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**The New Zealand prisoner of war  
pamphlet: official pamphlet of the  
Prisoners of War enquiry office of the Joint  
Council of the Order of St. John and the  
New Zealand Red Cross Society**

**No.5 (August 1942)**

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Acquarone Salonica (printer)

TĀMAKI PAENGA HIRA AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

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Pamphlet No. 5, August, 1942

# Prisoners of War Pamphlet

ISSUED BY

The Joint Council of the Order of St. John and The New Zealand  
Red Cross Society

## SICK AND WOUNDED FUND

Hon. Assistant Editor—Mrs. J. W. JACK.

Hon. Editor—Mr. J. ABEL

All the official information supplied is taken from the monthly bulletin issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva.

Next-of-kin are invited to send copies of letters to any of the below mentioned offices. Please do not send any letters posted from Prisoner of War Camps, dated earlier than March, 1942. Also make sure that the date of the letter is given, also Camp when known.

If you do not desire the name of the prisoner of war to be published with his letter, please make this clear when forwarding copy and the name will be deleted.

Shortage of paper does not allow us to publish copies of groups of prisoners, and as these are extensively published in several leading New Zealand weekly journals, next of kin are requested therefore not to send in photographs of groups.

Relatives are requested to send pictures, particularly of camps, for reproduction in this pamphlet.

The Editor.

### HEADQUARTERS AND WELLINGTON:

96 Tory Street, Wellington.  
P.O. Box 139, Te Aro Wellington.  
Telegraphic Address: "JOINTCIL."

### AUCKLAND PROVINCE:

Bank of New Zealand Chambers,  
Swanson Street, Auckland.  
P.O. Box 247, Auckland.

### CANTERBURY & WESTLAND PROVINCES: OTAGO AND SOUTHLAND PROVINCES:

105A Cashel Street, Christchurch.  
P.O. Box 1098, Christchurch.

2nd Floor, Queen's Buildings, Princes St., Dunedin  
P.O. Box 456, Dunedin.

Taken from the International Red Cross Review, February, 1942.

### CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE FOR READING MATTER FOR PRISONERS OF WAR AND INTERNED CIVILIANS.

Both in the camps and in the work detachments the Prisoners of War have the desire to read, and according to the many reports from the International Committee Delegates they ask for books. For many this "hunger to read" is an instinctive reaction. Many, no doubt, only trifle with books to distract themselves, amuse themselves, or perhaps learn a little, but others essay by a grand effort of spiritual evasion to escape from the preoccupations of the present. There are those too, who in thoughtful books, try, in their hours of sadness and boredom, to find some prop and stay.

Good books create a healthy, breathable "atmosphere," which preserves hope in the prisoner's heart. In the heavy

silence of the camp, the very alteration in his material condition may give the prisoner that sense of the brotherhood of all which may help to give birth to a new philosophy, a sense of altruism more ordered and more generous, more in conformity with human nature.

The hope of attenuating even a little the blind evilness of war has encouraged divers organisations to strive to satisfy the intellectual and moral needs of prisoners and interned civilians. They do this by sending books to the camp libraries and special works to the "universities of captivity," where the prisoners struggle to maintain an intense intellectual life which enables students and other intellectual workers to pursue their studies.

As one knows the efforts of all these organisations are coordinated by a "Consultative Committee for the Reading Matter for Prisoners of War and Internees," presided over, under the auspices of the Red Cross International Committee by M. Martin Bodmer, member of the International Committee.

## SIX ORGANISATIONS.

All that is necessary has been said about this institution, of the spirit that animates them and the harmonious working of their incessant toil. Let us recall, however, that six organisations of succour make up the "Consultative Committee," independent of the Service of Intellectual Help of the Central Agency of Prisoners of War which serves as intermediary between the camp leaders of the camps visited by the International Committee Delegates and these organisations: The Y.M.C.A., International Bureau of Education, Commission Oecumenical for the Spiritual Help of Prisoners of War, European Fund for the Help of Students, International Association of Librarians, all of Geneva; Swiss Catholic Mission for the Help of Prisoners of War (Fribourg).

Since the beginning of hostilities the Y.M.C.A., after having obtained the necessary permission from the Governments concerned, set about their work in most of the countries detaining prisoners or internees. The Secretaries of the Universal Committee, having fixed the basis of the work according to local conditions, appointed experienced men to visit the camps and there organise the work.

Fortified by their principles the Christian Unions strive to help the prisoners to resist the moral and intellectual apathy which menaces them and prepare them to take up again one day their normal life. The spheres into which they carry their programme of action are: instruction and reading, mutual help, deepening of the spiritual and religious life, sport and recreational activities, hand work, the arts (music, singing, theatre, design, painting, etc.).

The 40 Secretaries who regularly visit the camps of prisoners and internees have the essential task of promoting the development of culture, of stimulating their social activities and of discovering among the prisoners themselves those men who can serve their comrades as professors and teachers. These Secretaries assure, as much as possible an efficacious collaboration between the military authorities, the camp leaders and the responsible prisoners, and advise the Central Bureau at Geneva or one of their Agencies what material should be despatched to the camps. The sending of material is done through the offices of the "Help for Prisoners of War" at Berlin, Paris, Marseilles, Stockholm, Warsaw, Calcutta, Cairo, London, New York, Toronto as well as the Central Bureau at Geneva.

## CIRCULATING LIBRARIES.

Circulating libraries consisting of 15 to 20 volumes and packed in small cases reach the smallest and most distant work detachments. Other libraries consisting of 40 books on agriculture accompanied by a small text book are specially designed for technical study circles. The artistic life is maintained by the sending of musical instruments (from pianos to mouth organs), material for painting, sculpture or other artistic work. Sports goods and indoor games help to employ the long hours of captivity.

The following figures illustrate the importance of the work which has been accomplished these last two years:

From September, 1939, to December, 1941, more than 500,000 volumes; recreational, instructive or religious books have been despatched into more than 600 camps in 27 countries, in nearly every continent. We give the following summary of statistics of consignments during that period by the centres of Geneva, Berlin, Warsaw, Belgrade, Stockholm, Paris, Marseilles, London, New York, Toronto, Cairo, Jerusalem, Melbourne and Calcutta.

**BOOKS:** scientific, instructive, religious, various, 509,930.  
**MUSIC:** violins, guitars, saxophones, violincellos, etc., 2,359; harmonies; 3,684; accordians, 260; gramophones, 658; records, 3,296; scores, 9,473; sheet music, 14,700.

**SPORT:** Footballs, etc., 4,651; ping-pong and tennis balls, 12,186; complete ping-pong sets, 943; boxing gloves, 440; equipment, shorts, tights, shoes, 990; complete cricket sets, 19; small cases of sporting goods, Y.M.C.A., 623; small cases sporting goods, British Red Cross, 27.

**MATERIAL FOR EDUCATION:** blackboards, compasses, set squares, water colours, oils, etc., 15,298.

**THEATRE:** comedies, 715; indoor games, 31,623; cinemas, 12; radio sets, 42.

From the 1st January to the 31st December, 1941, the Bureau at Geneva itself despatched 10,208 parcels of a total weight of 47,849 kg. (nearly half a ton), in which the most important articles were 135,555 scientific, instructive or religious books.

From the numbers of publications specially edited for prisoners of war one would mention the following: "Suggestions for Programmes of Activities," "A.B.C. of the German Language," "Plan for Studies in Agriculture," "Programme of Physical Education," "Advice to those who wish to produce Plays."

This work of humanitarian mutual help, without any religious distinctions, this organisation conscious of its Christian responsibility to brothers in distress, this undertaking whose budget for 1941 reached nearly a million Swiss francs, is made possible by the gifts and contributions of members and friends of the Y.M.C.A. in several neutral countries and in the United States of America.

## SERVICE OF INTELLECTUAL AID.

Created in 1939, at the beginning of the war, the Service of Intellectual Aid to Prisoners of War of the International Bureau of Education was not called upon to give its full service until the end of the summer of 1940. The lapse of time between the commencement of hostilities and the sudden augmentation in the number of prisoners was utilised in organising the technique of the work.

The work was divided into two sections; that of collective consignments of books sent to the camp leaders and that of the individual consignments, in response to the particular needs of each prisoner, the only section that had functioned up to that time. The organisation of "Universities of Captivity" in some camps retained the particular attention of the section of collective consignments, while the families of the prisoners mainly utilised the section of individual consignments.

To get some idea of the amount of work involved, it is only necessary to quote two sets of figures; to the first of July, 1940, the Service had sent barely a thousand volumes, and twelve months later, the 30th June, 1941, the number of works sent reached the figures of 49,983. Of these volumes 33,070 had been distributed to the libraries of the camps, and 16,913 had been sent in response to individual requests.

These statistics should be completed by the number of camps supplied; whereas, at the beginning of the summer of 1940 the Service was in touch with a dozen prison camps, it had established contact with 170 camps, scattered throughout all the continents by the end of June, 1941, without counting the camps of military internees in Switzerland to which the Service also extends its help.

Most of the books were scientific works and study books, one can estimate the value of the books sent by the Bureau up to the end of June, 1941, at nearly 250,000 Swiss francs.

