

# SOLDIER FLATTIE

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"A POLICEMAN'S LOT is not a happy one" says the song. It is silent about his lot when the Army makes him one of its own policemen. Contrary to public opinion, the military policeman really does other things besides making himself a nuisance when you are on leave. His activities are multifarious.

At an advanced base camp in Italy the Kiwi provosts carried out a raid on neighbouring villages which had its amusing side. Shortly after establishment of this camp and a Polish camp in close proximity, hawkers from these villages began to ply their trade. Such was their success that their numbers increased to a couple of hundred. Coincident with this thriving trade, it was found that articles of Army property were vanishing, and it was learnt that troops were sometimes bartering Army gear, including blankets, for the hawkers' wares. So it was decided to nip the

The first bag, taken within a minute or so of leaving camp, consisted of an unshaven hawker of middle age who protested volubly but who quickly became resigned, and a lad in his teens who burst into tears when hoisted on to the truck but was pacified by the older man.

Next a motley-coloured party of men, women, and children were rounded up and bundled into a three-tonner along with their stock-in-trade, mostly fruit, nuts, and cheap jewellery. A few of the bolder youngsters made a break for some nearby trees, but were quickly recaptured. Some of the women and children made the welkin ring with their sobbing and cries, others took it calmly enough.

This went on all morning, and by noon nearly two hundred pedlars of all ages, sizes, and sexes were locked in a Nissen hut. They were sorted out according to the villages from which they came and their names were taken. Then they



affair in the bud. Consideration was also given to the fact that the hawkers were a menace to security.

So a small party of New Zealand and Polish provosts, later joined by two Italian carabinieri, set out to arrest all hawkers in the area and take them to the Kiwi camp for inquiries.

were lectured by an interpreter on their conduct and told they must not enter military camps without a permit. Otherwise they would be arrested and charged for daytime trespassing and shot if found in similar circumstances at night.

During the afternoon small parties carried out the more important task of