

501. There were two wards?—Yes, sir.

502. Until the measles broke out all the serious cases went in one ward?—Yes, sir.

503. Did I tell you before the anchor was put down that the Health Officers told me that they would take complete charge of the sick directly we came alongside the wharf and see to their transhipment?—Yes, sir.

504. You were sick in the hospital yourself the last two nights?—Yes, sir.

Pay-Sergeant OLIVER sworn and examined. (No. 34.)

505. *The Chairman.*] Will you tell us your name?—William Arnot Hill Oliver.

506. What contingent were you in?—The Eighth.

507. What squadron?—I was attached to No. 2 regiment on the staff.

508. Were you on board the “Britannic”?—Yes, sir.

509. Are you here to volunteer your evidence, or have you been subpoenaed?—I was subpoenaed yesterday.

510. What can you speak about?—I would not care to make a statement. I would sooner that you questioned me.

511. Did you come here with a complaint or not?—Well, I do not think I have complaints altogether. The chief object of my coming here on this occasion was that men had been complaining, and I thought that they might be rather strong in their complaints, and I think I have something to say as well as they have.

512. If you have come here to make a complaint we should like you to do so, so that we will know what to ask you about. In regard to the food, what about that?—Well, the chief complaint was about the meat.

513. You might speak from your own knowledge, not from hearsay?—The complaints in regard to the cooking of it: well, I must say that on several occasions it was not properly cooked, but when that was the case bully-beef was served out immediately after. I think it was the Gear Company's of New Zealand. And there was any quantity of that; and, then, again, when the meat was not good, which was very seldom, there was any quantity of good bread-and-butter, and when there was not cheese there was always jam, and I think any ordinary man ought to have been able to make a good meal from it.

514. Then, speaking generally, do you think the meat supplied to the men was wholesome?—Yes, I do. Of course, there were a few exceptions when the meat was badly undercooked, and then there was another case about some fish being unwholesome, but I cannot speak about that myself, just from hearsay. I did not touch it myself, as I am not partial to fish.

515. Generally, your report as to the food is that it was not perfect, but was on the whole wholesome?—That is so, sir.

516. What about the supply of water?—The reveille was sounded every morning. I do not suppose the non-commissioned officers in the boat were so very particular about rousing the men immediately up to time. If they were late they lost their chance of washing; if they were up promptly they got their wash.

517. If you turned out shortly after reveille was there time for every man to get a wash?—Yes, there was.

518. And water for them to wash in?—You might have to put up with second water towards the last, but if you went up early you got fresh water.

519. The mornings you went up early how many men were waiting to get a wash—was there basin accommodation for everybody?—You might have to wait until one man washed. If you were pushing you could get in smartly, but you might wait five minutes.

520. But if he was early he could get a wash in five minutes?—Oh, yes. But the fact is that as the journey got on they seemed rather reluctant to wash—many of them.

521. Was a man given an opportunity of getting a bath?—No, we had not an opportunity of getting a bath after the first two or three days. The weather then was agreeable, but afterwards it got cold and wet, and I do not think any one would have cared to take that bath.

522. Could they have got the hose put on them?—Oh, yes; if a man wanted a bath he could have got it when the decks were being hosed.

523. And the drinking-water, how was that?—Oh, of course, there was no waste about that; but you could always get a drink.

524. Do you know anything about the latrines?—Yes. I went over in the “Cornwall,” and the latrines on the “Britannic” were a long way better than those on the “Cornwall.” In fact, no one could say anything about the latrines.

525. Were they kept clean or were they allowed to get dirty?—They were kept very clean, and washed out every morning. In fact, I never saw the latrines that any man need be at all frightened to go there.

526. Were your quarters forward or aft?—Forward.

527. And you do not know anything about the latrines aft?—There were orders out that each regiment was to use its own.

528. You can only speak of the latrines forward?—Yes.

529. Were they often awash with filth on the deck?—On account of the men throwing paper into the trough the receptacle for letting the water away would get blocked. I have often taken the paper out with a piece of wire to free it. When they were blocked the basins would fill. It was only a little water, and perhaps a little urine.

530. Were they constantly dirty of evenings?—No; it just depended if the sieve had been cleaned.

531. Was a man able to go in comfort of an evening, or was it generally filthy?—It was never filthy; there might be a little water on the floor.