## UNIVERSITY OF CAPTIVITY.

A director of the courses of a "University of Captivity" gives the following information in his report:

The special lectures take place each day, except Sundays, after the midday meal and the evening meal from 6 to 8.30; they deal with the following subjects: French grammar, Latin, Greek, German, mathematics, book-keeping (elementary, secondary, advanced), sciences, theology, philosophy. Each evening from 8 to 8.30 also, three lectures or discussions of a general nature treat with very varied subjects: questions of law, civil, commercial, administrative or financial; of pedagogy; applied science; Bible studies; architecture; Greek; Latin; French; Provençal, etc. The students who form the groups for the special courses of lectures are small in numbers but they are most assiduous. One would estimate the audiences of the general lectures in the evenings to average about 200. Except for certain special lectures these teachings are followed mostly by non-commissioned officers who wish to utilise their

Donor: Mr. Ian Vandreg, 2004

leisure by adding to their general information, however, some students of civil or commercial law, book-keeping, medicine or theology follow their studies to complete their courses.

Five professors are officially recognised by the German authorities. They are helped by several voluntary professors and lecturers. The teaching body is composed of people who hold diplomas for their special line of instruction, professors, clergymen, doctors of law, civil engineers, mining and electrical engineers, those who hold fellowships in mathematics, architects, manufacturers.

#### OECUMENICAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

The Oecumenical Council of the Churches, which represents almost all of the Churches except the Church of Rome, decided, at the beginning of the war, to constitute an Oecumenical Commission for the Spiritual Aid of Prisoners of War. From then it has worked under its own responsibility in full autonomy. Its task is to further the development of religious life in the camps and among the prisoners. In this work the Commission visualises two objectives; to give spiritual guiding to the various parishes created in the camps, and to supply Bibles, New Testaments, and religious literature to these communities and their members.

By contact with the responsible authorities the Oecumenical Commission has been able to obtain permission to send padres to certain prison camps that were without chaplains. This was the case, for example, for the German prisoners in Canada and in the Netherland East Indies, where there was no pastor among the German prisoners. The Commission obtained permission to send a missionary for the care of their souls.

The office of the Commission which is situated at Geneva has seen to the major part of the despatches of religious literature, making contact with the French and English prisoners in Germany and Italy. In eighteen months they have sent forward almost 7,000 Bibles, 22,500 New Testaments, 40,000 Gospels or other Biblical works and also 7,000 religious writings.

The Commission proposes to distribute to the Russian prisoners Bibles, New Testaments and Gospels in considerable quantities.

By medium of divers members of the Commission in New York, in Great Britain and in the Dominions, and of the "Evangelisches Hilfswerk" (a German organisation which is charged by the Churches of the Reich to respond to the spiritual needs of the Protestants in the army, or prisoners in enemy hands, and who undertakes to see to the spiritual life in some of the camps in Germany), Bibles and religious literature have been supplied to prisoners. And that the Protestants in the work detachments may not be completely isolated the Evangelisches Hilfswerk has agreed to distribute sermons written in their own tongue twice a month to the prisoners in Germany, and to see that they are supplied with Bibles and Gospels, if, for one reason or another, they cannot be sent from Geneva.

The Vice-president of the Commission has twice had occasion to visit camps of French and British prisoners in Germany. These visits have helped to make more direct contact between the prisoners and the Commission, and to strengthen the parishes in the camps in their will to bear witness to the faith they hold.

The activities of the Commission have been able to be maintained thanks to the financial help of the various Churches (especially American Churches) and the generous aid of the Swiss public, who give books and money. The greatest proportion has been supplied by the "American Bible Society" which has assisted with its funds in the despatch of Bibles, New Testaments and Gospels into the camps.

#### UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.

In the first months of the war the European Fund for the Help of Students was preoccupied in bringing all possible help to the young university students who, torn from their studies, might be subjected to the rigours of prolonged captivity. However, the problem only became great after the events of

the month of June, 1940, and from that time the main effort of the European Fund was directed towards the prison camps.

Its first task was to rediscover the university students among the mass of prisoners and the places where they were detained. With the permission of the German authorities a questionnaire was distributed in the camps to enable the students to give all particulars of their previous studies, the examinations they had in view, and the books they needed. Contact was not slow at being established by this questionnaire and thanks to the collaboration of the International Committee and the Secretaries of the Y.M.C.A., who, in the course of their visits to the camps, drew the attention of the prisoners to the services that the European Fund was in a position to offer them.

At the present time the European Fund is in individual contact with more than 5,000 university students; it sends them regularly the books that are necessary to them to continue their studies, as well as exercise books, pencils and drawing materials. Each day new requests come to the Bureau at Geneva from prisoners who have heard their comrades speak of its work and who would also like to benefit. The majority of the students are of French nationality, but the Fund is also occupied with a great number of English, Belgian, Polish and Yugoslav prisoners in Germany.

Furthermore, the European Fund supports about twenty "Universities of Captivity" which its General Secretary visited on two occasions in 1941. These "Universities" have chiefly developed in the officers' camps, "Offlags," where the presence of numerous intellectuals have enabled centres of study to be created in which the prisoners can occupy their interminable leisure time. They find, in following a definite course of work, a reason for being and for hoping; and work, conforming to the French programmes, at perfecting themselves in their own profession or in preparing their examinations.

Similar organisations exist in the Belgian and English camps; on the initiative of the European Fund the University of Lausanne as well as several French Universities have adopted some of these "Universities of Captivity," and they supply them, by the intermediary of the European Fund with the works they need.

Recently the European Fund occupied itself more particularly with a camp established in West Prussia where 3,000 candidates, nearly all students, had been regrouped by the German authorities, so that they might be able to finish their studies.

During these last weeks the activities of the European Fund have undertaken a fresh extension, and by hundreds the new requests come from the camps. Most of these requests are in relation to the specialised works that the Fund buys new from the publishers, sometimes in Switzerland, sometimes in France where it has had great assistance from the French Red Cross, the administration of the Service of Prisoners of War, and the Central Committee of Prisoners of War at Paris. Up to the present the European Fund has sent into Germany more than 20,211 books suitable for university studies, almost all new, as well as many tens of thousands of exercise books and notebooks. Actually these consignments are made at the rate of 1,000 to 1,200 parcels per month; each of them contains two or three books.

Parallel to this effort, the European Fund attends to the intellectual needs of German and Italian students, who, for the most part are imprisoned many thousands of miles from their own country. In Canada the European Fund has the assistance of a Secretary who visits the camps and offers the students the same service as is given to the university student prisoners in Germany. Already hundreds of books have been bought in the countries overseas where the German and Italian prisoners are held, in Canada, Australia, Ceylon and Egypt. Moreover, a very great number of special works which are impossible to procure in these countries have been sent from Switzerland.

Up to the 31st December, 1941, the European Fund had devoted about 60,000 francs to its work for Prisoners of War, which is only one branch of the work it accomplishes to help students who are the victims of the war. Since September, 1939, it has expended a sum total of 270,000 francs for students.

After the departure of the interned French soldiers the Swiss Catholic Mission for the Help of Prisoners of War continued its charitable activities to twelve thousand Polish and

several hundreds of English and Belgians held in Switzerland, by answering requests for prayer books, articles of piety and religious music. The mission also sent regularly to priests, who were prisoners of war, the wafers and wine they needed for Mass.

The search for the missing, done in collaboration with the Red Cross International Committee was one of the important activities of the Mission. It attended to important communications from Italians who had left their families in France, messages relative to births, death, marriages, etc. Sometimes there was news of civilians interned in West Africa.

Independently of the sending of prayer books and religious works, the Book Service has edited and printed 10,000 copies of "The Prayer Book of the Catholic Soldier" (which has been sent to the military interned French in Switzerland, and to the French prisoners in Germany), as well as the "Prayer Book for the Christian Soldier" intended for English prisoners.

Thus the Swiss Catholic Mission for the Help of Prisoners of War unites its efforts to all that is done in Switzerland, in particular that done by the Red Cross International Committee, to accomplish the work of charity incumbent on them in the great and dolorous trial that the world is enduring.

Before this trial, which is prolonged, and becomes worse by its prolongation, the work of organisations of cultural help for Prisoners of War remains imperiously necessary, because it is of profound significance.

## PRISONERS OF WAR LETTERS STALAG XVIII. A.

From G. PHILLIPS.

Dated 4/2/42. I sometimes borrow a German-English grammar book and do a little study but find it rather hard to concentrate for too long; just can't be bothered yet. Also spend some time rolling bandages which helps to pass the time, not too bad a job either as we have a machine to roll them on. Last week we had a visit from an English Padre, he is visiting all camps and hospitals to see if there are any complaints that can be rectified; he was pleased we had very little to worry about here in hospital.

Dated 25/2/42. Weather must be warming up outside as we can hear loud rumblings as large slides of snow come off the roof tops. One of our fellows was almost knocked out by one fall that caught him unawares. I am having a spell back in bed but hope it won't be too long. I hope you are not getting worried about my being in hospital so long because I really don't feel very ill and I can eat anything I like so can't be so bad. We have more books here now from the Red Cross.

Dated 15/3/42. It is Sunday evening and I have just had a pretty fair supper of various tinned meats from a Red Cross parcel; did well for lunch to-day too, a spot of roast chicken.

From Gnr. D. CROFT, dated 15/2/42.

