

HOME STATION.

1st July 1864 to 30th June 1865.

Home
Station.

THERE are five different commands on the Home Station, viz.: The Nore, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Cork, and the Channel Fleet. With the exception of the Channel Fleet, very few of the vessels employed in these several commands have duties to perform in any way analogous to those which form the effective force on foreign stations; in fact, they consist chiefly of stationary ships,— coast-guard ships, training ships, guard ships, store-ships, and small steam vessels ordinarily employed as tenders.

The diseases which abound most on the Home Station are those which affect the organs of respiration, venereal diseases, and rheumatism, complicated in many cases with syphilis. It may be assumed that the operation of the Contagious Diseases Act is not yet sufficiently extended to confer that amount of security from these diseases that was hoped for; hence, as yet, there has been but little or no decrease in the amount of venereal disease contracted by ships' companies stationed in, or fitting out at, the home ports.

The ratio of cases of sickness and injuries of all kinds entered on the sick list, for a period of seven consecutive years, has been 1125·5 per 1,000 of mean force.

It will thus be perceived by the accompanying Table, that the following vessels exceeded that ratio:

Achilles - - -	2140·4	Prince Consort - -	1407·2
Defence - - -	1251·1	Research - - -	2000·0
Enterprise - - -	3100·0		

IRON CLASS

The Achilles was only commissioned on the 16th of September 1864. It was, therefore, natural to suppose that her sick list would be high, it being the first year of her commission.

Home
Station.
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RON CLADS
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mission. Venereal diseases constituted by far the largest proportion of her sickness, but there were many cases of trivial injury which required surgical treatment. Rheumatism and catarrh also prevailed to some extent, the former chiefly amongst the stokers.

In the Defence, which has been three years in commission, the ratio of cases does not very largely exceed the average for seven years. Venereal diseases, ordinary colds, rheumatism, and boils, are the most prominent affections in this vessel.

The largest ratio of cases was in the Enterprise; the prevalent affections, however, were of a trivial nature, consisting chiefly of catarrhs, venereal diseases, boils, and rheumatism. The Enterprise was commissioned in May 1864, and the surgeon, with justice, attributes the large number of cases on the sick list to the habits, antecedents, and condition of the men on joining. He states, that the lower deck, on which the men are berthed, is rather low, but it is wide and open, and contains ample cubic space for the number of men.

In the Prince Consort the sickness was not materially in excess of that usually observed in a newly-commissioned ship; it consisted mainly of venereal and catarrhal affections, diseases of the skin, and boils. This vessel was commissioned in January 1864. The surgeon attributes a large proportion of the affections which prevailed in her to the fact that the main-deck was imperfectly ventilated by small, narrow ports, and that the mess-deck was only lighted by artificial light, and was necessarily more or less gloomy. These circumstances, he thought, had a prejudicial effect on the physical condition of the sick. The patients generally exhibited a cachectic appearance, and he remarks that one-half of the whole number of cases occurred amongst men and boys between the ages of 15 and 25, when strength is presumably less confirmed. The condition of the vessel, in so far as light and ventilation were concerned, was to a considerable extent remedied at the time when the last return from the ship was sent in; but there had not been sufficient time to judge of the effect of the improvement on the health of the ship's company.

The Research was also a newly-commissioned ship, and the most prominent affections in her were, as in the other vessels, catarrh, rheumatism, venereal diseases, and skin diseases. The surgeon thought the prevalence of the catarrhal and rheumatic

rheumatic affections was probably due in some measure to the cold iron beams over the hammocks ; he also thought that the dampness caused by the condensation of the breath on the iron may have been productive of injurious effects. The berthing of the men was very good, and there was ample cubic space on the lower-deck for the complement

Home
Station.

IRON CLADS
in them of.

The remaining iron-clad vessels in which the sickness was below the average ratio for seven years were, the

Black Prince - - -	817.3	Royal Sovereign -	937.5
Hector - - - - -	900.	Warrior - - - - -	788.4

Of these the Black Prince and the Warrior had been long in commission, the former nearly three years, and the latter over four ; there was therefore nothing peculiar in either to call for comment in this place. Venereal diseases caused the largest loss of service.

The Hector, commissioned in January 1864, shows a very low ratio of sickness for a newly-commissioned ship. Early in the year a good deal of sickness, in the shape of catarrh, sore-throat, ulcers and boils, prevailed. This depended, the surgeon thinks, on the state of the decks, which, once wetted, never dried ; dry-holystoning was therefore adopted in all the compartments of the vessel, with the exception of the engine-room, and to that measure, and the use of fuel-stoves, he is inclined to attribute the improved sanitary condition of the men. He says, that after these measures were adopted the crew experienced great comfort ;—and the condensed vapour, which used to accumulate in large beads on the beams overhead, and ran down the ship's sides, almost entirely disappeared. He speaks in a qualified manner of the ventilation of the vessel, though it was more perfect than could reasonably be hoped for in a vessel constructed like the Hector.

The Royal Sovereign was an exceptional vessel in many respects. She was commissioned on the 7th of July 1864, and paid off on the 14th of October of the same year, to be re-commissioned on the following day, with a considerably reduced complement. During the period embraced in the returns from this vessel, she was undergoing alterations of one kind or another, involving, it may be presumed, the hulking of the ship's company for considerable periods ;

Home
Station.

these circumstances consequently deprive the returns of any value as a record of the influence of the construction of this class of vessel upon a ship's company. The most prominent affections on her sick list were of a catarrhal, venereal, or rheumatic character.

IRON CLAD
continued.

SECOND
RATES.

The only seagoing vessel of this class, the Edgar, was somewhat in excess of the average ratio of sickness. She had been upwards of three years in commission, and it may therefore be presumed that her ship's company were in good average condition. On referring to the nosological returns sent in to office, it appears that by far the largest proportion of sickness arose from venereal disease, there having been comparatively very little active disease of any other kind in the ship. The prevalence of syphilitic diseases, of course, is not affected by the length of time a ship may have been in commission, but almost altogether by the opportunities afforded to the ship's company of contracting them. The surgeon of the Edgar, in one of his quarterly returns, says, of the cases sent by him to hospital, "more than one-half of the whole number sent have been for syphilitic disease, which seems, year by year, to be rather on the increase in our Home Ports. The towns of Weymouth and Dorchester are no longer free, and the arrival of the Channel Fleet at Portland is followed by an influx of prostitutes from the other ports to these towns, where they become fresh foci of disease in the surrounding districts."

FOURTH
RATES.

The only two vessels of the fourth rate were the Aurora and Liverpool, in both of which the ratio of sickness was somewhat in excess of the average, though in the Liverpool the excess was trifling.

For several months the Aurora was on the West India Station, but during the remainder of the time she formed one of the Channel Fleet. She was commissioned in the winter of 1863, and therefore may be regarded as a newly-commissioned ship. The diseases most prevalent on board were catarrh, venereal, rheumatism, and affections of the skin and cellular tissue. Cases of diarrhoea were frequent in the Michaelmas quarter of 1864, but they were not of much importance.

The Liverpool was about seven months on the Home Station during the period embraced in this report. She was commissioned early in 1863, so that her men must have been in