

273. But, systematically, there was no drunkenness on board?—None came under my notice.

274. Then, with the exception of one case, you say that the officers were sober?—Yes, except on this one occasion. I went down from my cabin to the saloon, and met an officer at the door of the saloon who was the worse for liquor. I took him for a private at first, and asked what he was doing there. I turned round and looked at him, and saw that he had no badge. I said, "Are you an officer?" He said, "Yes, sir." I then told him that he had better go to his cabin at once, and ordered the purser to close the bar.

275. With the exception of this case, was there any drunkenness among the officers?—None that came to my knowledge.

276. Were you satisfied that the officers carefully attended to the comfort of their men?—Perfectly satisfied.

277. And you have no fault to find with any of the officers?—No.

278. *Mr. McNab.*] I just wanted to ask you a few questions in regard to the illness—that is the only point. You stated, Colonel Davies, you did not think the illness could be prevented?—No.

279. You know that something like twelve cases have resulted in death?—Yes; some, perhaps, from illness contracted since they left the ship.

280. How many cases of death are you aware of that had their illness contracted while on board ship?—Only two who died on the ship, so far as I know.

281. Were all the deaths that resulted since the men left the ship through illness contracted after leaving the ship?—I cannot say, sir. It is beyond me. You could arrive at it by finding out whether the men who have died since were patients on the ship. I have no knowledge of it.

282. Do you think, from your knowledge of Volunteers and of transports, that a transport-vessel that can take 1,084 Imperial troops—do you think, from your knowledge of Volunteers, that it is advisable to have that number when they are all Volunteers who have not seen six months' active service? Do you think it is advisable to put that number on board, as a Volunteer officer?—Yes, I think it is.

283. Then, you think that Volunteers can stand the "packing" equally with Imperial troops—I do not see why not. I do not understand why you say "packing" because the Imperial representative corps was sent round on the "Britannic." I presume that is what you refer to.

284. I want to know, if the steamer had registered accommodation for 1,084 men, whether you think it is advisable, as a Volunteer officer, that 1,084 Volunteers should be put on board of her. I understand you to say Yes?—Yes; I do not see any necessity for treating them differently from a regular soldier.

285. Then, if these 1,084 Volunteers who had come down from the veldt, where they had been used to the open, and on active service for about three months—do you think they should be put into the troopship to the extent that was done?—I do not think it would have made any difference to the number of men that have died of pneumonia. If these men had come back in lots of 500 I do not think it would have made much difference. I do not think it has anything to do with the number of men on board.

286. You stated that one of the reasons why men took ill was that they had been on the veldt, and the change from the veldt to the steamer caused it?—I do not think the steamer was overcrowded. She was full, but not overcrowded.

287. And from your knowledge of transport, knowing that that might be anticipated, do you consider that that number of men should have been put on board the steamer, although the men had come from the open veldt?—I do not think it affected them. For instance, I can give you an example. I came back on the "Tagus" and on this boat. On both occasions I had a very fine cabin on deck, and yet on both occasions I was laid up. Officers are just as liable to get a cold as the men. I think it is the change of climate, not the ship.

288. If it is the change, and not the ship, and the change of conditions, how is it that so large a proportion of men who went on board the steamer when she left South Africa have since died than those who returned to the colony in small numbers?—I think you will find that a larger proportion died since the "Tagus" came back, although the "Tagus" had fewer troops on board.

289. You say you do not know whether these men who have since died were ill when they landed?—No.

290. Were any of your men sent to Somes Island?—I do not know how many. That has been done by the Health Department since they landed.

291. So that the deaths on board the troopship that took place at Somes Island would be of men who, when the steamer landed here, were in hospital?—Not necessarily. I think men have been sent from Wellington streets to Somes Island; I am not sure. Men who came by the "Britannic" have been taken ill since they landed and been sent to Somes Island.

292. Of the other steamers that have brought troops from South Africa, do you know if the number who died after the steamer landed here—whether they were sick in the hospital here? Are they greater in the "Britannic" than in the other troopships since the war began?—I do not think they are greater, or as great, as the number from the "Tagus."

293. Outside of the "Tagus"?—I do not know in the least.

294. You cannot express an opinion whether the proportion of the "Britannic" troops who died after they landed is greater than the proportion of the troops outside the "Tagus"—of returned troops since the war commenced?—No.

295. One complaint was made in regard to funerals. It is not usual on a troopship to parade the whole of the troops?—No, certainly not. It is not considered advisable on account of the gloom that it casts over the ship.

296. It is only for a small portion?—Only the man's squadron, and that was done in each case. I should like to say, in connection with funerals, that when the first man was buried the