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FOR THE EMPIRE'S CAUSE. IN MEMORIAM.

FLACK.—In loving remembrance of Lance-Corporal A. Flack, only son of Mr and Mrs A. Flack, Banfield road, Wai-kiwi, 26th Reinforcements, who was killed in action somewhere in France on August 6, 1918.

To-day as I gaze on your photo,
In likeness so faithful and true;
Do you know that my heart is still
aching
And longing dear Alex for you.
God called you home, it was His will,
But in my heart you liveth still;
Your memory is as dear to-day,
As at the hour you passed away.
There is a link death cannot sever,
Love and remembrance lives for ever.
So loved so mourned.
—Inserted by his old cobbler.

"The Digger."

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13, 1920.

SOLDIERS LEASES.

Instances where soldiers have given inadequate supervision to the provisions of an instrument giving them a legal status in relation to the purchase or lease of a property are being frequently met with. And the object of this article is to sound a note of warning to all soldiers who are endeavouring to secure a home, or farm, as the case may be. It is not suggested that the document is deliberately framed to achieve an undue hold over the soldier. The case of the Makarewa settlers is a case in point which will serve to illustrate what is intended to be impressed upon the mind of the soldier. It will be remembered, that some time ago a number of soldiers took up land in the Makarewa district. The men started work and began to bring the land into a state of production. A great deal of bush had been fallen and the time had arrived when the bush had to be burned. About this time the attention of the settlers was drawn to a clause in the lease providing for the protection of the tramway which was the

property of a sawmilling company. The effect of this was to cause the settlers to stop burning and meant a considerable loss of time and which may have involved a greater loss of time than actually happened. In the event of their proceeding with the burn it may have cost them a considerable amount of money. The matter was eventually adjusted, but the fact remains that here was the existence of a lease, signed by the settlers, which contained a clause that the men themselves knew nothing about. The obvious duty of men dealing in transactions of this kind is to make sure that they thoroughly understand every clause in the lease before signing it, and the money spent in getting a solicitor to analyse the document is money well spent. It frequently happens that an attempt is made to save this fee, but when it is realised what may result from a clause in the lease it is evident that the "penny wise and pound foolish" policy has nothing to recommend it. We frequently come across men who have no idea what they have signed, and a number of men who are purchasing houses on the small deposit system are daily regretting their haste. Men should not be too hasty in completing the deal but carefully go into the whole question, and it may be incidentally mentioned that a guinea spent in getting the opinion of a practical man to ascertain whether the house has the borer or not will save many regrettable moments after the deposit is paid. Another case in point, is that of a number of settlers who took up land on the Wanganui River; although in this case the fault was with the Aotea Maori Land Board. Nevertheless it will serve to show the inconvenience caused by an unrealised or faulty provision in a lease. In the leases as signed by all the tenants there was a provision protecting the improvements made during the term of the lease, and as there was a right of renewal for a second term, at valuation, the protection of the improvements is a matter of great importance to the settlers. This provision to conserve to the tenant his improvements was accepted by them in good faith and was no doubt given by the Land Board in good faith. It was discovered some time afterwards that the Board had no power to give a lease containing such a clause. The effect of this was to place a serious handicap in the way of the settlers and place them at a disadvantage from the standpoint of finance and roading. The settlers assumed they would be in the position of Crown tenants and that they would get the usual assistance, but discovered, too late, that they were responsible for the entire roading of the land. The Prime Minister is hopeful of making a satisfactory adjustment, and that will no doubt be done. However, we commend the object of this article to all returned men, also their wife or widow, as the case may be.

ROADS.

