

freezing-point to 55° or 60°. I tested it with the thermometer. This shows that the men lying on the ground and about the floors of the hutments, through which the draught was pouring, were practically in a semi-freezing atmosphere.

30. *Mr. Ferguson.*] Do I understand you to say that, whilst it was freezing at the site of the camp, when you got through the gorge the temperature rose to 55°?—Yes, from 52° to 56°; and it rose higher still when I got to Wellington.

31. This was at what time in the morning?—Between 2 and 3 in the morning. It was about 56° in Wellington.

32. You observed that on a thermometer?—Yes. Now, if the authorities wished to avoid the mud and the cutting-up of the camp by the cartage of heavy material from the railway-station they should have put a railway-siding in to the camp. They could have done that at a small cost, and thus delivered their heavy goods and their commissariat and the men practically on the spot.

33. Can you give us the date upon which you made these observations?—I have not got them here, but I can get them and give them to you. I can also bring witnesses to prove what I say. Now, what I want particularly to give you are my personal observations and what directed my attention immediately to the gross muddle that was going on at Trentham. As far back as October and November I had returning troopers calling to see me at my residence in Christchurch, and they were then suffering from septic throats.

34. Troopers from Trentham?—Yes, from the camp up here. I may tell you of one case that was not under my personal charge, but was a serious one. It is the case of Frank Rutherford, the son of Andrew Rutherford, of Hurunui. He developed a septic throat and subsequent pneumonia and rheumatic fever. When I came to Wellington my attention was deliberately called to the serious condition of affairs by a trooper whom I met in a barber's shop.

35. When?—On the 24th June, when I came up to Parliament.

36. *The Chairman.*] What was his name?—I have not his authority for giving his name, and I would not like anything in the nature of victimization to take place.

37. We have nothing to say with regard to that; but I should not suppose for a moment that anything of the kind could take place?—Well, I am using this man's name without his authority.

38. You can hand in his name, and it will be treated as confidential unless we decide to call him?—Yes; then I will give you his name, but I know that victimization does occur.

39. You need not discuss that phase here at all?—But it is very important.

40. It is not important to us, and I can have no suggestion that we have any control in regard to victimization; we want the facts. We have announced that any person desiring to give evidence here shall have the same immunities as witnesses have in the Supreme Court. The men can come here with the grossest libels and yet be protected?—Well, this is a letter written by the boy to his mother [produced and put in]. His mother's name is on the envelope.

41. Now, in regard to this man, C.T., you saw him on the 28th?—Yes. He was in the barber's shop and looked very ill. I asked him what was the matter with him, and he said he was supposed to have been suffering from pleurisy. I took his temperature, and it was 101. He said he had had a sore throat. I looked at his throat, and then I gave him a prescription and told him to go somewhere and get into a warm bed.

42. Have you anything further to say about this Blenheim boy?—No; I wanted you to see that that boy was walking about the street with a temperature of 101.

43. Was he on leave?—Yes; he was in the barber's shop in his uniform.

44. Had he been in the hospital?—Yes, in the Trentham Hospital, and had been discharged as convalescent.

[Mr. Skerrett put in full statement regarding case for perusal of Commissioners.]

45. *The Chairman* (after perusing statement).] He only had four days' leave at that time?—I do not know.

46. We are going to get his evidence presented to us?—Yes. I may say that I had not, of course, recognized the seriousness of the whole conditions. I was continually meeting these men, some of whom I knew. It was just by accident that I took his name.

47. Now, in regard to McNeil?—I can thoroughly vouch for him. He was a stalwart and fine man. His private position I knew personally, and he was a man that would not make comments such as he has made there unless they were absolutely true. That letter was brought to me by his father. It was written to his mother. I hand you that letter because it is typical of some twenty or thirty I have had. This one will show you the real condition of things. I think that Dr. Martin will see that that boy in his lay way describes his condition beautifully. [Letter put in.] Now, sir, I want to tell you my personal experience of Monday, the 28th June. I went to Trentham and passed quite readily on to the racecourse through the gate into the ground. It was quite an easy access. I tell you that because on the next occasion when I went I was held up in all directions. I was accompanied by Mr. L. M. Ready, and we passed into the grounds of the tea-kiosk. On going in we met four stretcher-bearers, and I asked them what they had been doing. One of these stretcher-bearers looked terribly ill. He said they had been carrying a man in out of one of the tents. I said, "What was the matter with him?" He said, "We do not know, but he is unconscious." I said, "What did you do with him?" He said they had taken him into the tea-kiosk and put him on a stretcher. Then I asked the stretcher-bearer who looked ill what had been the matter with him, and he said he had a sore throat. He said, "I ought to be in bed myself." I said, "I think so"; and on looking at his throat you could see it had recently been very badly ulcerated, and his tonsils. Not only that, but he had swollen lymphatic glands on the outside. We then passed on in.

48. Do you know his name?—No, I do not know the name of the stretcher-bearer.