

617. You think, as a whole, the men on the vessel were "soft" for soldiers—I mean that they did not have the hard work that the other contingents had, and therefore they were rather soft?—I think that is just it. If they had had more work they would not have grumbled.

618. Do you think that any work could have been given them on board?—Give them plenty of work on the veldt, sleeping out of a night-time wet and dry, and give them some real hardships, and they would have been only too pleased to have come back home in a transport.

619. Have you been out on the veldt before?—Yes, sir; fourteen or fifteen months, all told.

620. Did you find that the fourteen months on the veldt made you better for the return home?—I was rather disappointed when peace was proclaimed. I was perfectly satisfied on the boat. But we were all disappointed about peace. The Tommies, they cheered, but the colonials did not. They were very disappointed that it came along so soon.

621. Would you consider that, being so recently landed in South Africa, and having had so little trekking, and being in the main disappointed at the sudden completion of the war, these would all be elements that would tend to make the men more fastidious on the steamer?—Yes; they grumbled more. There was no trouble with returned men. But if at any time there was any complaint in regard to the food they could always get it changed. I have seen joints of meat underdone; some men like it underdone, and others may not. They could take it back to the cook and get another joint. I went over to my squadron and asked if there were any complaints over the meat, and I saw it was underdone. I said, "If that is too underdone take it back to the cook, and he will give you a fresh joint."

622. Now, in regard to the sleeping-accommodation, was there enough room to hang all the hammocks?—I slept down among the men. I counted thirty or forty hooks that were unoccupied, for the men said they would rather sleep on the floor.

623. Which hold was that in?—That was in the D and C.

624. Was it down on the bottom deck that the men were on: was it below the hospital?—Yes, sir.

625. And you counted as many as thirty hooks not occupied?—Yes, sir; thirty or forty.

626. Did any of the men prefer to lie on the tables and floor?—This was the reason of that, sir; I noticed it coming over before. Some of the men could not sleep in the hammocks; they could not get a good night's rest, so they would sleep on the floor. That is the reason why they slept there.

627. Would you think that if the men had been able to sleep in hammocks very many more would have had room?—They could have slept up in the hammocks, because there was plenty of room. Instead of hanging their hammocks straight along, many used to sling them crossways on the different hooks.

628. You say that sometimes, in place of hanging them to the proper hooks, they hung them across?—Yes. They missed one hook to give more room for swinging.

629. If several men were to do that, and not take advantage of the proper hooks, there might be men on board who could not find a place to hang their hammock, because the room was being used so awkwardly?—They would never complain about that. If you asked them, "Where are you going to pitch your hammock?" they would say, "We are going to sleep on the floor."

630. Then, speaking for your deck, did you ever hear of any complaints that the men could not get their hammocks?—Every man had his hammock placed in the sea-kit rack over the tables in C and D hold.

631. There were no complaints on your deck?—Not at all.

632. Can you tell us from your own knowledge whether there were fewer men in your deck than in the other decks?—No; that I could not say.

633. How many men would there be at each table?—I arranged to have eleven or twelve men at each table. They wanted to put fourteen men at one table, as they were mates, but I said I would not allow it. I had eleven, twelve, and thirteen, unless some went to the hospital.

634. Then, there was no necessity to put anything like sixteen at one table where you were?—No, sir; I would not allow it. There were the first few days, until we got settled down, and then I had them all altered.

635. Was it possible to do that in all cases? Might there not be some decks where they had to put sixteen to a table?—I hardly think so, sir. I do not think they had to crowd the men like that.

636. You think that if they had sixteen men at one table there must have been some tables that had less than that number?—Yes, certainly.

637. *Mr. Millar.*] Did you ever receive any complaints from your men in connection with their food?—Yes, sir, on one or two occasions I did.

638. Were they attended to?—Yes, sir. The orderly officer was present at the time.

639. What was the nature of the complaints?—That the meat was underdone.

640. And on that occasion when you received the complaint it was rectified by the issue of other meat?—Lieutenant Parker happened to be on duty that day, and he said, "Take that piece of meat up to the cook, and get a fresh joint." Some of them were too lazy to take it up, and said they had finished dinner.

641. On no occasion that you are aware of was any complaint made which was not attempted to be remedied?—No, sir, none whatever. If they could not get fresh meat they would get bully-beef and biscuits. There was also a barrel of biscuits standing in the hold.

642. Did you ever see to the issue of rations?—I never had to see to that, sir. That was Quartermaster-Sergeant Fraser's work.

643. How were the troop-decks kept so far as cleanliness is concerned: were they well attended to?—Yes, sir. I told off a sergeant to see that the decks were thoroughly scrubbed, and squeegeed, and dried up with a mop, and then they were sanded.