

32. CHAPLAINS.

During the past year the Chaplains List has been purged with a view to the retirement, &c., of those Chaplains whose age exceeded that laid down for retirement, or who were non-effective. This work has not yet been completed. New appointments to the Chaplains List are being strictly limited to clergymen under the age of forty-five years.

The majority of the Chaplains who attended the annual camps carried out their duties conscientiously and well. Others, again, appeared to be lacking in experience and did not make the best of their opportunities of getting into touch with the men by organizing entertainments, &c., in camp.

Up to the present 125 Chaplains have been despatched on service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and out of that number eighty-nine are still serving abroad. Four Chaplains have been killed in action, and ten have been decorated by His Majesty the King for distinguished and meritorious service. The supply of suitable Chaplains for service with our troops overseas, and in the training-camps in New Zealand, has been well maintained, and the Churches have rendered valuable assistance in the selection of clergymen for service abroad.

33. NEW ZEALAND DENTAL SERVICES.

The Dental Corps is continuing to render valuable service in providing dental treatment for soldiers, the whole of which is now being done in camps with excellent results, all work now being standardized and under direct supervision. The new arrangement has greatly added to the amount of work to be done in camps, but the staff, with slight addition to its numbers, is successfully coping with the extra amount of work presenting.

A Dental Officer and mechanic continue to be attached to all hospital ships, and a Dental Officer to transports. Eighteen officers have been sent on duty with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and eight have returned, two of whom have resumed private practice. There are now thirty-three officers and sixty-three non-commissioned officers and men of the Dental Service in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force; of these officers eighteen are in England, ten in France, four in Egypt, and one in Samoa. The results accruing from the visit abroad of the Director of Dental Services have more than justified the step taken.

34. BASE RECORDS.

The work in this branch continues to increase as each Reinforcement embarks, and it is now responsible for the custody and consequent work thereon of 90,000 files for members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force who have proceeded overseas, in addition to 11,500 subject files referring to the numerous details dealt with by this branch. Increased work has necessitated increased staff, with the necessity forecasted in last year's report of increased accommodation.

Further experience has enabled the various war branches of the Defence Department, although located in several different buildings, to reduce overlap and duplication of duties, which has been of considerable benefit to Base Records. This branch is now responsible only for the custody of the files of those soldiers who have proceeded overseas, and the files of those men whose actual military service terminates before embarkation for foreign service are in the custody of the Director of Recruiting. Any inquiries about a soldier who has not embarked are referred to the Director of Recruiting, whilst this branch is responsible for all inquiries and action outside camps in New Zealand with reference to any soldier who has left this country or who returns invalided or on leave to New Zealand.

The staff now consists of 68 military and 162 civil members, the latter of whom comprise 137 female clerks and 19 Civil Service cadets, and the pay-roll averages £130 10s. per head per annum.

Some idea of the increased work may be obtained from the fact that the number of letters now received daily averages over one thousand, an increase of four hundred since 1916, and over eight thousand documents per day are dealt with by the branch.

The latest addition to the building includes provision for suitable offices for the Director of Military Hospitals and his staff, and when the latter occupy their new offices this branch will undertake the clerical work and keep the records required on account of the transfer from the Public Health Department to the Defence Department of the care and custody of all sick and wounded soldiers and discharged soldiers.

Very long hours have been worked when heavy casualty lists are received, but the system in force enables all lists to be dealt with expeditiously, and on no occasion have any cases remained undealt-with overnight.

The increased numbers of returning soldiers are being satisfactorily handled, and both soldiers and their relatives appear to appreciate the system in force which permits of demobilization from the ship's side, instead of returned men who do not require in-patient treatment having to report in hospital after a few days' leave in order to obtain their discharge, as is the custom in Australia.

The honorary staff have continued for a third year to carry on their excellent work every morning and evening (Saturdays excepted), and without this assistance during the frequent extra busy periods the branch could not successfully be carried on.

35. RECRUITING.

The work of recruiting for the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces has progressed satisfactorily and without friction. As the result of experience gained, considerable changes of an administrative nature have been made with a view to the simplification of the work of medical examination, appeal, concentration, and despatch of men to Expeditionary Force camps, with a consequent improvement in the carrying-out of the administration of the Military Service Act.