JUDGMENT.

(Contived from Page 6.) you much learn to totter a bit and speak in a squeaky voice."

At that moment there was a discreet tap at the door.

"Come in," said the actress.

A next little maid appeared. "Three gentlemen to see you, ma'am, she said demurely.

"Three?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Who are they? What do they want?" "I don't know, ma'am. But they come from London, and they say they must see

"Oh, tell them to write or to call in the merning. I cannot see anyone at this bour. If they come from the Press, and want to interview me, you can give them a glass of wine and a biscuit, but I can't see them-not to-night."

"Yes, ma'am; but-"

Before she could say any more she was gently pushed aside, and three men sidled

Clara Clarke drew herself up to her full height.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" she demanded.

Her tone was that of a tragedy queen. The leader of the three men, a solid, thick-set fellow, with a square, bulldog face, did not permit himself to be overwhelmed, however,

"I'm sorry, mum; but business is business and dooty is dooty. "We are looking for Richard Foster, an escaped convict, and we have reason to believe he is concealed in this house!"

(Another thrilling instalment next week.)

SOUTHLAND R.S.A.

ANNUAL REPORT.

In submitting the report for the year ending March 31, 1920, it is gratifying to record the great increase in membership, which has grown from 583 financial members to 1710 financial members, and though the New Zcaland Expeditionary Force has ceased to exist, and all those who served in the great war have returned to New Zealand, there are problems connected with repatriation, pay and allowances, pensions, gratuities, land, etc., that are still to be faced, and it behoves all returned soldiers to concentrate their united efforts towards the successful solv-

ing and adjusting of these subjects. The policy of the R.S.A. has always been sound and has followed a line of action, which while recognising the claims of returned soldiers and their dependants upon the country has also studied the resources and ability of the country to meet the claims put forward, and by this means the Returned Soldiers' Association has the confidence of the public.

The Association is not in any way connected with party politics, and is non-sectarian, and thus its views are not narrewed by following any particular shade of political thought.

MEMBERSHIP.

Owing to the great increase of membership, in the early part of the year this Association decided to form what were termed country sub-committees, and immediately sub-committees were formed at Tostapere and Lumsden. At the Annual Conference held in May a new scheme of organisation was in augurated and a District Organiser was appointed for Otago and Southland. He immediately visited Southland and formed sub-associations at Winton, Orepuki, Bluff, Otautau, Nightcaps and Dipton, while representatives from this Association formed sub-associations at Woodlands, Wyndham, Edendale and Fortrose, making a total of twelve seb-associations throughout the district, with a membership of 683 members.

The total number of unfinancial members in the Association is 131, 66 of these being unfinancial for the years 1918-19, 1919-20. The amount of subscription due from these members represents the sum of £98 10s. A great number of unfinancial members are men who have evidently left the district as notices sent to them have been returned through the post as un-found.

PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE.

As you are aware at the last Annual Meeting, Dr. Garfield Crawford was elected president, but owing to the press of professional duties he was reluctantly compelled to tender his resignation, and at a bi-monthly meeting held on September 29th., Mr R. B. Caws, was elected president in his stead.

Of the original committee elected six members have resigned at different periods during the year, and for the last two menths there have been two members short on the committee. Owing to the difficulty that has been experienced in getting sufficient members to hold a General Meeting these two vacancies were not filled. and a suggestion is being put forward by the out-going Executive, that vacancies

on the committee caused by resignation, In perial and New Zealand rates is now may be filled by those nominees next in , being made to those nurses and soldiers order in the ballot at the Annual Meet- 1 who enlisted in the Imperial Army, and ing, thus ensuring that members of the to members of the Motor Boat Patrol who Executive will be as nearly as possible elected at the Annual Meeting.

During the year Mr D. J. B. Seymour held twenty-seven meetings, and eight extraordinary general meetings have been held, one of the latter being called by re-

"THE DIGGER."

At an extraordinary general meeting held on October 10th., 1919, it was decided to publish a weekly paper called "The Digger," and a Board of Management consisting of five members with the president ex-officio, was elected. As you are aware this paper has been launched and the editor, Mr F. G. Blake, will, during the course of the evening report on the progress made.

GENERAL SECRETARY.