Many thanks for your letter of the 21/10/41 which I received a fortnight ago yesterday. I received a parcel from the New Zealand Patriotic Society in London, yesterday, and by Jove it was welcome. It contained underwear, shirt pyjamas, balaclava, gloves, pullover, scarf, chocolate, razor blades, tooth brush and paste. Not bad, eh! Gee it was good to get into some decent clothes again. I suppose your parcel will be arriving soon, I would advise you to send summer wear in your next. I am receiving Red Cross parcels regularly now so everything in the garden is rosy.

From L. ROBERTS, dated 21/2/42.

I am still caring for New Zealand wounded. Keeping well and fit. Seven months a prisoner and your first letter with four others just arrived. Can't stop reading them! It is a thrill to hear Otorohanga news. Glad Bob Hammond is O.K. I have been for walks into the hills but the snow is too deep

to enjoy it. Frenchmen wait on us with meals. We get little more rations than the working parties. We have wonderful quarters. On my birthday the boys had a good turn out for me. We get one bottle of beer per day each. All saved up for the week. I have been to a football match. The New Zealanders beat the Tommies 15-3. Please send socks, slippers, boot-laces, underclothes and any articles you think useful. Thanks to the Red Cross for their help.

From Pte. G. A. HANKEY, dated 8/2/42.

Well, Mum, I received your parcel this week and very pleased to receive it; what a surprise; it all came in very handy. Thank you very much. By the way I received everything in the parcel. We went for our walk to-day over the hills. Have had a very heavy fall of snow and it was wonderful to see all the people out ski-ing, young and old. Have grown a moustache. Played football yesterday, won 6-0. THE PEOPLE AROUND US—ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WIRE HAVING A TOUGH TIME, NO FAGS, CADGING THEM OFF US.

Dated 5/2/42. We have a very big hospital here, holding just on 400 patients of all kinds of skin diseases and sickness. I am working in the skin ward and like it very much. We are receiving Red Cross parcels weekly and fifty fags. The Red Cross have issued us with a complete set of clothes, boots and underclothes; as a matter of fact we are ten times better off than any civilian on guard here. We are allowed out for a walk through the village weekly and get a good issue of ale. I have had six letters from home and a clothing parcel. We have with us a Y.M.C.A. man who is doing a terrible lot for the boys; also a French priest who says Mass every Sunday.

From N. D. BEATTIE, dated 30/1/42.

Dated 22/2/42. Your parcel has not yet reached us, but I expect it soon as some New Zealand parcels have arrived. The Red Cross parcels of canteens are still coming regularly, and believe me they are a godsend which we should be absolutely lost without. The concerts here are wonderful—frocking and acting being excellent. "Cinderella," which has just finished was worthy of production anywhere. The feminine roles were wonderful. "Show Boat" is the next attraction and is said to be the best yet and starts on Saturday. The job we are on now entitles us to go for a walk in the township and districts on Sundays (accompanied by a guard naturally). I have just returned from same walk and enjoyed it immensely.

From L/Cpl. L. F. MCINTOSH.

Dated 8/2/42. Received three letters from you on Friday. Hope you are still well. I am in good health and honestly the treatment is very good. Any chap who complains about his treatment is a fool. I have my Tiki and Fern Leaf. My weight is eleven stone four pounds now, heavier than I have ever been.

Dated 22/3/42. I have come across several of the old boys. In our party there are five Aussies, five New Zealanders and nine Tommies. You should hear some of the stories that are told at times. The battle of Greece is fought about three times a week. The sun rises about 11 and sets at about 4 in the afternoon. Pat Calvin, Len Winter, Darkie Dunn and McCollough are all "giffangers", Jim Taylor is also one.

## STALAG VIII B. A DOCTOR WRITES.

From Capt. A. N. SLATER.

Dated 3/1/42. We average about 60 operations a month here. A large number of New Zealanders are going through our hands and I feel it is a real privilege to have the chance of helping them.

Dated 9/2/42. Still no sign of parcel, but it takes ages; as far as I know no New Zealand parcels have arrived yet. Fortunately we have all the essentials of life here, a change of clothing, a warm bed and sufficient food, although it becomes incredibly monotonous. The days are lengthening and the cold is not so intense. We get news from German papers and now get an occasional French paper in the Mess. The health generally of Prisoners of War is excellent.

From Dvr. J. Received my clothing

From Pte. E. I am getting wash-house Cross. They The others a we are three

From Pte. M. Things the Red Cross Still, we have right. I have get to chure

From Pte. J. I am now low brick b roughly 250

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From H. BE. Dated 21 and you do ally the soc list, so the organ is sw

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From Dvr. F. E. MILLAR, dated 8/2/42.

Received a wonderful surprise on Friday dear—received my clothing parcel in good order. Everything I wanted in it, too.

From Pte. E. G. COLLIER, dated April.

I am getting good at dancing. The boys go down to the wash-house every night. We had some clothes from the Red Cross. They were swell. Five of us are working in the mill. The others are in the forest. I am in with two good lads and we are three good cooks.

From Pte. N. S. JARDINE, dated 29/3/42.

Things lately have not been so good, as over Christmas the Red Cross food parcels have failed to arrive for two months. Still, we have had issues of different things instead and do all right. I have been to several good concerts recently, and also get to church regularly.

From Pte. J. W. SHAW, dated 22/3/42.

I am now in the Medical Compound, consisting of four long low brick buildings, three of which are barrack rooms, with roughly 250 men to each. We have also several large stoves to each building for heating and doing our cooking. In the centre of the building is washing-room with small shower taps and long trough, where we wash, also a small adjoining room with a copper for boiling yater and a place for washing our clothes.

From Dvr. G. HARDIE, dated 22/3/42.

Am now "arbiting" (our German for working) about 80 kilos from the main camp and find it passes the time away comfortably and keeps the old mind occupied. Hopped in early before the winter is over in time to pick an inside job till the snow clears. Hope to get an outside job when the weather is better. Our digs are now in a converted dance hall, well heated, on the outskirts of the town (about the size of Dunedin), and it means a walk of half an hour through the cobbled streets to the factory. The work is simple and light and conditions are better than filling in the day at the lager. We still have plenty of fun, having brought along plenty of amusements—cards, housey, hopology, draughts and chess.

From A. FARRELL.

Dated 22/2/42. Working in forest sawing down trees. First pay yesterday—7 marks and 2 pfening for 15 days' work. Have sent for cigarettes to main camp as no Red Cross parcels for two weeks.

From H. BEZER.

Dated 22/2/42. Well Mum, I received your parcel all right and you do not know how pleased I am to get clothes, especially the socks and shoes. I got everything that was on the list, so there was not anything missing—thanks. The mouth-organ is swell, everything in the parcel is swell

From Sgt. ROBIN HOOD, dated 15/2/42.

At last I have something to do. . . . I am going to work at a big mining town camp to supervise the cooking and manage the canteen. The job was advertised in our camp notices and when I applied, not expecting to have any success, to my surprise I got the job. I shall now be positioned near one of the big towns. My duties are similar to when I was C.Q.M.S. in my old unit. The meals are prepared by girls and not by our own cooks as in my previous camp.

From Pte. D. J. ROBINSON, dated 15/2/42.

Another big batch has arrived from Crete and Greece. We have received Canadian Red Cross parcels and they're excellent. My new specs. are semi-shell framed and very comfortable. Our welfare fund paid for them and I'll pay them back—14 marks only. Lately the weather has made hundreds of big black crows seek shelter in the camp. Now that the ban is lifted we don't do dressings or treatments in the Compound but march the sick down to the Hospital and back again. We wear our Red Crosses on the arm. Table tennis is very popular at present as the carpenter's shop has just supplied each barracks with trestles and tables.

From Cpl. A. K. BROWN, dated 6/2/42.

I have arrived in civilisation and in closer touch with the Red Cross Organisation. I am perfectly well and expect to be

100 per cent in a week or so, after I have recovered from the trying travelling, and also become acclimatised. Plenty to eat, the Red Cross parcel per week does that, and a cold climate has worked wonders after the sand and heat of the more tropical countries of our experiences. I am quite comfortably housed, and when properly settled will be comparatively happy here.

From Dvr. H. PARKER, dated 1/2/42.

Well all is great and Aussie, the chap I am messing in with, is slinging off me for being so fat. In fact I am now over eleven stone. It was certainly great to receive word from you, and to hear you are all well. We are being well treated by the Red Cross, we get good food parcels every week. I am well off for clothes.

Dated 23/2/42. Thanks for the parcel, Mum, I received it on the 20th February, so it only took seven weeks. The pullover, shoes, socks and chocolate were corker; well the rug opened some of the lads' eyes. Please send some more chocolate, tooth paste and socks; tooth paste is like gold here.

From F. C. ANKETT, dated 1/2/42.

Patience has its virtue; I received my first two letters sent July 13th and August 24th. Just read my letters for about the twelfth time, two days ago they arrived. They seem to bring you all much closer and I guess four letters would cover all our thoughts—namely HOME.

From Sgt./Pilot A. R. E. FOX, dated February.

I had a real pleasant surprise last week when my second clothes parcel arrived. It was great Mum, and I can't thank you enough. The heavy underwear was great—I've got 'em on now and I'm really glowing all over—plus a bath with my lifebuoy soap, I even smell nice. I really have plenty of warm clothing now—could do with summer underwear and chocolate.

From Capt. J. BORRIE.

Dated 18/1/42. This week Bill Forman and Stevenson-Wright left as volunteers for a Russian Camp. It will be hard, but they will have work to do. Colonel Bull and Major Fosbrooke left as surgeons for another camp.

