

A Casual Reply.

WE have to thank the Hon. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the Princess of Wales' Committee, for his frank, if somewhat jaunty replies to our questions in reference to the chequered career of the *Princess of Wales* hospital ship; and whilst we cordially sympathise with Her Royal Highness and the Committee in their disappointment at the latest accident sustained by the ship, we are still of opinion that Lord Wantage, the Chairman of the Central Red Cross Committee, was not justified in pooh-poohing, in the press, the very natural anxiety felt by the public concerning the management of the ship; nor can we agree with him "that their money has been well spent," considering the enormous sum expended and the very infinitesimal amount of practical work accomplished. The engineering department has now been proved to be sadly at fault, and fourteen weeks up-keep and wages spent, in bringing home a few mostly convalescent soldiers, who would have cost the nation a tithe of the sum if brought home, in the greatest comfort, on board a first-class steamship.

The fact that the *Princess of Wales*, after sailing on Wednesday in last week for South Africa, for the second time arrived back in the river, owing, it is understood, to an accident to her boiler, is quite sufficient proof that there is a screw loose somewhere; and now that she has been despatched to the Tyne for repairs and an enquiry is pending by the Board of Trade, it is needless to carry the controversy further.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

1. On what date did the *Princess of Wales* hospital ship leave Tilbury Dock—was it, or was it not, the 23rd of November?
 1. Yes.
 2. Was her machinery found to be defective before she got down the river, and was she, or was she not, buoyed off Gravesend for repairs?
 2. No. There has never been anything wrong with the machinery. The crown of the boiler was let down by carelessness of one of the engineers.
 3. Did she make a second false start, and was she, or was she not, again taken in harbour for repairs at Sheerness?
 3. There was some leakage, it was thought, from a boiler, so Major Morgan determined to stop and have this overhauled. *Nothing whatever was found wrong.*
 4. Did she, or did she not, arrive at Cape Town on the 8th January, 1900, thus taking *forty-seven days* (six weeks) to make a voyage which can be accomplished in a fortnight?

4. She is only an eleven knot boat, and was never meant to get out earlier. She arrived two days before her time.
5. How long did she remain useless at the Cape, and were further repairs found necessary, or not?
5. The electric light wiring had been badly done, and required entirely overhauling. The only other repairs were quite trivial, and such as would always be needed after a voyage.
6. Was a letter dated "*Princess of Wales*, Cape Town, 21st January," sent to the *Isle of Man Examiner*, containing the following statement:—"We have been aboard now since November 21st, and in Cape Town for a fortnight, but owing to a number of repairs, which, we understand, will occupy another ten or twelve days, we have been unable to do any hospital work yet. This one trip will probably cost between £15,000 and £20,000. It is a big sum for bringing home 180 odd patients." And has this statement been proved true, or untrue?
6. I daresay—a lot of silly letters are written.
7. Did the *Princess of Wales* arrive at Southampton on Sunday, 25th of February, with her first contingent of wounded, thus taking *ninety-six* days, or close on fourteen weeks, to accomplish the voyage to and from the Cape, or not?
7. She was timed to arrive back on the 26th February. She arrived on the 24th February.
8. Does Lord Wantage consider "that those who have generously contributed to the Red Cross Society, and who are, doubtless, anxious to be assured that their money has been, and is continuing to be, well spent," are justified in feeling any degree of satisfaction in paying for the salaries and for the maintenance of the enormous staff of this hospital ship for *fourteen* weeks, when the work could have been accomplished by an up-to-date steamship in *five* weeks?
8. The vessel was quite well known to be an eleven knot vessel, and the price calculated accordingly.

Mr. Sydney Holland further adds:—

"There is no mystery and nothing to conceal about this ship, though some people never seem contented unless they are seeking out some "scandal." The ship started again on Wednesday. But again, by gross negligence of one of the engineers, the crown of the boiler has sunk. This means, as far as I understand, that a furnace under the boiler, was lighted, and not a sufficient quantity of water kept in it or in some part of it. This is terribly unfortunate, and a cruel dis-

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