During the year Mr D. J. B. Seymour resigned the position of general secretary at headquarters. My Seymour filled this position for a number of years, and there is no doubt that his retirement has been a great loss to the Associations through-out the whole of New Zealand. Nevertheless it is gratifying to know that Mr Seymour intends to still keep in touch with executive matters. The position of general secretary has been filled by the appointment of Lt.-Col James Pow, of Dunedin.

REPATRIATION.

The appreciation of the R.S.A. is due to the Repatriation Board and its staff for the good work they have done during the year. This department is in full sympathy with the returned men, and it is safe to say that no other department carries out its duties more sympathetically than does the Repatriation Board.

During the year Mr S. B. Crawford who was first elected R.S.A. representative on this Board was transferred to Dunedin, and tendered his resignation Mr L. S. Graham being elected in his stead, and a report will be submitted during the evening by your representative.

LAND SETTLEMENT.

The Association has devoted a great amount of attention and time to the question of Land Settlement. It has lost no opportunity in pressing the importance of opening up more land under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act, and there is no doubt that a bold land policy is required to enable those lands which now lie idle to be cut up for closer settlement, and grazing lands to be stocked to their full carrying capacity. This action will not only settle more returned soldiers on land, but will be advantageous to the country as it will considerably increase the production of the Dominion.

The N.Z.R.S.A. are preparing a Land Roll, that is a roll of men requiring land, and all those men who want land have been requested to furnish the Association with the particulars of the class of land required, i.e., whether dairying or pastoral. The object of preparing this roll is to ascertain, if possible, the exact number of soldiers' requiring land, so that the R.S.A. may be able to support the policy presented to the Government urging the necessity of acquiring more land for settlement. Although up to the present time the Association has not been successful in having a representative on the Land Board, yet during the year we have obtained representatives on the newly constituted Land Purchase Boards of the Dominion.

GRATUITIES.

The question of gratuities is one that affects vitally every returned man. very many cases owing to anomalies existing under the regulations governing the gratuity, hardship is imposed. The R.S.A. have pressed the Government repeatedly to set up a Gratuity Appeal Board. This has now been done and all cases of anomalies existing in connection with the gratuities are being forwarded to headquarters and placed before this appeal board. Where it is proved that such cases are cases of hardship the Board will recommend to the Minister of Defence that payment be made.

PAY AND ALLOWANCES.

It is satisfactory to record that during the year the following adjustments have been made in connection with nav and allowances. Payment of retrospective separation allowance and children's allowance is now being made from the date of entry into camp, thus soldiers' wives are receiving 3s per day separation allowance from their husband's entry into camp, and the guardian of the children is receiving 1s 6d per day for each child, from the date of the father's entry into camp. It is even more gratifying to know that widowed mothers are now being paid 3s per day separation allowance in place of 10s 6d per week. Retrospective payment at expeditionary rates of pay is a'so being made to the members of the N.Z.E.F. who received the lower rate of 4s per day, on their entry into camp. Payment of the difference between the

were resident in New Zealand before the

PENSIONS.

The question of pensions also demands careful consideration. There is no doubt whatever that the pension at present granted is inadequate, and the Association has pressed for an increase of pensions by the addition of plus percentages up to 150 per cent (i.e.) £3 per week, supplementary pension and attendant's pensions being over and above such rate, and the dependant's allowance to be assessed at the The Association has also asked that leg-

islation should be altered to allow in the

case of the death of a husband as the result of war disability, his wife or dependants to be eligible in every case for pension. This applies particularly to men married subsequent to a disablement. The Association also asks that a pension be paid for war disablement at any time after discharge, and that the present legislation restricting the period to seven years' be amended. That examination for T.B. and nerve cases be made by specialists; that no soldiers' pension be reduced without the soldier appearing before a medical officer preferably before

a medical board and that a Pension Ap-

peal Board be set up and provision made

to assist applicants to put their own cases

before the Appeal Board. It is gratifying to note that the Pension Board are now paying pensions on behalf of those men who are in mental hospital, and that the wife or dependants of those so unfortunately placed, now draw the full pension as laid down in the case of death. On the man leaving mental hospital the amount of full pension is made retrospective for a period of two years, and the wife or dependant then draws a pension according to the man's disable-

MEDICAL.

