

N.Z. ARMY TANK BRIGADE

A Hand-Picked Force HIGH STANDARD OF EFFICIENCY

Pick of the Dominion's armoured units is the New Zealand Army Tank Brigade, a hand-picked force originally trained and intended for overseas service, but which, through changing circumstances of the war, has been retained in New Zealand. First in the tank field in New Zealand, it has set a standard of toughness, skill and efficiency which has been an example to the rest of the tank units. If invaders set foot in this country, tank units may well be a decisive factor, just as they were in the Great War.

The British introduced the tank into modern warfare. On the night of September 14, 1916, behind the British lines, battle-tired troops gazed in astonishment as metal monsters lumbered along a fire-rutted road preparatory to a dawn attack. More than a year later—in November, 1917—the great Allied offensive began at Cambrai, led by a surprise attack by 400 British tanks. Within a few hours, the Allies had won approximately the same amount of ground as had taken three months, 400,000 casualties, and scores of millions of pounds' worth of ammunition, to gain at Passchendaele. On August 8, 1918, the tanks attacked again at Amiens. This was the day described by Ludendorff as "the Black Day of the German Army in the history of the war." When in October, 1918, the Supreme Command of the German Army announced to the Reichstag party leaders that all hope of a German victory had gone, they added that the British tanks had been one of the two decisive factors.

From then onward, it was obvious that the war of the future would be a war of speed and mechanization, of armoured mobility and immense hitting power. For a start, in the present war, the lesson of the tank went against the Allies when the full might of the German panzer divisions was turned against the Low Countries—seven divisions of 70,000 men controlling an avalanche of steel composed of 3000 heavy and medium cruiser tanks, 4000 light tanks and armoured cars, and nearly 10,000 other armoured vehicles. incidentally the word panzer comes from the original German name for tanks, or "land ships" as they first called them—"Schutzengrabenvernichtungspanzerkraftwagen."

Lesson of Libya.

Since then, the fortunes of war where tanks have been concerned have varied, largely depending on the respective strengths of the opposing forces. Where a force has had superiority in speed, armour, fire power, and hitting strength, it has usually won out against the opposition, however resolute and courageous. This has been only too apparent in the present Libyan battles.

All these lessons have been apparent to the New Zealand Army authorities for a long time and a tremendous amount has been accomplished toward ensuring that this country will have absolute tank and other armoured superiority over any force which may make a landing.

An article in "The Dominion" last week reviewed some of the qualities it takes to make a tank soldier. The tanks themselves in battle operate very much like a fleet of warships. As the men manoeuvre into action, taking their orders constantly by wireless or radio telephony from other tanks or from headquarters, or even from "spotting" aircraft, they see little of the actual battle through the observation

slits or through the periscopes fitted above the gun turrets.

The first tanks of 1916 were ponderous and slow-moving. Their combat speed of several miles an hour enabled the enemy to run away or to dodge. They were incredibly uncomfortable and their crews were often not only half-cooked but almost asphyxiated by exhaust gases.

Tanks today are mobile, high-speed, precision-built instruments of warfare. They are more comfortable than their predecessors, but life in them is still

