



UNIQUE CHESS SET

By CPL. W. N. WILSON

FOR many centuries, craftsmen of all nations have been attracted—one might say challenged—by the almost limitless possibilities offered to them in the design and manufacture of fancy chessmen. Pictured above is a fine example of Northern handicraft, the work of an elderly Eskimo who lives at Pond Inlet, N.W.T. About a year ago, Supt. H. A. Larsen, O.C. "G" Division and a keen chess player, commissioned the native to carve a set of chess pieces in Arctic motif and materials.

Walrus ivory is not an easy medium to work with, nor is soapstone, of which the black pieces are made, nevertheless, the venerable Eskimo came up with the finished set 12 months later in spite of the fact that he himself is no chess player and probably has no notion of why anybody would want to have 32 of his little carvings.

The traditional six different kinds of chess men—Castles, Knights, Bishops, Queens, Kings and Pawns—are represented in Superintendent Larsen's set as bears, Arctic foxes, snowy owls, Eskimo women and men, and beady-eyed little seals. Each of the 32 men is mounted on a disc of walrus tusk. The black queen is an especially charming figure, complete

with tiny baby perched on her back. The bears are about four inches high, other pieces slightly smaller and of ideal proportions for use on a regulation-size chess-board.

"Do-it-yourself" experts all over the world have for centuries warmed to the task of making chess sets. For materials, designers have chosen exotic woods, bone, china, rubber, gold, amber, sea-shells, soap, paper, plastics, jade, onyx, even grass, if one counts the exquisitely-woven raffia sets made by certain African tribes. There are beautiful hollow crystal chessmen in existence, intended to be filled with colored water before each game. There are magnetized sets, pocket-sized sets; four-foot high concrete pieces, used for outdoor contests. On many occasions live human beings have been used as in parts of Italy where, on certain festival days, gaily dressed actors play out their chessic roles on huge lawns.

Nor has the chess-board been neglected by craftsmen. Essentially a chess-board consists of 64 squares of contrasting colors. With these specifications to go on, workers have turned out chessboards of leather, of brass, mother-of-pearl, Plexi-glass, linen, marble and of almost any other substance you care to name.