

548. Not been before in South Africa?—No.

549. What rank do you hold?—Regimental quartermaster-sergeant.

550. Can you give us any evidence as to the blankets, the insufficient food, the water, accommodation of the men, and such matters on board the "Britannic"? Are you here to make any complaints?—No, sir. I was asked to come to this inquiry and state what I know about the food and the sanitary condition of the ship.

551. Had you to do with the issue of the blankets?—Yes.

552. Did they pass through your hands when issued at Durban?—Yes; I saw every blanket issued.

553. Were they in good or bad condition?—In good condition.

554. Did you look at them with a critical eye to see their condition?—I looked at every blanket there.

555. Did you believe them to be free from vermin?—Yes; they smelt quite fresh, and some of them were new.

556. Had there been vermin in them would you have discovered that?—Yes. They were white blankets, and as I had been in a troopship before I would look at them carefully.

557. You believe these blankets were free from vermin?—Yes, I do.

558. How did the hammocks seem?—They were clean.

559. Did they pass through your hands?—Yes.

560. And they had all the appearance of being fresh and clean?—Yes.

561. Did you take any particular notice of the ship when you went on board at Durban?—I went round the ship next morning. I only arrived on board late at night as I was returning stores at Durban.

562. Where did you issue the blankets?—Down in the store on the ship.

563. Had you any means of knowing how long the blankets had been used before?—No.

564. When you went round the ship next morning what appearance did she present?—The ship was clean enough, but you cannot expect everything after the first night at sea.

565. Was the ship herself clean, apart from other matters connecting with starting?—Yes.

566. Did you issue the sand and brooms, or was it the ship's work?—I had to draw them.

567. Was there any difficulty in getting sufficient sand and brooms?—There was no difficulty in getting them, but they seemed rather short of sand at the finish.

568. What do you mean by "at the finish"?—After we left Melbourne we could not get sand.

569. Had you to do with the issue of rations?—Yes.

570. Getting the meat out of the freezing-place?—That was done by the ship.

571. When did it first come under your observation?—In the butcher's shop every morning.

572. Was it weighed out?—Yes, before a butcher who was told off for the men.

573. One of your own men?—Yes.

574. What was the ration?—About $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. a day.

575. Used you to examine the meat?—Yes, every day.

576. What was the quality of the meat: was it well-grown meat or was it an inferior sample?—Some of the meat was tainted a little on the outside.

577. How often?—About twice or three times a week. Sometimes it would be a little green, but that would be taken away, and no meat passed without its being examined by the officers, and also by an experienced butcher whom we told off.

578. Was any meat put into consumption that, in your opinion, was unfit for human consumption?—No, sir; on no occasion that I saw.

579. Did the medical officer and the veterinary officer attend every day at the inspection of the meat?—Yes, every day.

580. They were attentive?—They went through every piece of meat. I was there on every occasion.

581. You think both the officer of the day and the sergeant saw that no meat was issued except what was good?—Yes.

582. You do not think they were lax in their duty on some occasions?—No, sir.

583. Do you consider there was an ample supply of meat?—I do.

584. Did you have any complaints made to you officially that the meat was insufficient in quantity or bad in quality?—Yes.

585. Did you report that?—Yes.

586. To whom?—To the officer of the day, and sometimes to the chief steward, and then they got corned beef.

587. Do you mean when the meat was unsatisfactory you could get other meat?—Yes.

588. Do you think there was any case in which men went without meat through it being bad?—If it was so it was their own fault.

589. Do you know any instance in which an appeal to a higher authority failed to get relief?—No.

590. Sure of that?—Yes.

591. How much bread did they get?—A pound a day.

592. Biscuits?—The biscuits were put in barrels on the deck in any quantity, and the men could help themselves.

593. Were they good?—Yes; and if there were any bad casks of biscuits you had only to report it to the storekeeper and get another.

594. What was the cause of their badness?—They were damp once; they seemed to be dry and none of them wet, nor was there any mildew, but they had no flavour.

595. Were they clean?—Yes, very clean.

596. You had no difficulty in replacing them when the defect was pointed out?—No.