

In dealing with large bodies of men there is always the possibility that through ignorance or diffidence on the part of those entitled to receive help some of the most deserving cases may inadvertently be overlooked, and it was accordingly laid down as the guiding principle of the Department that *no man was to be missed*. In order to ensure this principle being carried out every transport returning with invalided soldiers is met by the representatives of the Department, who obtain from the ship's lists, supplemented by inquiries of each individual soldier, the particulars necessary for the preparation of the Department's register. Opportunity is taken to give each man a card explaining the objects of the Department (Appendix V (H)), and he is also given a leaflet, which has been prepared by the Lands Department, relating to land-settlement.

THE DEPARTMENT'S MAIN REGISTER.

The Department's register takes the form of a history-card for each man (a specimen of the card is given in Appendix V (A)). Immediately the lists are brought off the ship they are handed over to our voluntary staff, which writes up the cards as far as the section marked "Leave granted." The cards are then sorted into districts corresponding to the Local Committees which represent the Department in the various centres throughout the Dominion, and from the cards so sorted confidential lists, containing the men's names, addresses, and condition, are prepared and despatched to the Committees, so that the local Patriotic Societies may be apprised of particulars of the men returning to their districts and enabled to get into touch with them at the earliest possible moment. This work is really a little outside the strict duties of the Department, but it has been undertaken in response to local requests, and is, I believe, appreciated and found to be useful. The cards are then sorted alphabetically, and forwarded to the Head Office in Aitken Street for incorporation in the cabinets which constitute the Department's Main Register. It will be observed that the cards which have just been written necessarily relate to men who have newly returned to the Dominion, and being undischarged are exclusively under the control of the military authorities. Experience has shown that until the date of a man's discharge has been settled misunderstanding and confusion arise if premature attempts are made for his civil employment, and for the time being, therefore, the new cards are relegated to the "Not ready for action" section of our register.

THE VOLUNTARY STAFF.

Mention has been made above of a voluntary staff, and before leaving the subject I should like to express once more my acknowledgments to the gentlemen who have been such an assistance to the Department in the duties described during a period of nearly two years. The work is necessarily of an emergency character, and when I state that at the date of this memorandum the register consists of upwards of nine thousand cards it will be seen that the work has assumed very large proportions. To show the expedition with which it is accomplished, I may mention that with scarcely an exception the cards are completed and the schedules sent out on the evening of the day on which the lists reach Wellington. A hospital ship which arrived recently brought nearly four hundred soldiers. The lists arrived by the Auckland afternoon mail; work was started at 5 p.m., and everything was completed and despatched the same night. The staff consists of a few officers over military age who are employed in the Government Insurance Department, and I am happy to take the present occasion of placing on record my appreciation of their very fine services, which are the more admirable because they do not spring from sudden and evanescent enthusiasm, but are characterized by the perseverance and sustained effort which are amongst the best national qualities. Officers employed at some of the branch offices of the same Department have also rendered valuable assistance from time to time in the work on board arriving transports under circumstances of considerable discomfort owing to shortness of notice and the irregular hours involved. I wish to express my thanks to these gentlemen also for their very valuable help.

PROVISION FOR EVERY INVALIDED SOLDIER TO BE PERSONALLY INTERVIEWED.

One of the leading features of the Department in its dealing with returned men is the personal interview. Shortly before a man is discharged the Defence Department advises the Discharged Soldiers' Information Department of the intended date of discharge. The card is then withdrawn from the "Not ready for action" file and incorporated in the "Under action" category, and thereafter each stage of the correspondence, until the case is finally disposed of, is noted in the appropriate space on the card, so that at any moment perusal of the card shows in brief what has been done for the soldier concerned and the stage which has been arrived at.

The first step is the personal interview. Immediately the Department is advised of an impending discharge a Government officer is instructed to interview the soldier on behalf of the Department. The instructions and the report to be furnished are shown in Appendix V (B). The questions have been framed with a view to meeting a variety of circumstances, and the wishes and views of the soldier himself are expressly invited. It is naturally found that a considerable number do not stand in need of the Department's assistance in procuring employment, having already businesses or farms to return to, or possibly being in possession of private means. A provision is made on the form for an express statement to be made on the subject of assistance, and a certain proportion of the reports come back noted that assistance in obtaining employment is not required. Other soldiers are found to be already in employment or to have employment promised, whilst others are still undergoing curative treatment, and intimate that they are not yet ready for work. In the case of the first two categories the card is suitably noted and transferred to the "Disposed of" section; in the case of the third the result of the inquiries is noted on the card, and the case is kept under observation for further inquiries, being temporarily filed