Dated 18/2/42. Ron Stewart and Louis Longmore went as Doctors to working parties this week. Tom McArthur seems to be out on a working party. We get a weekly four-page paper in English. Since being in Hospital I have done little German. One hardly sees the Germans to get practice in speaking.

Dated 8/3/42. The recent acquisition of a piano is a god-send. Each day I play it for an hour striving to remember what I once knew and striving to play more from ear. On Friday last the German Welfare Officer brought round films of Mickey Mouse, Olympic games, Variety Show Fairy-tales and News Reels—very enjoyable and last night we had a sing-song round the piano. Those who have had parcels from New Zealand welcome the warm clothing. There is nothing like New Zealand underwear.

Dated 22/3/42. None have received New Zealand mail lately. We are all well, very hungry as apart from occasional issues of bulk food there has been nothing from the Red Cross for over seven weeks.

From W. ORMISTON, dated 1/2/42.

We have been getting Red Cross parcels and they are really wonderful. We could practically live on them alone. We get one a week and a typical parcel consists of a couple of tins of meat (bully sausage) butter or margarine, cheese, tw, and three tins of fish (varied) biscuits, tinned milk, fruit (raisins, dates, prunes, etc.), jam, sugar, chocolate, soup. So you can imagine what that means to us. There has been quite a bit of New Zealand mail arrive.

From Dvr. I. E. A. APPLETON, dated 25/1/42.

This past week we have had three new guards with us to replace the original who had been with us two calendar months. These new ones, especially the chap in charge, seems to understand a chap who is working better and already they have done a great deal to improve not only our billets but have been getting us better meals. Two soups a day instead of one and

different ways of cooking them. It makes life so much better, especially as this week has been the coldest yet. We are still threshing and standing on the straw is one of the coldest things a chap can stand on. We had a parcel of books and a few games from our home camp last night so that helps the book question.

From Cpl. V. MOORS, dated 21/1/42.

To-day we partook of a pleasant surprise in that through the Patriotic Society of New Zealand parcels arrived for us. I must say they were simply grand and, of course, as they were packed in America there were commodities which we in New Zealand seldom see. I have great admiration for the work the Red Cross are doing for us.

### STALAG IX C.

From Sgt. H. M. ENGLISH, dated 14/2/42.

I received one clothing parcel from New Zealand House in October. Gee, I haven't spoken to a woman for over a year. Shakes me! I lecture some officers here on sheep farming in New Zealand and I have something to do. I speak French, Serb- ish and German pretty fluently now. I nearly forgot English while I was entirely with Frenchmen for three months.

From Pte. K. J. MATHESON, dated 3/3/42.

I am well. The food is very good and quite a good bed so we are not so bad off. I have only the one letter from you so far but not worried as I know they will turn up later on. If you are any length of time in hearing from me don't be worried as some weeks we don't get issued with P.C., so cannot write.

### STALAG XVIII D.

From Pte. J. G. MARRETT, dated 3/5/42.

Everything is going all right with us. We have moved to a new lager in an old castle, and believe me we are now a lot better off. We all have single beds and a good bath, water laid on and good fires. I'll say this for the people I work for. They are very good to me, especially when it comes to eats. They persist in my eating until I can eat no more. If they think I have not eaten enough, then they think I'm ill.

### 306 XVIII D.

From L. STRINGER, dated 3/5/42.

I haven't received any parcels from you yet but I have had 400 cigarettes from New Zealand Patriotic Fund. I am still working on the farm and it is not so bad though we work long hours. The people on the farm are quite good, there is a son four years older than me, the mother and her elderly sister. To-day is Sunday, we don't work, we make a real English meal out of the Red Cross parcels also we get beer of a kind so we don't do so bad. You don't have to worry about not sending me food as I have more than I can eat. With our Red Cross parcels we live like lords.

From Dvr. N. B. HUDSON.

Dated 29/3/42. I am keeping in the best of health. I mentioned in last week's letter that I had received your parcel. Well, it was not your parcel at all, it was one from the Red Cross in England, sent by the New Zealand Red Cross in money and made up in England. I got two towels, two pairs of socks, one woollen jumper and gloves and woollen underpants and one woollen singlet, one razor and blades, tooth brush and powder and boot polish, three cakes of chocolate, one comb and pencil, shaving soap, and one woollen scarf and hat. I thought it was your parcel, with all the summer gear in it. I hope it comes soon. The Red Cross sure look after us. The mail is long in coming. I have had none for ages.

[Note.—The parcel referred to from England is one of the standard parcels sent from New Zealand House and paid for from the Sick and Wounded Fund of the National Patriotic Fund Board.—Editor.]

Dated 5/4/42. I received a nice parcel of cigarettes, 200, from the New Zealand Patriotic Society. We didn't have a cigarette between us. They came on Easter Sunday. I am still putting on weight. My weight now is 12st, 2lbs. I have put on a little weight since I left home (my weight then was 9st. 8lbs.).

From Pte. N. W. ALLEN. Dated 12/4/42.

Our Red Cross parcels were a bit late this week but they arrived to-day and we all had a visit to the village to collect them, so things are right in that line. We have also received a rugby ball from the Red Cross—most of the afternoon has been spent in kicking it around and having one or two arranged games between ourselves. The other week we had a fellow with a camera out from the local village and we all had him snapping us in all different positions.

From Sgt. M. E. MULHERN, dated 26/4/42.

Just received a letter dated 20th January, that is four within the last three weeks. Also a card came yesterday from the main camp telling me that your second parcel has arrived so will get it in a few days. We have all had a new uniform sent from England and new boots are arriving shortly so with your parcel I am now comfortably clothed. Would like some boot brushes, shaving cream and gym shoes (not white). A mark is worth one English shilling. The money we get is special lager money and there is very little we can get with it. I am very well and getting good food at my new place. No woollen clothes here—these you have sent are just great.

### STALAG XX A.

From Cpl. A. J. SPENCE.

Dated 14/2/42. There is a lot of mail in for us redirected from Athens—I have left the writing of this card to the last minute just in case there should be anything for me, but it seems I'm unlucky. One of our chaps had eight letters from New Zealand all written around November. There may be some more in later. Have just seen "Mr. Pim Passes By"—a production by our concert party and dashed good. One of A. A. Milne's plays.

Dated 21/2/42. There is a lot of New Zealand mail in but so far I haven't had any. However, it is very encouraging to know there is some in the offing. I had my teeth checked up yesterday—all O.K.

Dated 1/3/42. Have been looking back through my diary to see if there is anything to write about, but the sum total seems to be—French class, did my washing, etc., etc. The weather is beginning to thaw and the snow is considerably less, much to our sorrow because we have a lot of sport tobogganing on the slopes behind our fort. My French, you will be glad to hear, is nearly back to old standard.

### OFLAG VI B.

From Pilot Officer I. C. KIRK, dated 6/3/42.

The parcel of clothes arrived last Monday, and should fulfil my needs as regards clothing for this year at least. The winter here has been a record for 150 years.

From Capt. N. GARDNER.

Dated 19/1/42. Since last I wrote I had very pleasant surprise of a gift of a pair of skates from Sports Committee for my services in surveying and supervising the making of the ice-rinks. Huge thrill to be on ice as it's the only attractive sport we get. We have Canadian flyers in camp, who are brilliant hockey players. We're running an ice carnival this week.

Dated 14/2/42. I've acquired a pair of sabots as they're very warm in the snow and I've had no luck getting boots yet. We had an issue to-day of tinned beer from Portugal, the first we've seen in this camp. One small tin per two men. I cut cards for my half and lost, so still don't drink.

Dated 1/3/42. We've just come to the end of a marvellous skating season. Lately I've even been getting up early for an hour's skating before breakfast. We had about 16 hockey teams on the ice and the finals were most exciting. I cap-

tained the Australia Edwards and Auckland man (Name game with

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tained the New Zealand team and we were unlucky to lose to Australia after a terrifically fast game. Team was Laurie Edwards (R.A.F., Auckland), "Spud" Miller (also R.A.F. and Auckland), Bill Werewhin (Hawera) and Francis Spackman (Napier) and Frank Renouf (Wellington). Funniest game with Ireland v. Wales as only about two could skate at all.

From Capt. M. G. WADEY.

Dated 29/1/42. Am getting quite fat on Red Cross parcels and if I don't soon reach the stage when I can go for a run again you won't know me on my return. Have only ten in my room now. Good crowd! All from England except myself.

Dated 4/2/42. We get three of these forms and four cards per month. Life here is much the same from day to day. Am becoming a real old lady as the thing in society here is to drop in and have a cup of tea. You'd laugh if you could see us sometimes chatting away over a cup of tea and doing our own cooking.

Dated 15/3/42. To-day is Sunday and with the exception of three of us writing letters the room is having its after-lunch quiet hour when all repair to bed. Have I told you how domesticated I am? I cook and keep house for our family of five.

Dated 19/5/42—[Note Date—Editor] I am still hoping for some mail of recent date. Still receiving some of the older letters, but none since early January.

2/Lt. G. J. RUSTON, has written stating that he has received a parcel sent from the Auckland Packing Centre in November, via New Zealand House.

### P.G. 35.

From Capt. A. G. GILCHRIST.