The question of making and maintenance of the public highway, is one which no progressive community can afford to give haphazard attention to. It has been said that "A nation is judged by its lines of communications." It will need very little reflection to at once perceive the truth of the statement. At the same time, what is true in the greater degree, is equally true in the lesser, and that the progressiveness of any local body and the community is indelibly marked in its roads. Times have changed very rapidly during the last few years. With the advent of fast motor traffic, the problem of a scientifically constructed road has thrust itself upon us much sooner than we could ever have anticipated. Have we in Southland realised this? If so, are we prepared to progress with the times, and go down to posterity as a progressive community? The old practice of county councils to make and repair roads with river bed gravel (which goes down in the winter time and comes up again in the summer) is done! The road of the future is the concrete road, or at least, one which has its foundation of concrete. Our roads have no foundation and coupled with the factor of slipshod formation are a continual source of heavy and ever-increasing maintenance. It is this maintenance which is a continual source of encroachment upon the ratepayer's pocket, and is a factor in the increase of rates, and in the end there is no road. This continual drain on the general account or county fund, as the case may be, is hindering the progress of other works which it is the function of these accounts to pay for, our footpaths etc. In the face of these conditions is it not true that we can put an effective check on this "expenditure without result policy"? Can we not save money and have a good road in the end? If we raise a loan and put down a scientifically constructed road, will the saving effected provide interest and sinking fund? Yes! and a further saving! If my memory serves me correctly,

the Dunedin City Corporation reconstructed George street about the year 1905. The foundation was concrete, and jarrah blocks were placed upon a cushion of sand and then covered with a thin coating of asphalt. The cost of this work was 16s 9 per square yard, and the cost of maintenance fell to about 9d per square yard, whereas before it was somewhere about 1s 7d, if not more. The same result was obtained in Auckland. Queen street maintenance was very heavy, but the council adopted a progressive policy and made a good road which cost 17/9 per square yard, and the company which carried out the work actually guaranteed the first two years maintenance at 6d per square yard. Proof of this policy is found in the fact that Auckland has consistently pursued this policy ever since, a thing which would not have been done had the venture proved a failure. The most defective piece of work existed where the council used local timber impregnated with creosote as paving blocks. We can no longer regard the question of good road as one entirely for a local body to consider and conceive of no greater magnitude than that of our own local environment. It must be reviewed from the standpoint that as local authorities we are mutually dependent upon each other, and with this enlarged vision of our sphere of activity, the road becomes a national concern and to the country as a whole, we are entitled to look for the effective formation and maintenance of the main lines of communication. To further illustrate the position of mutual dependency, were it not for the back country, Invercargill would be the proverbial "pub and a blacksmith shop." However, much we may dislike the facts, Invercargill is dependent upon the back country for its existence. A mutual dependency is established. The opening up of the back country by effective roading is a factor in our progress and is of national concern, in so far as it is a factor in increased production, and a creator of wealth for the country as a whole. We have now suggested that the Government take over the main roads from North Cape to the Bluff. This means that the utmost pressure must be brought to bear upon the Government. Here a very difficult task begins, but supposing the Invercargill Town Council were to frame a resolution embodying these suggestions and that every local body throughout the Dominion be asked to support it, the services of all leagues and other machinery created for the advancement of the country, farmer's unions, etc., should be asked. The Municipal Conference and Counties Association should support it, and it would at least pave the way for propaganda of a more extensive character. A further consideration in the roading problem is the necessity for all local authorities to conserve certain of their raw material as much as possible, and in this connection we quote a paragraph from the report of the Invercargill Town Council's gas engineer:—

RESIDUALS AND BYE PRODUCTS.

"Coke, the principal source of revenue, finds a ready sale in Invercargill and districts, and increase of output will be easily disposed of on remuneration prices. Tar is not so easily disposed of, the local consumption being small; consequently outside markets have had to be found and freights and railage have had the effect of keeping the price comparatively low. The recovery of bye-products from tar on a commercial basis is unpracticable in Invercargill on account of the small quantity available, and the costly nature of the plant required."

