



Drayton Grange Enquiry.

MELBOURNE, Aug. 27.

The Drayton Grange Royal Commission commenced taking evidence in Melbourne yesterday, but the evidence adduced disclosed nothing noteworthy.

To-day further evidence was taken, corroborating that given by previous witnesses as to the overcrowding and general insanitary state of the ship.

Dr. Robertson, the second assistant Government medical inspector, said he found the iron deck very dirty, while a few minutes' stay on the troop deck gave him a splitting headache. The drains were in a foul state. The space was not sufficient. All the troops unwell should have been landed at Albany, and the vessel should have been thoroughly cleansed. Those too sick to be moved could have been put in deck houses. The fact that some of the men on sick parade had to wait for two hours showed faulty organisation. He ascribed the sickness to infection through overcrowding and the insanitary condition of the vessel.

A number of troopers gave evidence agreeing as to the foulness of the air, and the want of accommodation on the ship. It was stated that unprotected meat was placed on the dirty decks, and that latrine water dropped onto the tables. One witness said he refused the bedding provided because it was full of vermin, and also alleged Private McGregor's death was accelerated by his having to stand on a wet deck on sick parade.

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Correspondence was read from Dr. Lovegrove, the principal medical officer in West Australia, Dr. Everard, the medical officer at Albany, and Lieutenant Hurst, in charge of the Albany forts, in which it was denied that any opposition was offered to landing of troops, sick or otherwise. It was pointed out by Dr. Everard that the weather was such as to make it dangerous to remove sick men from the ship. If they had been taken to the quarantine station a medical man and sick nurses would have had to be despatched from Perth.

The Commission sits again to-morrow.

MELBOURNE, Aug. 28.

The Drayton Grange Commission today examined Lieut.-Colonel Embling, the principal medical officer of the Victorian Military Forces. This witness said he visited the ship twice, and formed the opinion that the sleeping quarters were unclean and overcrowded. The hospitals, owing to the number of sick, were in the same condition. The blankets were filthy. The men did not, generally speaking, seem to be well in hand. Under normal conditions the medical staff on board would have suffered. In reply to Mr. Thomson, the witness said if the sick had been landed at Albany more lives would have been saved, and if 500 men had been left behind danger through overcrowding would not have been present.

Trooper Hawdon, of the sixth battalion, with experience of six troopships, said the Drayton Grange was the worst for accommodation he knew of. There were ten stowaways at his table alone. Witness confirmed the previous evidence as to the filthy blankets and inadequate latrine accommodation. Sometimes on sick parade he had to wait about four hours standing in water. Witness paid a high tribute to Dr. Shields, who was up day and night looking after the sick. The men bought whisky at 10s. a bottle to keep colds away. Sour and thick beer was served out at first free, and afterwards on payment. The overcrowding spoilt discipline. No fault was to be found with the officers.

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Lance-corporal Graham, Second
Scottish Horse, said that his comrades
kept their quarters as clean as the
others. They kept the portholes closed
all night and day because latrine water
blew in on them.

Captain Jermyn, who was chief
medical officer on the troopship Nor
folk, stated that the Drayton Grange,
which he had inspected, compared un-
favorably with the other troopships.
The patients would have suffered no
harm in being removed from the ship.
He thought that they ought to have
been landed at Albany.

The inquiry was adjourned till to-
morrow.