I have just returned from a walk which we are allowed twice a week. It is a great change to go outside the compound and the exercise is most welcome. All the trees are in full blossom and there is a warm springlike feel in the air. Most of the country-side about here is covered with olive trees, the intervening ground being covered with vegetables, beans, cauliflowers and cabbages. We are now allowed to write one letter and one card each week. On three occasions we have had a share of parcels prepared by the Canadian Red Cross Society and it has been a great thrill to taste butter, cheese, chocolate and marmalade again.

### P.G. 38.

From Lieut. P. J. BREWSTER, dated 16/3/42.

Again I write a few lines and I am pleased to say I am keeping 100 per cent. Now it is spring time, the snow lifted about three weeks ago and since then it has been warm and sunny. The valley is a glorious sight with its closely cultivated farms with all different shades of green. During the cold weather time hung heavily but now the days go fast. Our meals are much better as we are able to buy a few extras although prices are very high for any luxuries. We have bought about 150 books to start a library. They are a great acquisition. We have hired a piano and after mess once a week we have excellent community sings. I am secretary of the gardening committee. We have about half an acre of garden, also fruit trees and vines. It should prove a great boon both from a recreative and material point of view. We are able to buy a little chocolate and toffee, also dried figs. We have organised lectures and study classes and debates. In all life is quite pleasant and there is no need to worry.

From Lieut. R. P. WILLIAMS, dated 16/3/42.

To-day is Sunday and a very nice day and after I have written this letter I am going outside to do some gardening. We have very near one acre for our use and we should be able to grow some very nice vegetables. Also there are a lot of fruit trees and grape vines. All being well we should have a good show when they come up. We can't dig very much at one time being pretty weak and not so fit as we were in Egypt. I am in good health and the conditions are good but I am longing for the day when it is all over and we can get away from here. Please do not worry about me as I will be all right.

From Lieut. W. R. EASTON.

Dated 1/2/42. Another week has gone quickly, with officers here from many professions, the place is a minor university.

Dated 5/2/42. Organised swapping of knowledge passes a lot of time, we have heard of everything from Oxford to the North West Frontier. We are still a bit bottled up by the snow. I have quite a respectable beard now but with shaving becoming organized it will have to come off soon. We seem to be playing a lot of auction bridge lately. Clothes had a decent wash yesterday, the first for three months, so I am feeling better.

Dated 16/3/42. Highlight of the local news is the arrival of one very good piano, everyone is a trier on it, and one or two of the chaps are really good. I wonder what tunes you have now. They got the Palais Glide going last night, and put some ginger into it too. Have done a good deal of reading this last week, three of Shaw's plays, a book by Vachell, a Wodehouse yesterday and now I am on to "Kangaroo" by D. H. Lawrence. It has brought back some pictures of Sydney Harbour. Time here is just going like lightning, this is a beautiful spring morning. I have been a prisoner over three months. We were taken in a tank attack in December. For the last two months we have been in a permanent camp, an old convent in the country. The officers here are mostly New Zealanders; with their variety of trades, professions, hobbies, one can learn a lot.

From Lieut. C. N. ARMSTRONG, dated 8/3/42.

Our first long letter! 100 days of captivity yesterday. Spring now changes our whole outlook. Looking back we have passed comparatively swiftly and pleasantly one of Italy's coldest winters. Six weeks in transit camp—not so good—cold and hungry. We came here just after New Year to a large villa in central Italian mountains—converted from a Nunery. Conditions were better than I expected in a prison camp. Six or seven to a room, sheets, warm blankets and good conveniences; also hot showers if we could get fuel but they will be a godsend in warmer weather. With arrival of 25 of our men we have been cooking for ourselves with much happier results. We are becoming accustomed to shorter rations and warmer weather brings content, but all through snows we felt the burden of our prodigious colonial appetites. Coffee alone is a poor substitute for an English breakfast. The valley here will be delightful in spring and summer. Personally I have no greater ambition than to be transported to the old fireside and to those grand meals which I once took so much for granted. Mother. The Italians are most courteous and give us every latitude so that as I mentioned before we can make the most of our lot with lectures, talks, classes, debates, etc., and although we had no books the time passed amazingly well. There are 86 of us, mostly New Zealanders with three Englishmen (Indian Army), seven South Africans, a Fleet Air Arm, and an American Press Correspondent. Now spring is here, library books arrived to-day also this letter paper. We are permitted to garden and all are into it with shovels, now the snow has thawed, with hopes for a subsequent increase in rations.

From 2/Lt. F. W. TAYLOR, dated 16/2/42.

I am well and our treatment is good. The country is beautiful. We are passing the time by studying hard. Please send many parcels warm clothes, socks, tea, chocolates, honey, meat in tins.

From Capt. S. H. JOHNSON, dated 8/3/42.

I am now at a permanent camp and am being well and courteously treated. This camp is a small one and mainly for New Zealand officers. Lieut. H. Simpson and Lieut. Colin Armstrong are both with me. Our conditions are daily improving. We have commenced digging our own garden and some books arrived yesterday so we now have something to read. We receive the Italian newspaper each day so have a little idea of what is happening in the world. Our daily routine is as follows: 9 a.m. cup of coffee, 12 noon two plates of thin soup, a thin stew and 200 grammes of bread. 6 p.m. more soup and either some macaroni or rice and a glass of wine. Our classes and lectures in the afternoons and evenings help us to get

through the days. We are looking forward to receiving some Red Cross parcels one day soon. In parcels from home please include warm clothes as this winter is very cold with heavy snow. We are able to purchase uniforms here but nothing else in the clothes line.

From Cpl. S. C. WELSFORD.

I am well and fit as a trout. I have been living a fairly quiet life of late, fact is I seldom go to town, I have all my requirements brought to me, and so can have quite a lazy time. The weather is now definitely warmer. We received part of a Red Cross parcel a short time ago and we are expecting to receive half a parcel in the next few days, and soon when supplies permit we shall possibly receive a parcel at regular intervals. These parcels are quite a God-send I assure you, and we are all very grateful to the Red Cross Society for what they are doing for us.

Dated 9/3/42. We have up to the present received no mail. You may be interested in our life here. Coffee at seven in morning, bread issue of two small loaves at 10 o'clock. Rice or macaroni at mid-day. Vegetable stew with some meat for the evening meal at 5 o'clock. Sugar we receive once a week (week's ration). We also receive a ration of vino or sour wine also tomato concentrate and cheese which is generally incorporated with meals. Please do not worry about me; life here is not bad as we can generally make our own fun.

From Pte. R. GOODING.

Dated 18/2/42. I spend most of my day in bed as walking about sharpens my appetite too much. This place must be beautiful in the summer and is no mean sight now with its steep snow-capped ranges and fertile valleys. It is similar scenery to that in Greece and climate too. We were issued with a Red Cross parcel of tinned food yesterday but as our parcel of food had to be divided between three men we each had a mere taste. Have become quite used to macaroni and rice and enjoy the two little brown loaves which are issued daily. The camp canteen is open and small extras like cheese cubes and figs can be bought with our pay. Have had some clothes issued and have sufficient except for socks. Health of everyone here is satisfactory although our appetites are very keen owing to the nippy atmosphere. Please send a patent tin opener as we don't use knives.

Dated 8/3/42. I find interest in the camp doings which consist mostly of talks and lectures given by our Padres and boys on a wide range of subjects. Also lessons in Italian which help a lot to pass the time. There are working parties daily for additions to the camp so everyone has one day a week at it. As in Greece the steep hill-sides are all terraced for growing purposes although on a far more extensive scale. Houses are built on the heights and command great views. We received a Red Cross parcel last week, one between two men and I was prompt in cleaning up my lot. I have applied for a technical course in carpentry through the Red Cross to occupy my time.

From Pte. B. T. DELL, dated March.

Here goes for another letter from your jail-bird son. Last week I told you about the routine of the camp, I'll now touch on the social side. There is an Australian here who gives lectures every afternoon on Philosophy and Economic History, soon we will be given an opportunity to study the Italian language, lectures about three times a week of a night in our hut by different chaps on all sorts of subjects. The whole camp have put in a small portion of a week's pay to buy some musical instruments; in fact, there is always something new to interest us. Books and sweets are very scarce here and one misses the old books. Since we were captured about eight of us have stuck together, Southland chaps are: myself, Bob Boivin, Bob Russell, a chap Lindsay, a farmer, and four others from up North, so you see we are quite a happy family.

Dated 8/3/42. This week we received one Canadian Red Cross parcel between two and it was great, particularly a tin of butter which was among the contents.

From Cpl. S. J. WEIR, dated 22/2/42.

The general condition of food and clothing and living has improved, and when the summer comes we should be fairly happy. The hill-sides are covered with terrace upon terrace of vines and oak trees and little clusters of stone houses perched on an almost perpendicular hill-side, and the road and river wind together in and out among the rocks in the valley below. Sex are of the utmost importance, but before you send anything consider the pros and cons of the tactical situation (of which we know nothing) and the length of time a parcel will take to reach here.

Dated 8/3/42. This morning broke bright and clear, after several days of continuous downpour and it was lovely to hear the bells of the churches on the surrounding hills across the valleys, some deep, some shrill, others clear and silvery on the morning air. As one stands and gazes around the misty hill tops and listens, the peaceful sound almost makes one forget, for a moment, that there was a war, until the gaze drops to the barbed wire, and with a muttered curse we turn away, trudging through the sea of slush to the sanctuary of the hut, which is home—for the time being.

