

round and looking after the ship. I think it is due to me to say that the statements in the papers are made by very young men of from eighteen to twenty years of age, who know nothing about such matters.

860. In what regiment were you before?—The 5th Dragoon Guards.

861. What rank had you?—Troop corporal and sergeant.

862. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell us anything about the comparison between the treatment which these men received and that of the ordinary Imperial troops on board ship?—In an Imperial ship they do not get the same allowances. I think in this troopship they did not know how to go about it. When I was in an Imperial troopship we could hang two hammocks on three hooks. These men wanted four hooks for one hammock. When I was an Imperial soldier we got meat once a day; here they got it three times.

863. You imagine they got enough?—I could live on meat once a day, and have done it, and I think they could also.

864. Were these men more crowded than troopships generally?—I went to India in the "Serapis" with over eleven hundred men on board and one hundred and forty women and children.

865. Was she a bigger steamer than the "Britannic"?—She was not so big.

866. Then, generally, you think there was no cause for dissatisfaction?—No, if the men did as they were told. Of course, there was rough weather coming across, and the meat was not always what it should be; but with fresh meat you could not always get it of the best. They were calling out for bully beef when there was fresh meat, and I could not understand them.

Trooper GERARD BRANTAL COPE examined on oath. (No. 21.)

867. *Mr. Millar.*] To which contingent did you belong?—I went with the Tenth, and afterwards joined the Eighth.

868. What was your rank?—Trooper in F squadron.

869. Do you desire to give evidence in connection with complaints made by sundry troopers? Will you kindly state what fault you had to find? What did you see wrong on board the "Britannic"?—In the first place, I only had one singlet and one uniform, and I came home in the same clothes as I arrived in at Durban. The food on the boat was by no means good. I could not eat it myself. All I lived on was bread-and-jam for breakfast, potatoes for dinner, and bread for tea. As for the tea and coffee, they were very bad, and I only drank water. I think they must have boiled the tea and coffee in the same boiler as the soup was made in, because there was a little fat on top of the tea when we got it. They gave us fish once, and it tasted as if it had been lying in the sun for a day before. It was aft by the butcher's shop. I do not think the blankets could have been clean when they gave them to us. I could not swear to that, but I do not think they were clean.

870. Anything else?—As for a wash, you could hardly get a wash in the morning, because they turned the water off. I could not say the time, but if you went up after breakfast you could not get a wash. The water was turned off then.

871. Anything else?—I do not think there is anything else at present.

872. What was your occupation before you went out?—A clerk.

873. You say you only had one uniform and one singlet?—When we got to Newcastle Mr. Tapper instructed us to take only one change with us, and so I lost all my other clothes.

874. That was not the fault of the authorities?—No, but when I asked for a singlet I could not get one.

875. You had to wear the same one the whole way?—Yes, and it was very dirty and I did not get much rest.

876. What about the food?—One day the meat was very bad, and we took it up and got other meat instead. Then, one day we got stewed apples; I do not know what was in them, but it was some kind of lice.

877. Did you complain of the meat?—Yes.

878. Did you get other meat in place of it?—I cannot say whether we got it that time, but generally we got other salt meat instead of the stewed.

879. Then, the officers tried to get other meat for you?—Yes. For the first few days there were complaints going on, and then Mr. Heckler got us tinned meat, and whenever the meat was bad in the future we got tinned meat instead.

880. Then, that is not a complaint against the officers for not attending to complaints?—No. I do not think it was the officers' fault.

881. The ship gave you other food when the meat was bad?—Yes.

882. Then, the ship did what it could?—I think the meat was bad before it was put on the ship.

883. The grease on the tea and coffee, was that the fault of the cooks?—I could not say, but I think it was from not washing the boilers.

884. Do you think the galley was large enough to cook for all the troops?—No; I think it was too small.

885. That case of the tea we have heard about, because it was admitted that it was rectified?—Yes.

886. You never had bad fish on another occasion?—No; it was all right after that.

887. How many wash-basins did you have for the F squadron?—We had E, G, and H down there too, and there were only three or four basins for the North Island contingent. Then they put in another, and then we had seven, and we used to get the North Island men there. I suppose there would be six or seven basins in each place.

888. How many men were there in the four squadrons?—About five hundred, roughly speaking.