

It is worthy of note that the quality of the material being supplied for the new contracts is an improvement on that furnished under previous contracts.

55. HATS.

Considerable trouble has been experienced in connection with the supply of hats, mainly owing to the variation in quality and difficulty in obtaining material from England. Hoods, however, are now coming forward in sufficient quantities, and are of good quality, but deliveries are slow.

56. BLANKETS.

Under the 1917 contract the blanket called for is of the following dimensions and weight: Width, 64 in.; length, 94 in.; weight, $4\frac{1}{2}$ lb. each blanket. The issue of blankets of such dimensions and weight brings the New Zealand blanket into line with the British Army standard.

57. SHEETS, W.P., AND MESS-TIN COVERS.

Ample supplies are now available.

58. BOOTS.

Under the 1917 contract several important and necessary changes have been made in connection with military boots. The uppers are now cut from a heavier grade of chrome leather than was used formerly. The puffs, which were often a source of trouble through dropping, thus causing discomfort to the wearer, have been eliminated. The sectional heel-tips, which proved by wear to be altogether too heavy on one portion of the heel, thus causing the wearer to twist and distort the boot, have been abolished: these have been replaced by full heel-tips, which are proving satisfactory. Another weak spot in the 1916-pattern boot was the seam in the backstrap where it joined the golosh. This seam, known as a "bent seam," gave considerable trouble by breaking away after being submitted to wear. This fault has been remedied by the addition of an outside counter, which does away with the seam and strengthens this portion of the boot. It was also considered advisable to revert to the three-deck sole, and actual wear proves that the extra substance thus obtained in the fore part of the sole adds considerably to the life of the boot. These changes have resulted in the issue of a much-improved boot.

59. DECK-SHOES.

The canvas shoes formerly issued have been replaced by a more serviceable article. A full-chrome all-leather Derby shoe, solidly standard-screwed, is now supplied. These shoes will resist a certain amount of wet, and are capable of repair when the soles are worn, thus proving more economical than the cheaper article.

60. WATERPROOFING BOOTS.

A system of waterproofing was introduced in August, 1916, and every boot issued since that date has been subjected to this process. From reports received this system is proving most satisfactory, and has increased the durability of the boot.

61. REPAIR BOOT-SHOP.

A boot-repair shop was started in January last, and a staff of nine men employed, who repair an average of four hundred pairs weekly. The result has proved most satisfactory both financially and as regards the quality of work. Since starting this shop the price of all materials has considerably increased, the price of leather alone having advanced by 6d. per pound, while the cost of other articles has increased proportionately. Nevertheless first-class materials only have been used for repairs, and the cost of half-soleing and heeling boots—after allowing for wages, maintenance, depreciation of material and machinery—has been reduced by 10d. per pair as compared with the lowest quotation submitted in December, 1916. In addition the Department has the satisfactory knowledge that all materials used are of the best quality, and that the boots are thoroughly repaired by expert tradesmen. The total number of boots repaired to 30th April was four thousand pairs, thus effecting a saving of £166 13s. 4d., equal to an annual economy of £500.

62. VETERINARY STORES.

During the year arrangements were made whereby the Veterinary Department controlled the issues of drugs for veterinary chests, by which means a considerable saving has been effected.

63. VETERINARY SURGICAL INSTRUMENTS.

These are housed in the Wallaceville Laboratory, thus ensuring that every care and attention is taken of them throughout the year.

64. MISCELLANEOUS STORES.

Annual contracts have been made for the supply of miscellaneous stores, such as hardware, cleaning-materials, cooking-utensils, stable gear, picks and shovels, messing-utensils, &c., thus substituting a system of annual demands for piecemeal orders. This has enabled the Department to purchase to much better advantage. There are still some minor lines for which annual contracts have yet to be arranged, but it is hoped before long to have all supplies provided for by annual contracts in conjunction with annual demands.