

41. The appeals in which the Board agreed that no ground of appeal existed included those under heading (5).

42. It is scarcely necessary to comment on these figures, beyond remarking that only nine out of 121 appeals were allowed, of which nine the Commissioner had previously consented to six.

MINIMUM WAGE.

43. Reference was made in the last report to the subject of a minimum wage for married men. The present minimum of £140, even taking into consideration the war bonus given by Government, is altogether insufficient, and it is hoped that some provision will be made during the coming session of Parliament under which the Commissioners may be able to pay a reasonable wage to married men whose classified positions carry a lower payment than £3 a week.

DEFALCATIONS.

44. Last year, defalcations of a considerable amount were discovered to have been made in the Mines Department. The Commissioners inquired into the case. The fraud was accomplished partly by means of forgery and partly by manipulation of accounts, and was for a time concealed with unusual cleverness. Nothing was revealed to indicate any lack of alertness on the part of the Treasury or Audit Departments. The defalcations were rendered possible by the fact that the culprit was an old and trusted officer, who held a sufficiently high position in the Department to be treated as both certifying and paying officer of accounts. This is a practice which should never be allowed in the Head Office of any Department, however small the Department may be. The offender was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

RETURNED SOLDIERS.

45. The Commissioners decided early in 1915 that preferential consideration should be given to returned soldiers for any vacancies in the Public Service for which they were considered suitable. The Discharged Soldiers' Information Department is working in close co-operation with the Commissioners, and every effort is being made to carry out the decision.

46. Out of 961 men employed, 399 have left the Service. Probably many of the men took up temporary positions in the Public Service until they could obtain employment at their former trades or occupations; but, even making due allowance for this and the unsettled state of mind which probably exists amongst some of the returned soldiers, the proportion of resignations to appointments is high.

47. In order to facilitate the employment of discharged soldiers, the Commissioner has been empowered by regulation to dispense with the former conditions in regard to age, &c.

48. A difficulty still exists about the permanent employment of returned soldiers. As stated in the Fifth Report, the Commissioners, while not desiring to insist on too strict a medical certificate, cannot make any regulation, in view of possible unforeseen charges on the Superannuation Fund. If the matter could be settled by subsidizing the fund many of the temporary employees could be placed on a permanent footing.

49. The following shows the class of position in which discharged soldiers were employed on the 31st March, 1918:—

Clerks	103	Storemen	2
Messengers	68	Chauffeurs	14
Watchmen	5	Basketmaker	1
Night-watchmen	22	Sorters	4
Postmen	134	Caretaker	1
Linemen	114	Milk-tester	1
Night telephonists	42	Launch-driver	1
Meat Inspectors	16	Lift-attendants	4
Fields Inspectors	3	Locker	1
Orchard Inspectors	2	Miscellaneous	3
Draughtsmen	9		
Attendants	12	Total	562