From J. B. DURHAM, dated 1/3/42.

With every parcel do include music MS. I made a pudding from figs, sultanas and margarine from the last Red Cross parcel. One between three men; we hope to get another between two soon and after that one each. Also we should soon have a Red Cross representative here which should improve things generally. We are lucky enough to have a pack of cards and bridge passes the time and evenings. In the evenings we have debates, speeches, cards, sing-songs and quizzes. We get two small loaves a day, black coffee at 7 a.m. rice and macaroni on alternate days at 11.30 and at 5.30 stew which in this camp is very good. Plenty of vegetables for which we pay one of our two lira pay per day. Sunday mid-day we have a special dish. I will make it for you when I come home. Twice a week we get a little cheese, twice wine and twice sugar. The seven lira per week we have left from our pay is about enough to buy one pound of figs and a stick of nougat at the canteen.

From Pte K. DONALDSON.

Dated 1/3/42. We are anxiously waiting the issue of another Red Cross parcel which should be in a day or two. Have had a go at making steam puddings with our loaves grated up figs or our vegetables from tea in them, but the hardest job is hanging on to the bread. We have them steamed at the cook-house and they are quite good. Have just finished my mid-day meal of pasta-chuta, a thick mixture of macaroni, tomato juice and fried onions. You want to try it—it's good! Have also just finished, that is two of us, a Canadian Red Cross parcel of jam, butter, biscuits, bully beef, luncheon meat, salmon, sardines, prunes, sugar, salt and pepper, cheese, chocolate, milk, raisins, also a cake of soap, so everything in the garden is lovely. We also received 25 Gold Flake cigarettes. We have 500 card and bridge tournaments and talks, concerts and lectures in the different huts so our time is filled up.

Dated 22/2/42. I am in a two storied building and am in the top portion with 49 others. We sleep in bunks two deep, and have a straw palliase, two blankets and two sheets and pillow. The camp is in a valley surrounded by mountains, a good frost every morning, like winter weather in Kotovia. The food here is quite good. We have about half cup of coffee at 7.50 a.m., two small loaves of quite good brown bread at 9.30 a.m. about two mugfuls rice or macaroni about 11.30 a.m. and a vegetable soup with some chopped-up meat in it at 5.30 p.m. We receive two lira a day with one of those taken out for extras. There is a canteen (dry) in the camp where you can buy things. We receive a sugar issue every five or six days also five cigarettes a day, so one does fairly well.

From Cpl. W. A. SHARP, dated 1/3/42.

Up comes another issue of one's letters and one's cards so away we go again for a few lines. Well, everything is going on well and we are getting used to this life though we hope it

won't last spring again. Been. Six three and parcel cor tea, choco and would arriving 4 which is bread. We make up

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Dated Cross par Previous Although well as qu tin of Kll Jam, pkt. slab choc sardines a had some bread with great in been here

won't last long. Clothes and sox are scarce but with the spring approaching these may not be so necessary as they have been. Since last writing we got a Red Cross parcel between three and we hope to get another between two tomorrow. Each parcel contains a few small tins of food, 1 soap, 50 cigarettes, tea, chocolate, and is very welcome. We don't get any news and would like to know how things are going. Our tea is just arriving and it smells good. It is a vegetable and meat soup which is quite nice when eaten with one of our two loaves of bread. What we miss most is our tea, milk and sugar but will make up for that when we get back.

From Gnr. M. C. MANGAN.

Dated 22/2/42. Another month's time will make a big difference to the warmth of the sun. Archie Dick (Hamilton), Dan Watson (Thames) and I usually walk up and down the compound together every afternoon that the weather permits. One must have exercise. They have started to take parties for walks under guard outside the prison camp. We will be starters at the first opportunity. The camp is situated in a narrow valley and the hills each side are very steep and partly covered with grape vines and the balance with what we presume to be fruit trees. It should be quite pretty here in the spring. Camp conditions have improved considerably and we have every opportunity of attending Mass, Devotions and the Sacraments. I went to Communion this morning.

Dated 8/3/42. One gets more used to this life as the days go by and contents oneself with waiting for the day of release. I have just got back from Mass and had a "dixie" of hot tea under my bed clothes to keep it hot until I got back; unfortunately the chap in the next bed shifted the blankets and upset it. The Sheets are now hanging up to dry and I miss my hot tea. We received a Red Cross parcel a few days ago and shared between two—hence the tea. The parcels are very acceptable and we hope to receive another next week. Believe it or not I am taking lessons in Italian language. It's becoming quite interesting.

From Pte. R. PUDDLE.

Dated 21/2/42. We have long huts in which to sleep. There are nearly a hundred men in our hut and all the fellows from our company (6th Field Ambulance) who were taken prisoner are here. Our beds are two-decker wooden affairs and for mattresses we have straw palliasses. The other day we had a beautifully hot shower and afterwards were issued with sheets. The meals are not so bad considering! but believe me you had better study up your cookery book! We start the day with coffee at 7 a.m. Not like our coffee, of course, as the cow is missing. Also sugar, as we receive a sugar issue every five days. About 9 a.m. two loaves of bread arrive per man. They are not large like New Zealand bread, but resemble large buns. Bread is quite tasty, and is brown. At mid-day we have either macaroni or rice (usually with tomato puree), rice on Monday is plain and unsweetened. To this we add sugar and it is really good. Evening meal is a veg.-meat-soup-stew one and is good. Red Cross parcels arrived last Monday and again we were unlucky as we received only one between three.

Dated 8/3/42. Last Wednesday received another Red Cross parcel (one between two) and this was a Canadian one. Previous ones were British. Canadian parcel is really fine. Although not having variety of British it has quantity as well as quality. The high light was 1 lb. of maple leaf butter and it was simply gorgeous. Besides this, there was a large tin of Klim milk powder—grand! Tin of apple and strawberry jam, pkt. raisins, 1 of prunes, cheese, sugar, 1 lb. tea, large slab chocolate, tin bully-beef, pkt. biscuits, cake soap, tin sardines and one of salmon and salt and pepper. So we have had some glorious meals during the last few days. To have bread with real butter and jam with a cup of tea was just great. In my last letter I mentioned Padre Mitchell. He hasn't been here long but he is working well.

From Pte. R. L. COLLISS.

Dated 2/2/42. Captured in Libya on 30th November. Saw some exciting action but was not wounded. I have lost a little weight but still am doing well. Have received one Red Cross parcel—excellent too, and am now looking forward to next one. We can do with plenty of chocolate, sugar or saccharine and salt—would also like some Silver Fern tobacco and rice papers. The tinned meats and puddings went down well and helped to compensate for the loss of Christmas parcels. This letter seems to be all about food but that is what we dream of these days.

From L/Cpl. J. G. ROSS.

Dated 15/1/42. Hello! I suppose you have been worrying—well, I am O.K. Des Smith and I are still together and have seen a bit more of the world. Things are not so bad. Just waiting for the whole thing to finish now. I would like cocoa, milk powder, honey, butter, golden syrup, jam and chocolate.

Dated 21/2/42. Gee, it seems years since I had my last letter. Clothing I want is socks, towels, and under clothing. The weather has been very cold and I am glad the summer is on its way, the last few days have been real Hawke's Bay weather. Heavy frosts and nice warm days. You had better send me a couple of bottles of beer over. We get wine twice a week. You know I don't like wine but it makes no difference now.

From Gnr. D. E. T. HOULDSWORTH.

Dated 22/2/42. Conditions are very good. Food has improved 100 per cent, but still very little meat. Am looking forward to cigarettes, chocolate and socks. Not so much hurry for clothing. If you can send a face towel and some lifebuoy. Am longing for a letter from you. We get very little outside news. My leg is O.K. now and giving me no trouble at all. There are a few Blenheim boys here. Had Red Cross parcels, two among three and one among three. We are supposed to get one each. Hope it will work out right in due course. Have concerts now and again, also debates and general knowledge tests, between huts. Helps to pass the time. We have Rosary every night and there is always Mass on Sundays.

Dated 8/3/42. Had a Red Cross parcel last week, Canadian this time—one to three. May get one each next time. Time hangs heavy with nothing to do. We play cards a lot.

From Gnr. M. N. WATSON, dated 8/3/42.

Last week we received one Red Cross parcel between two boys which, as you can guess, was a great thrill. They were all Canadian parcels, which I understand are being sent by them for our New Zealand Red Cross. This morning we had a most helpful service followed by Holy Communion. I think prison life is the best lesson of Patience one could have. We are now having a series of lectures daily on various subjects such as agriculture, history and economics, etc., which are most interesting.

From Gnr. H. T. BROOK, dated 27/2/42.

There are 100 men to each hut. We sleep in bunks and we have three blankets, sheets and pillow, in fact when we all make our beds at night it looks like a first class hotel. We have electricity in each hut. For breakfast we have coffee—bread and butter is a thing never seen. We have for dinner each day, sometimes thick rice, or macaroni, for tea we sometimes get thick stew. We are treated kindly, but be sure to send some parcels. I have had one Red Cross parcel so far and it was good to get something different to eat. It would be just a dream to smoke New Zealand tobacco.

From L. H. LONG.

