desert. All else is rock and sand, stretching far into the interior of Africa and broken only by gullies and low hills.

Here and there, where the rainfall of centuries has carried the earth into valleys between the rocks, wandering Senussi tribes grow small quantities of barley. Round the wells along the coast small tribes have erected their crude villages and here a few date palms raise their tufted heads and fig trees struggle for sufficient moisture to lead a stunted existence. For nearly three months we made expeditions through that bleak and inhospitable territory, using horse-drawn vehicles and camels for transport.

The whole of the coast-line of that part of Egypt is dotted with "mersas," for "mersa" is the native name for anchorage. Almost every other place name on the map begins either with "bir" or "wadi." The first means a well, or cistern, for water is a precious commodity in that region, and "wadi" is merely the native name for a gully or dry water-course. During the time the New Zealanders were stationed at Mersa Matruh our drinking water had to be transported from Alexandria by boat, so that we had a strict ration when we went on expeditions into the desert. On those occasions we were accompanied by a battalion of Sikhs who were always followed by bearers carrying tins of water; two tins a man, borne on an old-fashioned yoke across the shoulders. For days those fellows followed their unit over the desert, for their religion demands that a white man's shadow must never fall across a Sikh's food or drink.

Great Changes

But great changes have taken place at Mersa Matruh since the New Zealanders and other units of a small British force used it as a base from December 1915 until operations ceased with the capture of Sollum by the South Africans early in 1916. After the war it became a fashionable watering-place for the residents

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MUST BE APPROVED Functions For Patriotic Funds

ATENTION is drawn by the Department of Internal Affairs (Patriotic Purposes Branch), to the provisions of the Patriotic Purposes Emergency Regulations 1939, insofar as the collection of funds for patriotic purposes is concerned.

The Department advises that it has come under its notice that a number of functions have been organised throughout the Dominion for the collection of funds for patriotic purposes and that in many instances the advertisements relative thereto do not disclose by whom they are being sponsored or whether they have been approved by the appropriate patriotic authority.

In this regard the Department points out that it is an offence under the Regulations for any person to raise money or to take up collections in money or goods for any patriotic purpose unless such purpose is an approved purpose and such person is an authorised collector.

Provincial Patriotic Councils established pursuant to the said regulations, have been vested with the sole power to appoint authorised collectors, but they may delegate such power to the Chairman of the Council, or with respect to any sub-division of the Provincial District, to the controlling committee of such sub-division which may delegate such power to the Chairman of such committee or to the Mayor or Chairman of any local authority in res-

pect of any part of the district of such local authority forming part of such sub-division.

It is therefore incumbent on any person or organisation wishing to organise entertainments, dances or other functions in aid of patriotic funds to make application to the appropriate authority for the necessary approval. Such permission is required only where the entertainment, dance or other function is represented, by advertisement or otherwise, as being held with the object of raising funds for patriotic purposes.

The Department appreciates to the full the patriotic motives which have actuated citizens and organisations

throughout the Dominion in organising functions in aid of the patriotic funds, and solicits the continuance of their valuable assistance and co-operation in seeing that the regulations, which are designed to ensure that funds raised for patriotic purposes shall be properly accounted for, are duly complied with.

MINISTERS' SONS IN UNIFORM

Four Ministers of the Crown now have sons in uniform. In addition to the list published a fortnight ago must be added the name of the Hon. F. Langstone, Minister of Lands, whose son, Private J. Langstone, is now in training with units of the 3rd Echelon.

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