The particular section that we desire to draw attention to, is that which deals with the disposal of tar, and the necessity for finding an outside market for the sale of the surplus. Although we have emphasised the use of the concrete road, we must realise that, so far as we know at present, tar must always play an important part in road construction and maintenance. Of recent years tar has been presented in many ways, but always closely allied with the problem of "dustless roads and tarred macadam." The distillation of tar, which dispels its injurious ingredients has rendered valuable service to the local authorities who have used it. Should we not, therefore, use all available tar on the roads instead of sending it away. Furthermore, in view of the scientific treatment of tar and its use on what we may for purpose of simplicity call the "tar spraying method" as an essential condition of this method, would it not be advisable to have our own plant for the distillation of tar from our gas works which would then be available for roads, footpaths, or any other essential work. If we sell any of our tar, then it means that our policy in dealing with roads and footpaths is too limited, and the roads are so much the worse off. The use of our tar on public works which make for the progress of the town, is a much more valuable asset than the actual cash received,

and in addition to this, an increase in the standard of comfort is involved. We must then enlarge our sphere of public works activity to use this surplus tar. This prepared tar is extensively used in England. It has been used in New Zealand, and gave satisfaction when distilled tar was in its infancy. A number of local bodies have the necessary plant and a few have the spraying apparatus. Wanganui, which is the same size town as Invercargill, has one, and there seems ample justification for us to seriously consider the question. At least no harm could be done by the Council considering a report from the engineer. It is possible the Council may have considered these suggestions before. There may be valid reasons why it is not carried into effect. However, this article is an attempt at construction and not destruction, and if we can raise comment by the people of Southland, and a wider vision upon this all-important question, we shall at least have accomplished something, and we trust that the matter will at least have the thoughtful consideration of all local bodies in Southland.

THE DIGGER'S LETTER BOX.

8/1762, Mandeville.—We shall be pleased at all times to publish your country notes. We have posted you stamped envelopes for return of copy which should reach us Wednesday afternoon if possible.—Ed.

Margaret, Oreti Plains.—Your interesting little story arrived too late to be published in this issue, but will appear next week. We are glad to welcome you to the Children's Column, and hope to hear from you again. We would like some more of the boys and girls from your district to write to us.—Mater.

To the President and Members of the Otautau Racing Club.—In the recent issue of this journal, the dates of racing fixtures were published. The date of your club meeting was omitted quite accidentally. A private letter pointed out the error, and I am greatly indebted to the writer for it, and trust this explanation will be satisfactory. The list was compiled in this office and did not emanate from any outside source. The fixtures will be published again and we shall have pleasure in making the necessary correction.—Editor, "The Digger."

"THE DIGGER."

It has been our custom to forward to various hospitals in Southland copies of "The Digger" for the patients. The Sanatorium at Pleasant Point and Cashmere Hills, also Hanmer receive them. There are some Southland boys in Cashmere, who, along with the other inmates, have found "The Digger" a very interesting journal, as the following letter will indicate:—

(To the Editor.)

Sir,—I wish on behalf of several Southland boys in this hospital to thank you for forwarding gratis the several copies, weekly, of "The Digger." It is the only local paper so distributed here, and we look to its arrival for local news. Wishing your paper every success.—I am, etc., HARRY J. WEBB.

Military Sanatorium,
Cashmere Hills, Christchurch,
August 4, 1920.

A business man called in to "The Digger" during the week and spoke very highly of "The Digger." His son has just come down from Wanganui and stated that he could always see the journal there and found it interesting.

A CORRECTION

Secretary, R.S.A., Balclutha.
Sir,—There appeared in the correspondence columns of the "Free Press" of August 3, the following paragraph, under your signature.

"Sir,—Recently there appeared in the columns of your paper a Ministerial letter reprinted from 'The Digger' concerning the Clifton Settlement. This letter stated to be received by the Invercargill Association, as the outcome of an interview which that Association had with a Hon. Mr Coates, and is identical with a letter received by the Association in answer to a report on the settlement forwarded to the Minister of Lands, and contained certain recommendations in reference to conditions as at present existing on the settlement."

An inference likely to be deducted from this paragraph is that the Invercargill R.S.A. interested itself in matters which come under the jurisdiction of the Balclutha R.S.A. Such is not the case, and the paragraph published in this journal made no reference whatsoever to the Invercargill R.S.A., and there is no suggestion in our paragraph that the Invercargill Association interviewed the Minister. While we deeply appreciate your