

THE CHEVRONS CLUB.

£150,000 REQUIRED FOR NEW SCHEME.

The Chevrons Club, the club of the petty officers of the Navy and the non-commissioned officers of the Royal Marines, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, is to be further extended and placed on a permanent basis.

Founded a little more than a year ago, the Chevrons Club has supplied a long-felt want. During the closing months of the war, and since the signing of the Armistice, the value of such an institution has been clearly demonstrated. Until the foundation of this club there had been no separate meeting-place for the petty officers of the Navy and the non-commissioned officers of the Army, the men who formed the backbone of the fighting forces of the Empire and upon whose efforts so much depended. Since its formation nearly 55,000 beds have been occupied and 10,000 meals served. That the men for whom it was established have appreciated it has been testified to over and over again, and they are supporting most strongly the proposal that it shall be made permanent. Not the least of the useful purposes it served during the war was to bring together men from many different branches of service, for it enabled them to obtain some idea, at least, of the difficulties under which others were working and, as a natural consequence, encouraged them to make light of their own troubles when they returned from their leave.

The men have no doubt about the necessity for the continuance of the club, and at a conference held recently delegates representing the Navy, Army, Marines, and Air Force decided that the club must be a permanent home and club for the serving and demobilized non-commissioned ranks. It was urged also that there should be branches in the Dominions and at the various naval, military, and air centres at home. At present the Chevrons Club has accommodation for 300 men nightly, though the average applications far exceed that number; and it is proposed so to extend the premises that twice as many men can be provided for. The establishment of similar centres at coast and inland places is also an essential part of the scheme. It is estimated that to carry out the project in its entirety a sum of £150,000 will be required. An appeal is being made for subscriptions, and it is significant of the esteem in which the club is held by the men themselves that nearly 200 regiments have already sent contributions.

In addition to joining together the non-commissioned ranks in the various parts of the Empire, through the club and its branches, the committee aims at helping them in other ways. An Employment Bureau has been begun, under the auspices of the hon. treasurer, Sir Edward H. Holden, and has already done good work. Many of the men inevitably regard their future with uncertainty and uneasiness, and it is hoped, by ensuring the cooperation of banks, business corporations, and commercial firms, to be able to offer employment to many of them when they leave the Service. A scheme is under consideration for ensuring the appropriate education of the children of fallen and disabled petty officers and non-commissioned officers. An ambitious sports programme has been arranged, the Sports Council having for its presidents Lord Desborough, Lord Kinnaird, and Lord Hawke.

An appeal for subscriptions to place the club on a permanent footing and to provide for its extension, signed by Admiral Sir R. E. Wemyss, General Sir William Robertson, and Major-General Sir F. H. Sykes, was issued in January. A further appeal, signed by Sir William Robertson, who can claim to speak with some authority, having served in the non-commissioned ranks of the Army for nine years, has been issued more recently, in which he urges that in addition to the great utility of the clubs as such, they will be a worthy tribute as a national memorial to our petty officers and non-commissioned officers, the men who have contributed so much to the magnificent victories which have crowned our efforts. "It is hoped," he says, "that every town in the country will follow the lead that has been set by a number of places, and endeavour to raise a certain amount of funds for the Chevrons Club."

All communications should be addressed to the Hon. Organizing Secretary, The Chevrons Club, 74, St. George's-square, S.W.1.