

Either the men did not avail themselves of their own personal boots for a change or both pairs were wet at the same time. At any rate, on realizing this condition of affairs, the desire of the Camp Commandant was that the second issue of boots should be made forthwith so as to provide an extra change of strong boots. The Camp Quartermaster states that he had requisitioned the Stores Department for boots in sufficient numbers to enable this to be done. By the instructions from the Headquarters Staff of the 17th May, 1915, the second issue of boots, except those for the Fifth Reinforcements, was directed to be provided before the 24th July in the case of the Sixth Reinforcements (1,900), the 17th September in the case of the Trenthams (2,250), and the 25th September for the Seventh Reinforcements (1,700). The Stores Department were therefore not called on to have the boots for the second issue to these detachments in stock at the beginning of June, and, although the Camp Quartermaster's requisitions up to and including the 31st May were, according to his view, sufficient to meet the demand for the second issue, the Stores Department were unable to comply therewith. On the 6th June the Camp Commandant spoke to the G.O.C. during a visit to the camp requesting him to urge on the delivery of the boots. The delivery depended upon the Stores Department obtaining the boots from contractors. Considerable time was spent by your Commissioners in endeavouring to elucidate the actual position of the Stores Department in regard to its supplies from contractors and its deliveries to the camp; but we feel that unless these questions were looked into by an accountant it was impracticable to arrive at a definite decision as to whether sufficient boots ought to have been in store, or as to whether any one was to blame for the deficiency. Up to the 4th July boots had not been supplied to the camp in sufficient quantities to enable the second pair to be issued all round. On that date the Hon. the Prime Minister visited the camp and gave instructions that a second pair of boots of some kind were to be procured at once. On the following day, out of some six thousand pairs of boots sampled, only some two thousand pairs of boots could be accepted for purchase, and Major O'Sullivan says the boots so bought have been a source of trouble ever since.

128. Criticisms were offered by one of the witnesses on the quality of the material used in the boots and on the workmanship, but we have found that this criticism was not based on the boot made under the present specification. The evidence of Mr. Ward, works-manager for Mr. R. Hannah and Co., who was an instructor at technical colleges in Britain, shows that from April cow-hide was substituted for split russet for the front lining, and this he deemed to be better. The chrome leathers now used for the uppers were selected by the Defence Department because they had been adopted by the War Office after lengthened experiments in place of the waxed kip, which was abandoned. He admitted that the feet were more quickly affected by wet through chrome leathers than through vegetable-tanned leathers. He also informed the Commission that the sole-leather used in New Zealand was not so good as that used in the British boot, as the British Government had prohibited the exportation of the best sole-leathers.

The witness made three suggestions of value: (1) That the boots should be kept stored at least a month before use, and then dried by fans in a proper room either in the factories or in the Stores Department; (2) he strongly recommended that the boots should be viscolized, or, at any rate, oil-dressed before issue; (3) that a boot of somewhat lighter make than the military boot, but stouter than the ordinary civilian boot, should be made and issued to the troops in the first instance. This would gradually break the recruits into the use of a heavy boot, and would enable parts of the hides that are now wasted to be utilized for military purposes, and thus reduce the cost of the heavy boot. He was also of opinion that the extra four thousand pairs of boots could have been procured in New Zealand in the months of April and May if a business man could have been sent round to the manufacturers. His expression was, "If it had been a business proposition instead of an official one the boots would have been obtained all right." We mention this as the deliberate expression of opinion by a witness who ought to know; but the Stores Department had