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120. *Anomalous that highest character on discharge only attainable with two and a half years' service.*

In March, 1916, cable inquiries were made from England and Australia to ascertain if any departure was being made from King's Regulations, paragraphs 415 to 419, in assessing characters on discharge-certificates of members of an Expeditionary Force. The replies showed that King's Regulations were being followed. The Australian Defence Department also forwarded copy of Instruction No. 334, issued on the 5th August, 1915, that if no report of misconduct existed, and there was no record of character available, the character was to be stated as "good" on the discharge-certificate. In December, 1915, in endeavouring to overcome the difficulty of correctly assessing characters at the time of discharge when the soldiers' conduct-sheets were not available in this country, it was decided to issue a discharge-certificate without assessment of character at the time of discharge, and when the conduct-sheets arrived to issue a special conduct-certificate. After a very short experience this system was found impracticable, as men discharged with bad characters only procured their certificate of discharge when applying for employment on which no character was shown, and the good-conduct man was found to be at a disadvantage with the "incorrigible." It was therefore decided in June, 1916, to follow the Australian custom, and this continued in force until some alteration appeared necessary on account of the longer period of service and the fuller conduct reports then available at the time of discharge. As so many soldiers had been discharged with "good" character it was not considered desirable to award "very good" to those with similar service, consequently it was decided that two and a half years' service was necessary before a "very good" character could be shown on the discharge parchment. Any other action would have necessitated the calling-in and reissue of all discharge-certificates after a reassessment of character.

It would appear that the Australian Defence Department has found its original system unsatisfactory, and still does not have sufficient information available at the time of discharge to correctly determine a man's character. Two recent Australian discharge-certificates issued at Melbourne and Sydney show no conduct, and the following announcement is stamped across certificate: "The practice of including a statement of character or special qualifications on the discharge-certificate has been discontinued from 1st December, 1917."

From this it would appear that the procedure adopted in New Zealand is justified, and that our discharge-certificates enable employers at any rate to distinguish the good-conduct men from the bad-conduct men, which would be impossible if no statement of character were furnished.

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121. *The soldier's discharge-certificate should show how and why the different conduct grades are awarded.*

The present discharge-certificate does show that no character better than "good" can be awarded to soldiers with less than two and a half years' service. When a "fair" or "indifferent" character is awarded on account of military offences which should not affect civilian life the reason is so stated on the certificate of discharge, several lines for this purpose being available on the certificate.

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121A. *Cabling minor ailments.*

Minor ailments are not cabled, and, with one brief exception, which was stopped as soon as London Record Office could be so informed by telegram, never have been. On the other hand, minor casualties, when received by mail in hospital reports, are notified to next-of-kin on a printed memorandum form. The necessity for this notification is that many minor casualties necessitate several weeks' treatment in a hospital or convalescent home, during which time a soldier often does not write home. Some other soldier, who is a better correspondent, knows of such soldier's treatment in hospital, and informs his own people, who forward the information to the sick soldier's relatives. The result used to be indignant or anxious letters from parents requiring full information and a reason for no notification of their relative's illness. Since the institution of the reporting of minor casualties by mail no similar complaints have been received, nor has one objection to the system been notified to the Department.

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122. *The organization of the Defence Department on its administrative side is faulty.*

*Vide 1. Page 6.*

The desirability of decentralizing some of the work falling on the General Officer Commanding in his dual capacity of Commandant and Quartermaster-General was recognized early in the war. Colonel Esson, C.M.G., was specially ordered to return to New Zealand in the middle of 1916 to take up the appointment of Deputy Quartermaster-General. Unfortunately he had subsequently to be allowed to return to the Treasury Department, to which he belongs. It would be of the utmost advantage to the Defence Department, and would remove many of the criticisms of the Commission, if his return to take up the appointment of Quartermaster-General can now be arranged. The question is now under consideration.

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123. *Training and Administrative Branches to be kept quite separate and distinct.*

*Vide 2. Page 6.*

Training and administration are and always have been separated. Duties relating to personnel, however, do not cover everything, and the General Staff is entrusted with