

## LETTERS FROM HOME

## Enthusiastic Reception By Troops In Egypt

## MAIL-DAY SCENES IN CAMP

The sound of an eager cry in the tent lines of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force is pretty sure to mean only one thing—that another big New Zealand mail has arrived. Letters from home seem unable to come too often for us, and were those who wrote them to witness the excitement they bring to the camp they would know that the time had been well spent.

Just when we are beginning to wonder how far away the next mail can be, someone comes hurrying to his tent with the news that a truck laden with bulky mailbags has just pulled up at the Division's post office. After that it's merely a matter of time before the first letters have been sorted and gathered in by eager hands.

In the last mail there were anything up to 20,000 letters for us—hundreds of thousands of words telling their stories of joys and sorrows and carrying tidbits of news from distant homes, scattered like little records of people and events which travel far through the camp by word of mouth before the day is out. Then, after the letters have been read, and re-read, we are in the mood to take out pencils and paper ourselves, and tell our side of the story.

I looked behind these mail-day scenes on a visit to the divisional post office the other day, and found that our letters are handled there almost exactly as they would be in any New Zealand mail room. Incoming mail is divided into letters and papers, which are re-divided according to the units to which they are addressed. Finally they are divided again into the principal sections of each unit. Then the sorted mail goes out, either by truck or by runner, to the units' orderly rooms, and soon reaches the individual soldiers to whom it is addressed.

On normal days the postal staff operates two deliveries of mail from local addresses and England and other countries, together with air mail from the Dominion. Outward mails are collected from unit orderly rooms after they have been passed by the regimental censors and are checked in the post office for censorship and correct postage. After the stamps have been cancelled, air and ordinary mails are separated and sorted according to principal post offices. Then they go on their way to base censorship and postal sections for shipment to their destinations.

I was interested to learn that every letter I write home is handled solely by New Zealanders from the time it leaves me till the time it is read in New Zealand. In the case of mails addressed to other countries, British and

Indian Army postal sections co-operate with us in their dispatch.

## Smooth Organization.

The organization of our post office is running like clockwork. The staff has a nucleus of New Zealand Post and Telegraph Department men, and the others have quickly fallen into the routine. It took the staff only three and a-half hours to get our last big mail out for delivery.

Now and then the postal men have mysteries to solve in the way of indefinite addresses, but they have the help of a card index system handed down from the New Zealand postal organization in the Great War. Files compiled from embarkation rolls and routine orders enable them to trace every man to his correct address.

And there is humor in the job at times. After all, it must sound funny to hear some of us, just after one mail has been distributed, asking: "Any idea when the next mail arrives from New Zealand?"

## PATRIOTIC WORK

## Interest Of Lord And Lady Galway

The Wellington goods store of the National Patriotic Fund Board where comforts are packed for troops going overseas and those already overseas was visited recently by the Governor-General, Lord Galway, chairman of the board, and Lady Galway. They were accompanied by Lord Dormer, A.D.C.

Their Excellencies were received on behalf of the board by Mr. W. Perry, M.L.C., with whom were Messrs. L. O. H. Tripp, B. C. Ashwin and J. Roberts, also members of the board. Others present included Mr. H. O. Belworthy, representing the secretary of the National Patriotic Fund Board, Mr. G. A. Hayden, and Mr. A. McM. Patterson, officer in charge of the goods store.

Their Excellencies spent 20 minutes in the store and were shown a wide variety of goods that are ready to give added comfort to troops and which have been provided as the result of the co-operation and practical assistance of business firms and citizens throughout the Dominion.

On Tuesday morning their Excellencies visited the rooms in which, under the Joint Council of the Order of St. John and the Red Cross Society, bandages and hospital comforts for the sick and wounded are being prepared and packed. They were received by Dr. A. Gillies, Lady Myers and Lady Elliott.

Yesterday afternoon their Excellencies visited the rooms of the Air Force Relations in the Marine Engineers' Institute Building, Aitken Street. The Air Force Relations take care of the Air Force personnel on behalf of the

National Patriotic Fund Board, and as yesterday was knitting and sewing-day at the rooms the opportunity was afforded their Excellencies of seeing the voluntary workers knitting various articles for the greater comfort of the air force personnel.

## Apples for Troops

## 5000 Cases to be Sent

Troops from New Zealand who are now overseas, together with others going from this country and New Zealanders who enlisted at Home and who will be joining their fellow-countrymen in arms, will not be denied the opportunity of participating in the Dominion's bumper apple crop this season. Five thousand cases of apples are to be sent overseas for their benefit.

The fruit will be paid for and sent by the National Patriotic Fund Board. This is one of the many uses to which the board is applying the funds subscribed by business firms and individual citizens for the welfare of the fighting forces. But for this public support and the strict applications of moneys received to the purposes for which they are contributed projects of this nature could not be undertaken. The board will also be sending shortly cases of parcels for the First Echelon, the idea being that every member of the Echelon shall receive a parcel that will remind him of his homeland.

Whenever naval men arrive after patrol duty at sea steps are taken to ensure that something is provided for their extra comfort. Early in January, during the stay at Wellington of H.M.S. Ramillies, a large quantity of butter, cheese and other articles were placed on board the ship for the officers and men, who later showed their appreciation of this action by forwarding on scrolls suitably inscribed and framed the signatures of every member of the ship's company.

## GREAT UNSEEN HEROES

"Those who know the heroic work of the Field Ambulances know that some of the men should get the Victoria Cross for their actions," said Sir R. Heaton Rhodes, president of the Canterbury and West Coast Centre of the St. John Ambulance Association, at the annual meeting. "They work quietly and silently and are seldom seen, so that they cannot be recommended for awards." Sir Heaton said. He spoke of the war nurses, too, and said that the Order of St. John had had great nurses in the Crusades, in Crimea, had had Florence Nightingale, and would have more great nurses in the present war.

## SOLDIERS DEMANDS FOR STATIONERY

One of the chief demands made of assisting authorities acting in military camps or on troopships is for stationery, and the more freely it is given out the greater the bane to the censors who have to read the letters before they are dispatched. This casts a side light on the meaning of the following extract from a Y.M.C.A. report from base headquarters in Egypt: "Our heaviest expense will be stationery. Are the boys eating it up, and are the censors blessing us!" The comment of the men themselves is the best form of appreciation for what the Y.M.C.A. is doing. "Don't know what we would do without you," is one of the commonest forms they have of expressing their gratitude for what the Y.M.C.A. officers in Egypt are doing for them.

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