Well, here's that man again with the news. We are in what I think will be a very pleasant valley. We are in warm dry bunk-houses. We have sheets on our beds. We have just received a Red Cross parcel. They are wonderful! We have a wine issue twice a week. I have a job in the cook-house. So I am as happy as ever I will be while I am a prisoner. Have just had stew and a good cup of tea for dinner.

From Pte. W. I. C. STREETER, dated 22/2/42.

Each night someone gives a talk to fill in the time after tea. I went to a farmers' lecture to-day and it was good and quite interesting. We have lectures, card tournaments and working parties each day and it helps to pass away the time. We get the news daily translated from the German and Italian papers. We get a wine issue twice a week, tobacco and cigarettes are not very plentiful here and sweets and chocolate we never see. We received a Red Cross parcel the other day, one between three men and I can say it did not last long; amongst the contents we received a 1 lb. tin of golden syrup and I mixed it up with some bread and put it in a cloth and had it boiled down at the cook-house—boy what a feed!

From Pte. G. J. GAIR, dated 6/3/42.

The Italians in this district are a superior type to those we have previously encountered, they treat us pretty well considering conditions and there is practically no friction between guards and prisoners. We do no work except within the camp which works out about 4 or 5 hours per man per week. The weather was very cold after the heat of Egypt and gave most of us colds, but it is getting warmer now and the hills are starting to tinge with the green of spring. There is a canteen here but things are very dear and we do not receive a big salary.

#### A PADRE WRITES

From Padre Capt. H. A. McD. MITCHELL, dated 2/3/42.

I am in a very lovely part of Italy, but cannot say where. It is a large camp and I am the only Padre, or indeed officer in it. The Padre's work alone will leave me very little spare time, and in addition I am president of the welfare committee, which takes a lot of time. I have been here about a week and have arranged for morning prayers. Vespers are to be held in the huts each evening and four lectures each week, two on Christian doctrine and two on general subjects. A mid-week service will be conducted in turn by a rota of ten men who have taken services in civil life. Two Bible classes have been arranged for Sunday afternoons and two church services, one Church of England and the other Free Church, each followed by a communion service. We had a great time yesterday—the Church of England service was held out of doors in the morning and was very large, the Free Church service indoors in the evening when only half those who wished to attend could be accommodated. Then I am in my room for an hour a day to receive chaps and they do come. I can see soon that I will be conducting quite a big communion class.

From R. T. WRIGHT, dated 1/3/42.

We had a concert in the hut last Friday night. It was a good show. Most of the programme was done by some English chaps. They certainly are wide-awake, and as I said they certainly made the show go with a swing. One of the chaps in the hut, a parson in civilian life, gives us each night an episode from the book "Dracula." It is a good yarn and every night at the time he gives it lots of chaps from other huts drift in for their bedtime story. We also have bridge and crib tournaments running in the hut. So far as entertainment goes we are not so badly situated. The chief drawback, not counting one thing, is the shortage of fags.

#### P.G. 57.

From Pte. H. C. SNELL, dated 30/2/42.

Fred and I are both here together and well. The weather is getting warmer than it used to be. We get a very nice Red Cross parcel each every week. To-day there is about two inches of snow on the ground. The camp we are in is very good. We have a nice bed each. We also have sheets on our beds. I expect it will be some time before we get any mail. It is very monotonous having nothing to do each day. We have a few books, not many. I was in hospital seven days just after I was captured. I'm all right now though.

From Pte. F. SNELL, dated 30/2/42.

Thanks very much for lovely Christmas parcel you sent over here. Never mind, Mother, don't worry over us, we are getting well treated. I got a surprise when they gave me sheets for my bed. Give my thanks to Canon and Mrs. Coats for parcel sent over. We are all in a good mood to-day for it is parcel day. We get one every week from the Red Cross and believe me they are jolly good parcels. We also get fifty English cigarettes every week through the Red Cross.

[Note.—These two boys are twins.—Editor.]

From Sgmn. T. SHERIDAN, dated 28/2/42.

We are paid a lira a day here, and last week we missed on the Red Cross parcels as none had come to hand, but we are all hoping they turn up O.K. this week. The parcels are a boon. They contain foodstuffs and make a big difference to us if they don't arrive. Prisoner of war mails take an awful long time, but I'm looking forward to word from home and a parcel too.

From Pte. T. G. BURGESS, dated 6/2/42.

To-day, Friday is the big day—we got a Red Cross parcel and 50 English cigarettes. Last week we got Canadian parcels which were very nice indeed. We are expecting similar parcels to-day. I am doing well, so don't worry.

From Gnr. A. W. L. ROBERTS.

The Red Cross are doing a grand job here and are seeing we get every possible attention. Have received three and one-half food parcels to date and also warm underclothing and a woollen hand-knitted scarf, and believe me they are appreciated. The food parcels contain chocolate, tea, sugar, cocoa, biscuits, meat and numerous other comforts. The ration we receive from the Italians is quite enough to keep us going and make us reasonably satisfied.

From Pte. R. BRIDGES, dated 31/1/42.

The censorship forbids anything in the way of interesting news, so there is not much we can discuss. We are in a decent camp and we receive a Red Cross parcel once weekly and also 50 English smokes, which keep us going all right. If you send any parcels the Red Cross will be able to inform you what to send. I suppose you know that poor old Vince Davie got it. He was alongside me when he stopped it and I am glad to say that it was good and quick and he didn't suffer at all.

From Pte. J. MINCHIN.

Dated 6/2/42. Everything is O.K. here; we have had some very good days lately. I am in bed keeping my feet warm.

Dated 12/2/42. I do wish I could hear some news. To-day, although it is a bit fresh, the sun is shining and it is quite a treat to feel a little bit of heat in it. Each week we get a parcel from the Red Cross and we look to it as much as we do to any Christmas. The Red Cross also give 50 cigarettes a week. Once we used to wonder what the Red Cross were doing, but we know now. We all look forward to our stick of chocolate most of all in the parcel. To-day we received our parcel so we will all be like school kids again when they arrive.

From L/Cpl. M. G. O'Connell, dated 17/2/42.

I am being well treated. I have been out of hospital about a fortnight, and am feeling well now. My arm is practically all right, and I am able to work, and four of my comrades are here with me, so I am very lucky. We received our first Red Cross parcel a few days ago and we never enjoyed a parcel so much before. We owe a tremendous debt to the Red Cross, which we can never repay. I don't know what we would do without them. You need not worry about me or about sending parcels, as I am O.K.

From Pte. J.

I am a well treated parcels are of milk, tea, cocoa, and last parcel Soccer, hand cards, chess put on a c there was a songs and We have a and several in a concert My mates a parcel I w we have g courses. I my chess ap

From Pte. J.

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From Gnr.

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From Pte.

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From Pte.

At last Spent two

From Pte. H. S. DAVEY, dated 8/2/42.

I am a box of birds, feeling well and very fit. We are well treated here. We have plenty to eat. The Red Cross parcels are very good indeed and contain lb. butter, big tin of milk, tea, sugar, jam, cheese, tinned meat, tinned fruits, cocoa, and ovaltine and a number of other useful items. My last parcel contained 18 articles. We have games such as Soccer, hand ball, base ball, etc., and indoor games such as cards, chess, draughts and other games. The different huts put on a concert several times during the week. Last night there was a real good one; some Maori lads sang some Maori songs and finished with a haka. They got a great hearing. We have a piano-accordion, steel guitar, banjo-mandolin, cornet and several mouth organs. I will be playing the mouth organ in a concert we are putting on for the other huts next week. My mates are four Aussies—fine chaps. If you are sending a parcel I would like a mouth organ. We are being well treated. We have quite a good library here and getting educational courses. I am taking one on engineering. I am polishing up my chess again. I have had 16 games and lost only three.

From Pte. W. GARDINER.

Dated 10/1/42. We are very near the Alps and a very cold wind blows off the snow. We spent a very dismal Christmas at our quarters, the quarantine camp in the south of Italy. We are getting well treated here, the food is good, our Red Cross parcel compensates for all the rations don't contain. I am in the best of health and there is no need to worry—that one thing you must not do is worry.

Dated 8/2/42. One can't complain of the treatment he is getting here. We were just saying yesterday how really wonderful it will be when we get our first letter from home. We have been captured over two months now; we were caught on 28th November. We spent a fortnight at Benghazi, then they took us here. We are expecting our Red Cross parcel to-day—get them once a week.

From L/Sgt. D. C. GRAY, dated 10/1/42.

Have been three weeks in hospital and now back in camp. The boys who were there when I went in are now all fattened out and very fit. The Red Cross parcels which we get every week are really wonderful. They have been all Canadian ones lately, and we have had some great feeds. We only have two parades a day and in between times play games. Once in a while each hutment has a fatigue day which is the only work we do. At night we have concerts, debates, lectures, gambling, etc., which all helps to pass the time nicely.

From Gnr. W. ROBERTS, dated 1/3/42.

Just to let you know that we are all well and in the best of spirits. Am in the best of health and am starting to restore some of my lost weight. As far as I know none of the Wanganui lads that I knew are in this camp. We have devised numerous entertainments in the camp and have concerts and lectures when the sun goes down. On fine days we have football and other outdoor games provided by the Red Cross. We get pay of one lira per day and this helps us to buy materials to play with.

### P.G. 65.

From Pte. R. M. NICHOL, dated 11/3/42.

