

518. You only returned in the "Tagus" and the "Britannic"?—Those were the only two ships I returned in.

519. Was the discipline very different in returning from South Africa to what it was going there?—The men were kept pretty hard at work with their horses going out.

520. Do you think it made them content and happy?—They always seemed to be happy and contented.

521. Do you think it would have been a good thing if the men were paraded coming back?—There is no room to parade on troopships coming here.

522. Then, they could only be inspected and dismissed?—That is all.

523. Was the "Britannic" a very wet boat?—Yes.

524. How often did the sea come on board?—I could not say there was a sea came on board, but there was spray. She was low in the water.

525. Did you remain below or go on deck?—I went on deck.

526. How often did you get spray over you?—I was too cunning an old sailor to let that happen.

527. Was it a common thing for the men to get wet?—They would get a little wet, but there was only one day, when some men were going to the cook-house for their food, that they got a proper ducking. They went below and changed their clothes.

528. Where was the wind generally?—On the beam.

529. With a beam sea?—Yes; we had a beam sea nearly all the way across.

530. What was your occupation before you went into the contingent?—I was a shearer between here and New South Wales.

531. How did the food on board the "Britannic" compare with the food given to shearers?—They do not get so well fed here as they did in New South Wales. The food on the boat was about the same as the shearers in New Zealand got when I was shearing here. When I was on a station here shearing I was nearly starved.

532. Then, you think the food on the "Britannic" was as good as shearers in New Zealand got?—Yes.

533. *Colonel Davies.*] You know the deck the non-commissioned officers had on the upper deck?—Yes.

534. You remember the portion of the promenade deck which was set aside for them: it was never too crowded?—No.

535. There was always plenty of room for the non-commissioned officers?—Yes.

536. They could play quoits?—Yes.

537. Could you sit about under the lee of the house?—Yes, when the weather permitted.

538. They could go from one side to the other?—Yes; I used to go myself.

539. One non-commissioned officer has stated he had to stand on the main deck—I think he said in the wet—all day because he could not get a place to sit down: is that correct?—I never noticed it. There was room enough for twice as many non-commissioned officers as there were on board.

Trooper WILLIAM McLOUGHLIN examined on oath.* (No. 26.)

540. *The Chairman.*] What contingent did you belong to?—The Ninth.

541. What troop?—In the second battalion.

542. What squadron?—E.

543. Did you return in the "Britannic"?—Yes.

544. What was your occupation before you joined the contingent?—Working in a stable.

545. You have volunteered to come up and give evidence: what would you like to say as to the condition of the food, or as to the ventilation, or the water, or anything with regard to the discipline on board; we shall be glad to hear you?—Well, sir, the discipline was good; the food was not good, and it was not half-cooked. The tea and coffee the men could not drink; it was not fit, and there was not enough sugar in it. We had not half enough room down below; we had only about nine or ten hooks to hang our hammocks from, and there were fourteen men at the table.

546. What about the meat?—It was not nearly half-cooked, and it was very bad; most of it was thrown out of the porthole. The bully beef was all good. We used to have to go up on deck till 10 o'clock in the morning to allow the mess orderlies to clean up. Some mornings when it was very cold we did not go. There was no room at the place where we went to wash. It was closed half an hour after you got there. If you were not there in the rush you could not get a wash. That was until the last few days; then there was plenty of water.

547. What about the drinking-water?—I could always have a drink. There was always a guard on, but he would allow you to get a cup of water when you wanted it.

548. Anything else?—One day we got fish which had been lying on the deck for two or three days. It was cooked for us, but it was not eaten; it was thrown overboard. The blankets and the hammocks were very dirty. We had no place to hang them out. We had to roll them up in the morning and they were packed down below.

549. Anything else to find fault with?—That is about all.

550. Do you think it was wise to take your blankets and place them down below, or what would you like to do with them?—Hang them out.

551. Where?—On the deck. It would have been better for them.

552. Do you know where 2,200 blankets could be hung?—No, sir, I do not suppose they could.

553. Do you think the officers were to blame because you could not hang the blankets out, or the officers of the ship?—I do not blame any one, but I should like to have hung them out.

* This evidence was sent to witness to revise, but was not returned.