

to show that, instead of credence being attached to the evidence given by civilians, more credence was attached to evidence given by the officers of the very branch of the service which was practically on its trial. One witness before the Hospitals Commission was a colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps, whose name he would not mention. This officer said the Government could not possibly have done better. He was in command of a hospital at Bloemfontein where there were 1,700 patients, and had to be sent down in disgrace for drunkenness. There was the case of the men at Bloemfontein Station. He had been an eye-witness of the events which the hon. member for Westminster had recorded. In the report of the Commission not only was his story discredited, but the story of the very man who was responsible for the mistake occurring was taken for gospel.

The Commissioners in their report stated that the detention of the invalids at the railway station had not occurred often. But one of the witnesses, Captain Lawrence, a railway staff officer, asked whether there were many occasions on which men were kept waiting, replied that he was sorry to say it was of constant occurrence. When he suggested to the P.M.O. at Bloemfontein that an orderly should be stationed at the railway to receive the cases, the latter gave it his consideration; but he ought to have considered the matter months before. If the Surgeon-General had seen that men were placed at the railway station these horrible catastrophes would not have occurred. He was asked by the Commission whether he could suggest anyone as a witness who would support his evidence, and he gave the name of his assistant at Bloemfontein. This gentleman at once wrote from Germany, where he was travelling at the time, to the Commission that he would be happy to attend to give evidence on any day appointed, but the answer he got was that the Commission did not think it worth his while to come such a long journey to give his evidence. He was aware that several other civilian witnesses who volunteered to give evidence were not summoned. He called on the Commission one day in London to inquire when it would be convenient for him to give evidence, and was told that if he did not give it there and then probably no other opportunity would arise; and, as he had not his notes with him at the time, it was inevitable that he should fall into some errors. But the few mistakes he had made would have been corrected if a proof had been sent him.

Every hospital at Pretoria when he arrived there was deficient in necessaries, there being one clinical thermometer to each 150 patients,

and a lack of all proper utensils for the sick, yet the Commission, while admitting there were some deficiencies in respect of drugs, dressings, and blankets, declared that everything was satisfactory. He suggested that the new committee which would probably be appointed to inquire into the Army medical service should not be a departmental committee, but a committee of wider scope, having on it some representatives of those civilians who had taken part in hospital work in South Africa, so that the country should not have to depend entirely for evidence on the Army Service Corps.

Mr. Burdett-Coutts (Westminster) said it had been said in disclosing the defects of the hospital system in South Africa he had injured the popularity of the military service. His answer to that was that the real danger to the interests of the Army lay in the fact that the state of things which had been disclosed existed; in the fact that there seemed to be little desire to change it and little desire to let it be known. He had disclosed nothing to the Army or to the classes from which the Army was drawn. He had only revealed what every man in every regiment in South Africa had seen with his own eyes. What he thought was the real danger to the rank and file of the Army was the fact that once the question was raised there seemed to be a desire in this House rather to conceal and palliate the defects of a Department than to face the defects and endeavour to reform them. In the whole of the debates there was no promise of reform on the part of the responsible Minister of the Crown. By way of justifying his view as to the impression which the report was calculated to produce, he took the question of the treatment of enteric and dysenteric patients brought down in trains from the front. In the long train journey of four or five days in open, crowded trucks, the patients had nothing to eat but bully beef and biscuits. When it was pointed out to the Commission that it would have been an easy thing to have carried on the journey a portable stove to make beef tea or warm milk, the only remark they had to make about the suggestion was that it did not recommend itself to the medical authorities. Then there was the question of the robberies by orderlies of hospital stores, and the patients' food and kits. The Commission said that was owing to the large number of untrained orderlies who were introduced to the hospitals. Who were those untrained orderlies? They were private soldiers, the comrades of the sick men, whereas the rank and file of the Army knew perfectly well that the robberies were committed by the orderlies of the Royal Army Medical Corps. This had been a tradition in military hospitals owing to the want

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