

During the same period the plant used in the making and upkeep of roads has been multiplied nearly seven times, rendering possible a very considerable improvement in the conditions of road transport. At the same time, the possibilities of Inland Water Transport have been further developed, resulting in October, 1917, in an increase of 50 per cent. in the weekly traffic handled, as compared with the figures for January, 1917.

FORESTRY AND QUARRY UNITS.

In the spring of 1917 the activities of the Army were extended by the formation of a Forestry Directorate, controlling Royal Engineer and Canadian Forestry Companies, to work certain forest areas in France and provide material for the use of our own and the French Armies. Quarry companies have also been formed in immediate connection with the Transportation Services.

Some idea of the magnitude of the work involved can be gained from the fact that from quarries worked in a single locality over 600,000 tons of material were produced in the nine months ending 31st August, 1917. Between March and October of this year the total weekly output of road metal received in the Army areas has nearly doubled. The average area of new and re-made roads completed weekly during October was seven and a half times greater than the weekly average for March.

By September, 1917, the Army had become practically self-supporting as far as regards timber, and during the active period of working, from May to October, over three-quarters of a million tons of timber were supplied for the use of the British Army. Included in this timber was material sufficient to construct over 350 miles of plank roads and to provide sleepers for 1,500 miles of railway, besides great quantities of sawn timber for hutting and defences and many thousand tons of round timber for fascines and fuel. The bulk of the fuel wood is being obtained from woods already devastated by artillery fire.

These Forestry and Quarry units have proved of great value, and have been the source of very considerable economy. My special thanks are due to the French Forestry authorities, as well as to the Comité inter-Allié des Bois de Guerre, for their assistance in our negotiations regarding the acquisition of woods and forest areas.

ARMY SERVICE CORPS.

The long period of active fighting, combined with the magnitude of our operations, has once more placed a heavy strain upon the personnel of the Army Service Corps and of the Administrative Services and Departments generally. The difficulties of supply have been increased by the unavoidable congestion of the areas in which operations were taking place, as well as by the inevitable deterioration of roads and by long-distance shelling and bombing by the enemy.

In spite of all difficulties the Army Service Corps has never failed to meet the needs of our troops in food, ammunition, material and stores of all kinds. Particularly good work has been done by the Motor Transport drivers, who have shown the greatest gallantry and devotion to duty in getting forward the requisites of the Army under heavy shell fire and during long hours of exposure.

ORDNANCE CORPS.

The energy and zeal of the Ordnance Corps have also been admirable. The intensity of our artillery preparations and bombardments has placed the heaviest demands upon the Ordnance workshops in the repair and the overhauling of guns of all calibres. Work has been continued by day and night in order to keep our guns in action, and the unsparing efforts of officers and men have contributed in no small degree to the success of our operations.

MEDICAL SERVICES.

The work of the Medical Service in all its branches has continued to afford me most valuable assistance. The high standard of efficiency displayed by all ranks of the Medical Service has resulted in an almost entire freedom from epidemic disease, and has been the cause of much saving of life and limb amongst the wounded.

The devotion and gallantry of the Royal Army Medical Corps and of the Medical Corps of the Overseas Dominions during the recent operations have earned universal admiration and praise. Their work of collecting the wounded from the front has been of an exceptionally arduous nature, owing to the condition of the ground and weather. I regret that so many gallant officers and men have lost their lives in carrying out their duties.

The Medical Service of the United States of America has shared in the work of the British Medical Service, and has given very valuable help.

I am much indebted to the devotion and work of the consulting surgeons and physicians and to the Auxiliary Services of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John of Jerusalem.

The Nursing services, several of whose members have unfortunately lost their lives from hostile air raids, have, as always, devoted themselves with untiring care and zeal to their work of mercy.

The excellent organisation and administrative work of the Medical Services as a whole have given me entire satisfaction.

VETERINARY CORPS.

The work of the Army Veterinary Corps and of the Mobile Veterinary Sections has been ably carried out, and has contributed largely to the general efficiency of the Army.

THE CHAPLAINS' DEPARTMENT.

I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of all ranks of the British Armies in France, our great appreciation of the devotion and self-sacrifice of the Army Chaplains serving in France. No considerations of personal convenience or safety have at any time interfered with their work among the troops, the value of which is incalculable.

ARMY COMMANDERS.

My thanks are again due to the Army Commanders for the complete loyalty and conspicuous ability with which they have carried out my plans during the past year. The task of launching three great offensives on different sectors of the British front, in addition to the almost constant fighting that has taken place in the neighbourhood of Lens, has demanded professional knowledge, determination and soundness of judgment of a very high order on