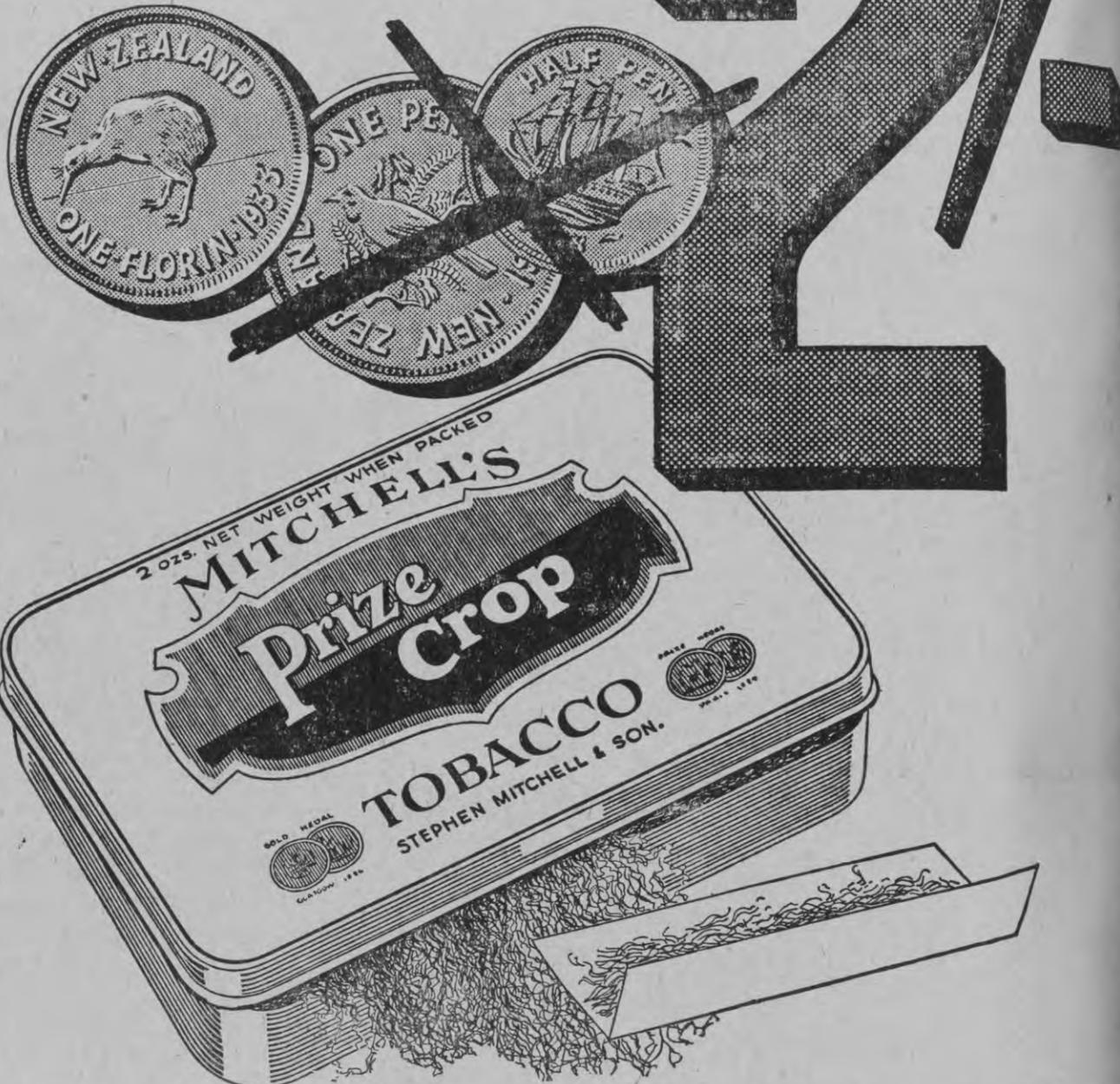
hard, calling for tough muscles, quick eyes, and iron nerves. These are the qualities of the men who today make up the personnel of the New Zealand Army Tank Brigade, and the divisional armoured units.

DEATH IN ACTION Captain Harding Leaf, M.C.

The death in action of Captain Harding Leaf, M.C., of the Maori Battalion, is officially reported. A member of the

Ngapuhi tribe, Captain Leaf enlisted the beginning of the present war as lieutenant, and was promoted to the rank of captain just before the battalion for overseas. In the last war Captain Leaf went away with the first Maori contingent and took part in the fighting on Gallipoli. He gained his commission in the field, and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry. By old soldiers of the Great War Captain Leaf recognized as a most efficient officer, excelled as a physical culture instructor and was an all-round athlete. Captain Leaf fought through the campaign in Greece, and fell in battle in Crete.

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