Am now settled in a permanent camp and it is very comfortable—new roomy stone bungalow, electric light, mattresses, blankets, sheets and bunks. The weather is getting warmer and the spring blossoms are on the trees—very pretty. Perhaps you could send me some socks and a jersey, in case we're here for another winter, as would take a while for a parcel to arrive.

From Pte. A. F. BINNIE, dated 10/3/42.

At last we have arrived in a permanent camp, so hope soon to be able to write a decent letter. Conditions have improved, beds and even sheets. We are fairly well south, but still feel the cold—thank goodness, summer is coming. Parcels—send chocolate, Greys and socks. I am still fit.

From Pte. S. B. AVENT, dated 10/3/42.

At last we are settled and I will soon write a decent letter. Spent two months in Greece—colder this time—we are now in

Southern Italy and the sun is grand. It sure helps. Living conditions have improved immensely—sheets on bed! Parcels—please send jam, pastes, chocolate, Greys, plenty cats. I am in good health; hope all are well. Chins up!

From H. K. CATRAN, dated 10/3/42.

Facilities much better. We have bunks three blankets and sheets. The food is good, but if you can send a parcel, O.K. Socks would be handy and concentrated sweets. I am in good health and not worrying. Half our boys are here so I have plenty of cobbles.

### P.G. 66.

From L/Cpl. G. F. MILNE.

Dated 13/2/42. Well, well, here we are again, still bright and cheery, awaiting parcels and mail from you all. Red Cross are doing good work and are fully appreciated by the boys. Senior Sgt. Doggets' son is here with me, also Athol Dean. I have put a 1d. per day in a box from 1st December until released.

Dated 8/3/42. Now we have settled down things are going along fine, so please don't worry. We received one Red Cross parcel last Tuesday between two of us—it was Canadian. Boy, oh boy! What joy to find a pound of real butter, tasted just like ours. 50 cigarettes all to be shared between two. Things are very quiet here, nothing to do all day. The days take a long time to pass, though this year is certainly galloping along. My health is really excellent under the circumstances. Tobacco here is like tree bark cut up. We had to hand our pay-books in a day or two ago to prove we were medical personnel, so let us hope something comes of it, there are too many of us to give us each a job. My own unit is here about two-thirds force.

From Sgt. G. F. CLARK, dated 3/2/42.

Things are improving—have been paid 16 lira and am now the possessor of a tooth-brush and paste; have also had a shave. Hope to obtain a Red Cross parcel of some more clothing shortly—I need it after two months. However, socks are at the moment unobtainable, but am making do. The Italians are really doing their best for us, but it is limited. Have had no mail or parcels yet. News of the outside world is of course non-existent and I only wish I could hear how you are at home and how the other lads of the N.Z.E.F. made out. Please send all the parcels you can; tobacco in dark plug (more concentrated), papers and chocolate. I suggest you study Mrs. Beeton, you will certainly need it when I return.

Dated 9/2/42.

Am feeling on top of the world to-day. Have just been issued with some clothing, Red Cross I believe—a coat, cap and pair long cotton underpants. After two months you can imagine I needed them. Also had a shave and might even have a bath in the summer. Above all, got a parcel from the Red Cross and did Harry and I have a feed! The 50 Gold Flake and cake of chocolate were especially welcome.

Dated 22/2/42. One of our padres here with us held a communion service early this morning which made my birthday complete or nearly complete. Have had no letters yet. Now that Harry and I are working in the office (dealing with the chaps mails, etc.) things are much better, something to occupy our minds. Prisoners over here are not worked at all. Received my second Red Cross parcel. What a difference it makes.

Dated 25/2/42. Letters issued early this week so this will follow my last closely. Had a much-needed hair-cut and shave but am still hoping for a shower. Of course, once the warmer weather comes there should be plenty of cold showers. We are now being paid 1 lira per day.

[Sgt. Clark has since been transferred to Camp P.G. 52.—  
Editor.]

From H. SILVESTER, dated 21/1/42.

Of the lira a day we receive I splashed 2 lira 70 cents on a writing pad and amuse myself during leisure and keep the brain stimulated by planning houses—a weakness of mine, as you know. I did not know one of the Tommys in the tent was a professional architect. He picked up two of my plans and added to them. We have proved a source of contagion and architecture is the enthusiasm of the hour in this tent. While away to collect our bread a few minutes ago I saw a sight unusual to New Zealand eyes—a great white bullock and a horse drawing a block dray. Horses and traps are common, some of the traps being fitted with hoods. The other day I saw a hearse, a really flash affair drawn by two black horses decorated with waving white plumes. Modern Italy is represented round here by a snappy little electric rail car service. Also some of the buildings are really modern structure, whilst ancient Italy is seen in some of the churches beside the stream. Had a lovely hot shower yesterday, my fourth of recent days, and had a shave at the same time. Incidentally possess a beautiful moustache.

Limited space debars a detailed commentary on this latest phase of what shows promise of developing into a troop's world tour. In Italy now—fourth continent in nine months. Enjoying a Scottish Red Cross parcel of food.

### P.G. 75.

From Capt. G. C. T. BURNS.

Dated 16/2/42. This is called a Transit Camp, there is no sign of a shift yet. At my rate of pay (1100 lira per month) less 16 lira per day charged for messing, we have about 21 lira per day left. No money is given to us, but we are allowed to buy what extras we can get. These include cigarettes made of Balkan tobacco, rather like "Caneels" or other U.S. brands. We get these irregularly, averaging about two packets every three days. We get dried figs and jam at irregular intervals. In the first month we got very little extra, but now we get about 2lb. of figs and 2 pots of jam (12oz.) in a good week—these are charged against us; other necessities, clothes, toilet gear, etc., have gradually trickled in and I now possess 1 pair cotton drawers, 2 handkerchiefs, 1 pair cotton socks, 1 comb and 1 pack of cards, all bought in the local town. We have also had a few novels in "Touchnitz Editions"—copyright in Europe only, and presumably sold to tourists pre-war; they are bought on a community basis and we have had a mixed bag of title. It is hard to pass the time away, but at the moment I am learning German.

Dated 28/2/42. Still fair in health, but still terribly bored in this camp. Thank heaven the weather is becoming warmer with spring arriving shortly. We had a great thrill last week when Red Cross parcels arrived, they were standard 10lb. food parcels from the Canadian Red Cross, but unfortunately we had to divide one between four. They contained tea, milk, chocolate, butter, etc., and boy! what a feed we had when they arrived. We have had only two so far, but we hope to get them more often. Food still holds first place in our thoughts and conversation. I am keeping pretty well and so are most of the others here. I manage to waste the days trying to learn German and reading the few cheap novels we have, and yarning and sleeping. My beard is three months old and of respectable length, but very ginger I'm afraid.

[Captain Burns is now at Camp P.G. 38.—Editor.]

### P.G. 78.

From Flying Officer R. D. CAMPBELL.

Dated 16/2/42. Much joy, your parcel sent from N.Z. arrived in perfect condition to-day. Your knitted goods are wonderful. Everything fits and the socks and handkerchiefs were much needed. I am wearing the blue pull-over now. The chocolate was grand! A thousand thanks! Mother. No recent mail since Japs entered the war.

Dated 5/3/42. Received your letter dated 25th December on 2nd March. I have done very well for mail, considering. Have Rev. Willis, F. T. Greer from Wellington, and several other New Zealanders here and all are well. Red Cross parcels have been very scarce, but they should roll in now that the weather is better. They mean so much to us and we are very grateful to that wonderful organisation.

### CASERTA.

From Gnr. E. J. CUMMINGS, dated 14/2/42.

This week's news finds me doing well and getting quite adapted to the new life. I am in hospital and getting on fine now. And the summer is fast approaching, so I have been in a good place for the winter. During the week we have had a Red Cross parcel. So far we have been getting one between two of us per fortnight, and believe me they are wonderful parcels. A parcel contains at least 15 articles such as chocolate, ginger biscuits, tinned fruit, vegetables and meats and even oatmeal. My mate and I made a pot of porridge and with some sugar and condensed milk to flavour it, well it just seemed like home sweet home again. One has to be in circumstances such as these to realise just how good our own home is and what a good country we live in. Really I don't think I'll ever growl again.

### PIACENZA.

From L/Cpl. L. RODERICK, dated 17/12/41.

We are in good shape and form for the winter proper and will make the grade. To-day's paper has first news of movements on the desert. Have spent an hour at the Electricity Class to-day and have just completed half an hour's tuition of algebra and French. Have not had any more mail as yet but still hopeful and read your first and Joan's letters over and over again. I walk daily in the castle grounds for half an hour with an English officer and we talk French. Well occupied here cooking for 80 men. We are doing well here regards food as we get a Red Cross parcel weekly besides our ration from the Italians. We also buy vegetables so we are doing very well. I only wish the lads in the big camps were doing so well. Great day in the Campo yesterday, especially for me as four of your letters arrived and we were visited by the Pope's right hand man, who brought us a Christmas Card from the Pope, and a few parcels, also took a message of Christmas Greetings from one and all to send home. I am glad you got the last message and hope you hear this last one on your own radio.

Dated 22/12/41. A few new faces arrived about an hour ago from Sulmona, but have not had time to contact any for a chat to ask of Wink Adams and Major Clayton. Have managed a couple of cakes—which I have iced with chocolate and written greetings with melted lollies. All materials are out of Red Cross parcels. We also get two turkeys to-morrow and by all accounts we will prepare quite an enjoyable meal.