The Association have also strongly urged that men suffering from T.B. shall not receive less than five months' hospital treatment on the one hand, or on the other hand should not be discharged owing to lack of sanatorium accomodation. or be discharged at his own request. That the allowance for limbless men procecding to centres for limbs, should be increased so that such men would in addition to the actual expense incurred receive an amount equal to the wages lost during their absence.

SOLDIERS' FINANCIAL ASSIST-ANCE.

The Association have pressed for the administration of the Soldiers' Financial Assistance Fund to be handed over to the Repatriation Board. At the present time the administration of this is far from satistactory, or sympathetic and it appears that unless this request is acceded to, there is little chance of men receiving assistance from a board which was supposedly set up to grant assistance. GENERAL

In view of the fact that the general elections occurred during the year the Association decided to hold public meetings and place the case of returned soldiers in a clear and consise manner before the general public. With this object in view public meetings were held and the questions vitally affecting returned soldiers and their dependants were dealt with in such a manner that those present could plainly see that all was not as it should be.

When the names of the candidates for Parliamentary honours became known, a series of questions which dealt solely with returned soldiers' affairs were drawn up, and submitted to each candidate for his answers. These questions and answers being published in the columns of the local press without comment of any kind, a d as a result of this action there is no doubt that the attitude of the candidates towards returned soldiers generally was brought clearly before the pablic.

ANZAC DAV

We are on the eve of what is to the soldier the most sacred day of the year, that is Anzac Day, Anzac Day does not represent to us simply the day on which we entered the great adventure as a fighting unit. It has grown to be a day of far greater importance, it has grown to be a day on which we soldiers pay a silent tribute to those of our comrades who have "gone west," and who amongst us has not lost relations or comrades during the last five years.

I, is proposed on this Anzac Day to hold a memorial service, a service in which the returned soldier will pay a tribute to his fallen comrades. $\hat{\mathbf{I}}$ feel sure there is no need to ask all returned soldiers to be present at this ceremony, which is to be held in the Municipal Theatre, at 3 p.m., on Sunday next.

(Sgd.) R. B. CAWS, President.

Balance-sheet Published on Page Ten.

AHMET.

A True Story of Life with the N.Z. Division in Egypt.

(By 11/1275.)

HE DESSERTS.

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CHIAPTER 6.

When the news that Mahmoud had brought to the Commandant at Ismailia proved to be correct, he was released from custody, and allowed to go after receiving bucksheesh. He made his way to the Arab town and joined up with the local moghassils, who, seeing him well provided with money, made him extremely welcome.

He sold the camel which he had obtained by the means related in the last chapter, and the proceeds, together with the handsome reward he had received from the Commandant, made him seem a wealthy man.

When he heard of the fight at Tulul, and that the authorities were requisitioning all the native carts for use as ambulances, he at once offered his services, as a driver. These carts were to be used for the conveyance of the wounded prisoners, and the wily moghassil at once thought that there might be an opportunity to obtain some plunder .

Thus, it came about that the youthful Ahmet saw his father driving the ambulance in which was the wounded Abu Sulieman.

Ahmet stood still, being overcome with urprise at the sight. Not so Mahmoud who although he had not seen his son for many weeks, had yet heard of his every movement through that mysterious brotherhood of the moghassils.

He made a sign to Ahmet to follow, and drove his mules off to where the rest of the carts were drawn up ready to depart. Ahmet, stealing a look at his comrades, saw that they were all too cusy to trouble about him, so he followed the cart.

Mahmoud, squatting on the ground beside his mules, made no sign as Ahmet approached, till the latter salaaming deeply, said: "Naharak Saicd Abu Mahmoud (greetin! or good-day to you, O my father, Mahmoud), when Mahmoud made answer (Saida Walal Ahmet Ben Mahmoud), and embraced him. Mahmoud listened eagerly to all that Ahmet had to tell him of the events of the last few weeks, and all that Ahmet knew of the dealings of Abu Sulieman, he managed to extract by means of cleverly put leading questions. Then, to Ahmet's query as to whicher the old man was alive still, Mahmoud replied: "He yet lives, but if it should be the will of Allah, that there be no moon this night, he will have joined Eblis in Gehenna by the rising of the sun."

