



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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GOING HOME 1,000 HAPPY AUSTRALIANS

SAIL FROM AVONMOUTH

The Lord Mayor's story of Avonmouth docks in war time, exhaustive and engrossing as it was, was not fully told on New Year's Day. Material for chapters full of interest and of great importance to the old port are continually being added, and some day, perhaps, his lordship will return to the subject and tell the City Councillors how, when the strife was over, the great transports sailed out through the entrance piers and away for the far, far South with the gallant soldiers, who, in their tens of thousands, came from all parts of Australasia at the call of the Motherland.

A week or so ago we told exclusively of the sailing of the *Miltiades*, with a great number of Australian soldiers, homeward bound, and young wives, who were leaving their old homes for the sunny land of their men folk beneath the Southern Cross. Another great ship, the *Karmala*, sailed away on yesterday morning's tide with the hearts of a thousand veterans of Anzac and the Western battlefields, filled with joy at the thought of being homeward bound. They went, as they landed in England, with no blare of trumpets, no cheering crowds, and no official send off. As the splendid liner cast off and was slowly hauled out of the dock, hands and handkerchiefs waved farewells from the deck, and the dock staff and workers responded with "Good-bye and good luck." How different was the scene four years or more ago when the transports left Australia, and how different will be the scene when the *Karmala's* six or seven weeks' voyage is ended and the soldiers land at Sydney.

A FINE P. AND O. LINER

The ss. *Karmala* belongs to the P. and O. Steamship Company, and Messrs Bethell, Gwynn and Co. are the Bristol agents. Before the war she was engaged in the London to Calcutta passenger service. She is a fine ship of 9,000 tons and is manned by a crew of 209 – 45 Europeans and 164 natives. During the last year or so the vessel has been engaged in carrying American troops to France. Her commander – Captain Armitage – counts among his experiences a trip to the South Pole with Capt. Scott, when he was second in command of the *Discovery*. His war time experiences would fill a volume with thrilling adventures and wonderful escapes, for he has taken the hazard of the sea almost without a break, and has suffered like most sailors from the deadly torpedo. He has had experience of the chief ports of the world, but this was his first visit to Avonmouth, and he had nothing but praise for the docks and equipment. In some respects, however, his views – spoken with caution – were not reassuring. It was not, for instance, good to hear from such an authority that Avonmouth is behind other ports in the United Kingdom and America in the matter of quick handling and prompt despatch, on which so much will depend in the days of keen competition that are coming. It should be added that responsibility for the trouble to which Capt. Armitage referred does not rest with the Docks Committee.

EMBARKING THE TROOPS

The thousand "Cobbers" arrived in two long trains. As they came into the dock the windows were crowded with brown, happy faces, and miniature Australian flags were displayed from many of the carriages. The process of embarkation was simple compared with the work of getting the passengers aboard the last great transport that sailed from Avonmouth to Australia. Then there were a great many women, many of whom carried a baby, and all of whom seemed to have an endless assortment of packages and parcels. The soldiers came up the gangways with their kit bags; nothing more. As they stepped on to the deck of the liner they delivered up documentary evidence of identification, and then dispersed to while away the time as best they could. Mingling with these good fellows one's appreciation of their sterling worth was strengthened by the cheerfulness of their retrospect. All the glamour of war had been washed out at Gallipoli or on the Western front at Pozieres, Bullacourt, or in the long drawnout weariness of trench endurance. But there were no complaints; no regrets. All the sacrifice and it was indeed a sacrifice for many a young Colonist, who was just beginning to reap the reward of years of fighting with the wilderness when the call to arms came – was seemingly considered well worth the while.

REAL SACRIFICE

There was one man who wondered how he would find his holding out beyond Melbourne when he got back. He had left it in charge of his man, who wasn't much of a hand at writing, so the progress of the farm was just a

problem to be solved when the war was over. He had joined up at the start, even taking his plough horses to the camp near Melbourne – overlooking a cemetery – thinking they might be useful. But the Colonel thanked him, in the name of the King, and declined the proffered gift. Another group had grim recollections of Salisbury Plain – of Larkhill, Codford and Sutton Veny, whence they had just come. There was a small party of Australian Red Cross nurses, and the limited number of civilian passengers included officials of the India Steam Navigation Company's officers going out to Colombo.

(*Western Daily Press* – Bristol, England, 3 January, 1919)



P. & O. Karmala



Australia - October 1919. Australian soldiers seeing Australia for the first time in three and a half years from the deck of the Australian transport ship *Barambah* (A37) which was bringing Quota No 65 of Australian troops home. (Donor F.W.B. McGovern)



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