

produced the heavy death-roll. None of the officers on board the "Britannic" are responsible for the details of the Tenth Contingent being sent from a camp where measles had been prevalent. The Transport Department in South Africa ordinarily supplies a complete change of clothing to men upon embarkation. This was applied for, but declined owing to the former issue being so recent.

Your Commissioners are of opinion that systematic instruction in the hanging of the hammocks would, by economizing the room, have avoided the necessity of men sleeping on the decks, that periodical physical inspection would have insured greater personal cleanliness, and that the carrying-out of both of these requirements would have kept the men in a condition better able to resist the after effects of measles.

Statistics supplied by Dr. Purdy show that the percentage of deaths from pneumonia in various countries under diverse circumstances point to the conclusion that there was not an unusual mortality of the cases treated. According to the United States Government report for 1901, the mortality ranges from 20 to 40 per cent. under hospital treatment. In the Middlesex Hospital there was an average mortality of 17 per cent. during a period of ten years, and in a remarkable epidemic at Middlesborough, in Yorkshire, the death-rate rose to 40 per cent. Pneumonia, it was stated, was one of the few diseases of which the death-rate had not diminished, notwithstanding the advance of medical science.

It is impossible to state the percentage of deaths which resulted from pneumonia contracted on board the "Britannic" or immediately after the disembarkation, as the men speedily scattered all over New Zealand, and their subsequent medical history is unobtainable. The fatal cases only are known. All medical records were left on board the transport.

Mr. W. T. Brown, formerly of Happy Valley, Wellington, appeared before your Commissioners and asked to be permitted to make a statement as to the complaints of his son, Trooper Brown, who died at Somes Island; but, as the statement was a narration of general conversations between father and son before the latter believed himself to be dying, the statement could not be accepted as evidence. But your Commissioners made inquiry into the circumstances of the young man's illness, and have nothing to report, unless that the medical officer in charge on Somes Island appears to have been most attentive.

DISCIPLINE.

Most of the evidence your Commissioners could obtain as to the maintenance of discipline on board had to be derived from officers and men whose own conduct was concerned; but the sworn testimony of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, whether dissatisfied or not with the food, accommodation, water-supply, latrines, or hospital, was that the discipline was good and the attention of the officers to their duties and the complaints of the men were not perfunctory, but zealous. The testimony of Lieutenant Wynyard Joss, of the Fifth Queensland Bushmen, was that he had not previously seen discipline as good; the Assistant Chief Health Officer, Dr. Valintine, pronounced it "excellent"; and the Port Health Officer, Dr. Pollen, declared, "I have inspected all the troopships that have come back. There was no barracking, the men were well behaved, they filed up, and they obeyed their officers promptly; it was striking to my mind between the discipline on board the ship and that on board the others." Notwithstanding all of which your Commissioners feel that that strict attention to details which no doubt is irritating to troops only partially trained, but which constitutes and insures real discipline, was not so perseveringly attended to as His Majesty's regulations enjoin. The troopers were not paraded for exercise on deck so much as they should have been, nor for personal inspection, as provided in His Majesty's regulations, and the first delivery of hammocks, their hanging, their daily stowing, and periodical inspection were not so efficiently attended to as they might have been.

In justice to the officers commanding regiments, your Commissioners desire to report to Your Excellency that the above and all other duties were as well, if not better, carried out on board the "Britannic" than on any other transport or troopship which has returned with New Zealand contingents. The congregation of large bodies of men, however, in very narrow limits demands most exact attention to regulations if the maximum of comfort obtainable is to be secured. That is doubly so when the troops are only partially trained, and discipline is relaxed by the cessation of the tension caused by service in an enemy's country, the virtual termination of their service, and the absence of that *esprit de corps* which comes from long association coupled with traditions of an inherited glory.

Taking all the circumstances into consideration, your Commissioners are of opinion the discipline was fully equal to the standard approved of by civilian public opinion in the colony; but it is essential to the well-being of New Zealand troops and their proper efficiency that a higher standard of discipline should be insisted on.

It is not, but it should be, ridiculous for an official to commend the discipline because the men "obeyed their officers promptly," and "there was no barracking." Attention to discipline and its daily and unceasing enforcement may seem difficult to the officers and irksome to the men, but the cleanliness, regularity, and obedience of all must be insisted on to insure the comfort and convenience of the whole.

"ORIENT."

Having reported to Your Excellency at some considerable length on the supply of food and accommodation, and the various questions arising in connection with the comfort and discipline on board the "Britannic," your Commissioners feel that, as there were complaints from only four of the non-commissioned officers and troopers of the "Orient" with regard to food and accommodation, it is unnecessary to report to Your Excellency more than that the food, accommodation, and conveniences evidently were of much the same character as those on board the "Britannic"; and as so few men responded to the advertisement inviting any who were dissatisfied to forward their names to the Commissioners, there cannot have been any serious cause for complaint.