At sunset came the order to march, and Ahmet, forgetting his new friends, the "Umpteenth Aussies," in his joy at being with his father, went with the ambulances. Acress the creaking swaying pontoon

bridge went the long serpent-like line of

native carts, each with its groaning freight,, whilst ever it became darker as the short Egyptian twilight, so short as to be practically non-existent, drew to a close. The black night clouds hovered overhead, as if impatiently waiting their turn to cover up the sky and put the world to sleep. Cart after cart, came down the steep eastern bank of the canal and crossed the bridge, the drivers hastening their unwilling beasts with cries of a a-a-a-a-a, whilst staff officers tried to hasten their passage in order that the crossing should be accomplished before darkness set in. By means of clever mauoenvring, Mahmoud had arranged that his cart should not make the crossing before the darkness had set in. He had too much sense to wait till the last, as he well knew that he would then be in the full view of the rear guard, and observation from British troops was not what he desired at that particular time. As his team began to cross the bridge he said to Ahmet: "Remember my son, that thy father is a moghassil, and that none may spy on that which he shall do, lest the evil eye may rest upon him. Take thou heed therefore that thou shalt not tell any man, that which thou shalt see." By this time the cart was halfway across the bridge, and Mahmoud dropping off, made his way to the back, and grabbing hold of the groaning Abu Sulieman, incontinently and unconcernedly heaved him over the bridge

into the canal, and then resumed his seat by the astonished Ahmet, as if nothing had occurred, and a few moments later was belabouring and anathematising his team as they breasted the slope of the western bank.

ORIGINAL.

Now, he did not think it worth while to mention to Ahmet the reason for his action, and thus the boy sat and shivered with dread all through the long night journey to Ismailia, which place, they reached at sunrise. Mahmoud having delivered the other patients over to the Egyptian military hospital, where all wounded prisoners were sent, and having received the payment for his services, betook himself to the abode of his brother moghassils, taking with him Ahmet. Nor in the confusion that occured, was Abu Sulieman missed, and it was not for some two days later that enquiries were set on foot with regard to him. When he could not be found, it was concluded that he had made his escape during the journey to Ismailia.

Later it was ascertained that the body of a Haj had been found floating in the canal near the Bitter Lakes, and that it had been buried with all the marks of respect that were due to a Sidi (saint), by the Arab fishermen, who had found it; this gave colour to the supposition that Abn Slieman had been drowned whilst trying to escape.

The true story of that night's happenings were known only to Mahmoud the moghassil and his son, Ahmet, who did not dare to say anything.

When the "Umpteenths" had finished their unsavoury job of cleaning up the battlefield, they were ordered to camp at Ismailia, and it was not long before they were over-running the town, and esperally native quarters, chiefly for the reason that the latter had been placed "out of bounds."

Mahmoud had found congenial companions in the Arab town and had left the small Ahmet to his own devices, Ahmet had lost his cherished rifle and as his uniform made him an object of derision to the small boys of Ismailia, he was extremely unhappy, and he often wished himself back at Helmieh with his small companions, or more often, back again with the "Umpteenths."

One day he saw coming down the street a party of soldiers, and at first he made as if to run towards them, for he recognised the badges of the "Umpteenths."

Then suddenly, he remembered that he was a descrier. He had heard enough to know what that meant, and he started to slink away. He was too late, however, for a voice called out: "Halt there, Sergt. McKenzie." With the eyes of the kmailia boys on him, Ahmet halted and stood to attention."

He made a pathetic little figure as be stood there. Gone were the ucat little brown boots and leggings, gone was the rifle and the little haversack and water bottle, while his buttons which he had been used to keep so bright, were now dirty and dingy. The stalwart Aussies surrounded their mascot. They rained questions on him which he declined to answer, simply saying that he was their prisoner and asking to be taken to the C.O..

"Bli me," said the Sergt, who happen ed to be the senior of the party. "But he's a game little cove, my oath if be

"Still," with a wink at his mates, "its ther clink fer 'im this time, and no error."

"D'yer think they'll shoot im. ser geant?" said one of the others.

"Betcher life!" said the sergeant "Think what a horrible example 'e is!"

To all this Ahmet made no answer, but strode along with his captors till the guardroom was reached, when he was with extreme gravity, handed over to the sergh of the guard, who made out a crime sheet, and placed him in a cell. When he was left alone, Ahmet's cour

age deserted him. He wept.

Next Chapter-(The Court Martial).

India is the largest sugar-producing country in the world, and is also the last est sugar consumer.