

119. If the camp orderly states that the letters were delivered regularly you are not in a position to contradict that?—Not in a position.

120. If the orderly states that your brother was provided with a bed, you are not prepared to contradict that?—I admit that my brother was provided with a bed on Sunday, the 27th.

121. He was provided with a bed on Sunday?—Yes.

122. On the Sunday following his admission he was provided with a bed, and expected to get out on sick-leave on the Monday?—Yes.

123. And he had a relapse on the Monday?—Yes.

WALTER REYNOLDS sworn and examined. (No. 23.)

1. *Mr. Skerrett.*] You are a bootmaker, residing at 76 Constable Street, Newtown?—Yes.

2. You have volunteered to give some evidence with respect to the quality and character of the boots supplied by the Defence Department to the soldiers?—Yes, sir.

3. How do you come to know about these boots?—I know them by repairing them, and I have seen them being made; but it is not so much of the making that I wish to speak of as of the leather they are made of.

4. Now, just give us your criticism of the material in these boots?—When these boots were first made for the first Expeditionary Force the lining under the front was made from a leather called split russet, but since then they have altered them and put in cowhide. Now, the front of the boot in wet weather, or in mud or grass, has to resist just as much as the sole of the boot, because when going through a paddock, say, it is the front which catches all the damp. This cowhide is simply a tanned chrome. I have a sample here [produced]. These are samples of the chrome that is outside and also of the lining. These leathers are very porous. They were adopted by the Defence Department on account of their softness. When it gets wet and dried again it becomes hard and harsh unless you oil it. I submit a very old leather should be used—that is, a waxed kip. The grain of this leather is on the outside; the grain of the other is on the inside and cannot be worn off. That leather would stand in water from twelve to twenty-four hours without letting the water through. The farm hands in the country would not have the leather which is being used in these boots at any price.

5. They would not have the chrome?—No. My contention is that by having the boot made from this leather, and the damp getting into their feet, it is apt to give the men colds, because this leather is very cold leather at any time. And according to what I hear from the men in camp they have been getting their feet damp and, having only two pairs of socks, they have got into their blankets with their wet socks on, with the result that a great many have got influenza. Now, I have a great friend out there, who takes great precautions. He has always led an indoor life. When he finished his day's work at the camp he always took great care to put on dry socks, and that man is improved by the camp life. He is a far better man than when he started. I think if the leather I recommend were used in the soldier's boots it would keep him dry and warm.

6. *The Chairman.*] Apparently, from the experience of your friend, even with the boot that has been supplied, if proper precautions are taken by the men they are not likely to suffer?—No; he is just as likely to suffer by contracting a cold by having wet feet, without getting into blankets with wet socks on.

7. But certain precautions to be taken by the men against getting their feet damp, or allowing them to remain damp, are always desirable?—Certainly.

8. One precaution would be a glass of hot whisky?—But you could not allow such a thing, because that is greatly against the regulations.

9. The precautions vary considerably, of course, and the men should know that if they are not careful in such matters bad consequences would follow; but you think that if they had this waxed kip in their boots their feet would not be so likely to get wet as they do at present?—That is so. There is no doubt about it, because one is a waterproof leather and the other is not. I should also like to say, in regard to the fitting of these boots, that it is a general rule to have in stock three different fittings.

10. That is, for each size?—Yes, a 3, a 4, a 5, and a 6. Now, these boots are all being made in the broad fitting.

11. Each size has not got the three variations?—No. I saw men in the first Expeditionary Force who had as many as three pairs of socks on to fill the boots out. Whilst they were going over the Constable Street hill during their sojourn at Miramar I tried to do something for them, because they were in such trouble with their boots. Their feet would perhaps be for a medium fit, but they would have this broad boot, and there was too much play in it. I think that the man who is giving out the boots should be an experienced man, and should put a tape round the man's foot: he would then be able to give that man a boot that would fit him, instead of giving him a boot that will fit him like a sack. You cannot expect a man to march well in a boot that does not fit him.

12. I always understood that the boots were specially attended to, knowing how necessary it was for the men's feet to be in good order?—That is so. Again, I think this boot could be made lighter. It has a very thick sole, and I think that is wrong. Say they have to march twenty miles—that boot will get very heavy at the end of that journey. In repairing these boots I found that belly leather is being used in them. It should be shoulder leather, because there is more substance in it.

13. If a boot is made with belly leather in the sole you say it is not a good boot?—No, that is not a good boot. It is generally recognized as good practice to use shoulder.