

THEIR FIRST DAY BEGINS

(By O.A.G.)

BUCKLE STREET is a grim barracks even on the brightest day. At 8 o'clock on a cold morning it looks far from inviting until it fills with youth.

Recruits for the 4th Reinforcements began arriving soon after 7.30 last Wednesday morning. Soon all hollow echoes were lost in brisk and breezy conversation as the men entered, stooping through the gap of a door guarded by territorials. Their first day in the army was beginning.

Some of them talked a little self-consciously, to hide their nervousness; others stolidly dropped packages of personal belongings and waited for anything to happen. They knew, perhaps, that the beginning of all army life means a great deal of waiting and standing about. That is inevitable and necessary until every man is tabulated and clothed and numbered and ultimately fitted into his own particular sphere in the giant military machine.

A Quiet Lot

The clock might easily have slipped back 25 years. Nothing has changed outwardly, except the cut of civilian clothes. The men seem quieter, but, said an n.c.o. already seasoned in the work of sorting out recruits: "This is a quiet lot."

If my memory serves me right those n.c.o.'s are also a quieter lot, matured by experience during the last war when they went through the same process of joining up.

Some hundreds of variously-clad young men have swarmed into the barracks. Tobacco smoke rises from about 700 pipes and cigarettes and hangs in a blue cloud above the restless crowd.

Above the drone of conversation, rather like the sound of a dynamo, rises the voice of an n.c.o. calling out names. Each man, as he answers, is given a crowned arm band and put into his own particular group, ranged around the walls. That is the first process of sorting out. Some of the bands are slipped on upside down.

A khaki-clad figure mounts a rostrum and the flow of conversation ceases, as though a vast door has been closed. He explains the procedure and asks the men "not to tear the town to pieces" on their way to the station. That raises a laugh and conversation begins with a

buzz and rises to a persistent belt of sound.

One of the recruits has made his first discovery.

"What a fine lot the sergeants are; not a bit like the popular conception of army sergeants and sergeant-majors," he tells me.

Meanwhile officers and non-commissioned officers, most of them veterans of the last war, move among the men, chatting informally, answering an endless list of questions, giving advice.

Advice

"For a while you'll have to do a lot of standing about. You'll sign a number of forms. For the rest of this week you'll be more or less messing about, getting your kit and finding yourselves and your way about the camp. Don't worry—the army will do all that for you. Do what you're told and everything will be easy."

Sound advice, that, for any recruit, from a man who knows his job.

When the standing becomes irksome the men sit on the floor or on boxes round the wall, or use their packs of belongings as a pillow. A sergeant is still calling out names.

There are the usual late-comers. Although the parade was called for 8 o'clock a few roll along casually an hour later.

"Bit late, aren't you?" politely asks a young territorial who guards the door.

"That's all right, sonny. We're here, aren't we?" And in they go, their whole attitude suggesting some future "problem children" for tactful n.c.o.'s to handle.

Life Friendships

Most of the men are total strangers, but soon, by quick perception, they seem to sense each other. Already some of those recruits have found their own kind. A young Wellington journalist has made friends with a recruit in plus fours from Christchurch. They find they have much in common and they are both bound for the same unit. Magnetically the types are drawn to each other, as in a well-ordered community. The few rowdy ones have found their own level, cracking crude jokes at the expense of those around them as they lounge against the wall. Those two in-

evitable stand-bys, sport and the weather, begin the conversation. A few lonely ones gaze on the scene, wondering perhaps, how things are going at the office they left yesterday, or reflecting on the farewell party of the night before. Soon they, too, instinctively move into the groups and begin to chat. Friendships which will endure for a lifetime are being made.

Most of them have taken the advice of old soldiers and wear old clothes, though a few look as though they are bound for the office or the golf links. At their feet are suitcases, battered or new, sugar sacks, kit-bags which saw service during 1914-18, paper parcels, containing the few personal things they will require until they don their uniforms. The shrewd ones carry all they need in their overcoat pockets.

Nobody is singing. Everything is matter-of-fact and working to plan. The late-comers have been checked and assigned to their places.

Now the last orders and instructions are given. The permanent staff men who are to conduct the recruits to Trentham Camp take their places. The Royal Air Force Band is ready. Automatically, it seems, the men fall into ranks of three, a movement which will become increasingly familiar to them as the days go by, since it is the first of all military movements.

A blustering southerly wind carries the band's music far across the neighbouring housetops and everybody stops to look and listen. Down Buckle Street they go, stepping briskly, but not with that measured tread which reveals the trained soldiers they will soon become. Their first day in the army has really begun.

Children from a school close by, line the street and cheer; parents and friends who have waited outside the barracks follow along the footpaths, or chat as they try to keep step with the swelling music. Along the route to the Railway Station friends wave and cheer as the men go by with their bundles and packages.

Soon the staff at Buckle Street takes up its routine duties. Their particular job is ended for the moment and the permanent staff of Trentham Camp will take over to continue the work of transforming civilians into soldiers.

So New Zealand's part in the war goes on and the man in the street says to his neighbour, "Well, another lot of our boys has gone into camp."

THE HOME GUARD

Statement By The Minister Of National Service

At our request the Minister of National Service (the Hon. R. Semple), has supplied us with the following statement on the duties and purpose of the Home Guard:

IT has rapidly become apparent that this war is assuming a vastly different complexion from anything hitherto known, and it entails upon New Zealand, in common with other parts of the Empire, the necessity of making full and complete provision for the protection of our own shores and our own homes.

"The decision of the Government therefore to establish the Home Guard and to link it up with the Emergency Precautions Scheme to ensure the continuance of communal activities and services in time of need, is being enthusiastically received by the community, particularly by those men who by reason of age or other circumstances are precluded from serving in the military forces.

"Let there be no doubt about it—New Zealand is in the danger zone, and it is certain that should the necessity ever arise here—which God forbid—every available man would step forward to protect his home, his children and his freedom. Even should there be carping critics at the moment, the call to action would most certainly find such people ready and anxious to do their part."

"It is of course obvious that many are not able to bear arms nor to take part in active military campaigning, and there are others who have conscientious scruples against such forms of service, but it is equally obvious that such persons can find ample scope for their energies with the allied Emergency Precautions organisation, which would be called upon to help in a multitude of ways if a disaster such as earthquake or fire should occur, whether the latter should arise from enemy action or otherwise.

"After all, most people want to help. It must be admitted that there has been a feeling of frustration among our men—particularly those over the age of forty-five, because they are doing so little. The Home Guard is their opportunity, fulfilling both the need for preparing themselves to defend their country and also satisfying their longing to be in the picture."

BATTLE OF HASTINGS

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including Harold's brothers, and there was no army left to provide opposition. William was free to advance on London and make of England a vassal state of Normandy.

It had cost him dearly, however. He had brought 60,000 men to Senlac. On its blood-soaked field he left one-quarter of them. Without bomb, shell, or machine gun, the Saxons defending their country had cut down 15,000 Normans in one day's engagement.

But the course of history had been turned for centuries.

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