

Boots



AND ALL

A KORERO Report

“**B**OOT-BOOTS-BOOTS-BOOTS, marching up and down again” have always been a subject of especial interest to the soldier. In the days when Kipling wrote his well-known song—days when, despite Napoleon’s metaphor an army marched on more than its stomach—they were often the subject of lurid comment. Indeed, Kipling suggests that hell is composed not “of devils, fire, dark or anything, but boots-boots-boots-boots.” However, the complaint was levelled not so much at the quality of the boots (though here too there was caustic criticism) as at the quantity of them—the maddening monotony of endless lines of marching feet.

To-day there can be little complaint as to this monotony—mechanized columns have replaced the old “line of route”—and, as to quality, the modern soldier, still vitally interested in what goes on his feet, finds little wrong with the way the Army shoes him. In fact he often goes as far as to say that the Army boots are the most comfortable in the world. He has his likes and dislikes; one make he swears is better than another, and he wonders why, when he is attempting to obtain that parade-ground gleam that will reflect the face of the inspecting officer, one boot seems to polish better than its partner. Here the real remedy probably lies in the application of more elbow grease.

But he will admit that he is well shod and point proudly to his strong black “Bostocks”—“half-soled three times”—which, next to his rifle, he acknowledges as his best friends. True, he likes to relax in civilian shoes on leave, but when he’s on the job his “Boots, soldiers, for the use of” are definitely hard to beat.

This general satisfaction with the quality of Army boots is explained by both the improved methods of manufacture and the more detailed examination of footwear carried out by Services inspectors before the boots are accepted. There are more boot-examiners in this war than the last, and they are more exacting. And, though the specifications have altered but little since the last war days of the “Bill Massey,” the modern boot is truer to size and more solidly and comfortably constructed. Thus any soldier with normal feet can achieve his heart’s desire—a pair of boots that fit him.

And there is quantity too. New Zealand factories have made, and are still making, hundreds of thousands of pairs of boots from New Zealand leather with New Zealand labour. Of all the articles of Army clothing the boot is unique in that it is almost wholly a New Zealand product. The lining, a fundamental part of your battle-dress, must be imported, but your boots, with the exception of the eyelets and the nails,