

Eight hundred and fifty Indian tents (G.S., 160 lb.) were imported during the year. Like other military stores, tents (circular, linen) and marquees (hospital) are unprocurable from England at present. This also applies to the linen material of which these tents are made.

48. CLOTHING.

Since my last report a Minister in Charge of Munitions and Supplies, with a separate staff, has taken control of the purchase of all clothing and other stores required for the Expeditionary Forces. Having legislative authority, the Minister of Munitions can thus compel manufacturers to supply.

Presumably owing to relative supply and demand, there is a sharp advance in price now being paid for uniforms, greatcoats, and underclothing.

Sealed samples of the articles agreed to be purchased are sent by the Munitions Board to Defence Stores, and where any supply is deemed not equal to sample the fact is reported to the Board, which rejects or accepts same as may be thought fit.

The appointment of this Board has been a great relief, enabling the Ordnance Stores Department to carry out their true function in the direct equipment of the Forces.

Notwithstanding the arrangements made by the Munitions Boards, contractors did not in some cases maintain the supplies contracted for, and hence there has been delay in properly clothing the Territorial Force as I anticipated by the end of March. This, however, was unavoidable.

49. SERVICE BOOTS.

This is an article of equipment which is always, at Home and abroad, a subject of criticism, although there has not been much complaint as to make or quality from the wearers in Egypt. The boots now supplied have been found good and serviceable.

50. ARMOURERS.

The armourers have had an exceedingly busy year. Every rifle that was called in from districts has been cleaned, overhauled, and most thoroughly repaired and rebarrelled if found necessary. In order to cope with demands it was found necessary to work overtime in the armoury for a period, but this has now been overcome.

51. ENGINEER UNITS: TERRITORIALS.

There is a shortage of technical equipment owing to stores having been withdrawn from units. As far as possible stores have been or are being obtained locally to enable a certain amount of training to be carried out by each unit.

52. SIGNAL COMPANIES.

The Signal companies are handicapped in their training owing to want of a cable-wagon and equipment for laying telegraph-cable. There are no cable-wagons on order, as, owing to the war, annual requisitions are not sent forward. A number of field telephones on order from England since 1913 have now come to hand, and when the telephone stores now being manufactured locally are delivered training in field telephony and cable-laying can be carried out by these companies.

53. MOUNTED SIGNAL TROOP.

A supply of field telephones has lately been received from England for these units, and they are now being issued. When the telephone stores now being made locally are received and issued these units will be able to train in their technical work of laying telephone-cable and operating.

54. FIELD COMPANIES.

These companies are well provided with artificers' tools and entrenching implements, but have been handicapped in their training for want of tool-carts and G.S. wagons. Intimation has, however, now been given by the War Office that six tool-carts and four G.S. wagons on order since 1913 are being sent out to the Dominion at an early date. When these arrive the field companies should be able to train in all branches of their work.

55. CARE OF STORES.

There has been, a good deal of damage and loss of equipment on charge to Engineer units in the past owing to neglect. It appears to be impossible for Territorials to look after their technical equipment and keep their store ledgers correctly posted up. As vehicles, harness, and saddlery will be issued to these units in the near future, there will be plenty of work to employ a man in each district for the cleaning, care, and preservation of equipment on issue to field companies and mounted Signal troops. It will be a saving to appoint a suitable returned soldier to each district to look after these stores and keep ledgers posted up.

56. ELECTRIC-LIGHT SECTIONS, R.N.Z.A.

The equipment of the authorized Defence lights at the forts is now complete, as the stores for the two new lights for Auckland Harbour have now come to hand. The electric-light Store ledgers of the R.N.Z.A. detachment in the four centres are kept in a satisfactory manner by the R.N.Z.A. sub-accountants.