

been very badly used by the naval authorities for conduct which should have earned him their thanks. Briefly, the facts are as follows : Surgeon Lea, an old University College man, who entered the service in 1883, was appointed to H.M.S. *Ringarooma* on May 9th. On joining he received a hint from the surgeon whose place he was taking that the captain was of "strange temperament." Mr. Lea soon found that his superior officer's eccentricities were the talk of the ship. The captain had exalted ideas about his own powers and accomplishments, and in August, 1894, ran his ship aground on a coral reef, apparently owing to his wish to display his skill with the gun. Mr. Lea's uneasiness about him was increased by the discovery that a brother of his had been the inmate of an asylum near Sydney for more than twenty years. Mr. Lea consulted his colleagues in the other ships on the station as the opportunity arose, and they agreed in advising that if the captain got worse he should be sent to a hospital on shore, in order that his condition might be further investigated. As graver symptoms developed, Mr. Lea became more and more concerned about his patient. The crisis came on April 17th, 1895, when the *Ringarooma* was getting ready for sea ; on that day the captain, who was in an extremely excited state, gave Surgeon Lea an order to fix, with his own hands, a table which it took two strong men to lift, and four to place in position. Mr. Lea respectfully asked to have this extraordinary order given in writing. The *Ringarooma* was to proceed to sea on the following day, and Surgeon Lea, feeling strongly that the safety of the ship and the lives of the crew would be in danger if commanded by an officer in such a condition, felt it his duty to place the captain on the sick list. The captain refused to submit to this, and placed the surgeon under arrest. Mr. Lea was then tried by court-martial on a charge of "insubordination and contempt." The court ruled out all evidence relating to the captain's state of health as irrelevant, and treated the case solely as a matter of discipline. The result was that an officer of unblemished record, who was within a few months of completing a period of twelve years' service that would have entitled him to a gratuity of £1,500, was put ashore at Sydney to find his way home as best he could. The finding of the court-martial excited the greatest indignation in Australia, where the facts of the case were well known. A handsome subscription was got up by the medical profession to enable Mr. Lea to come home and try to get justice, and the New South Wales Branch of the British Medical Association passed a resolution of sympathy with him ; its honorary secretary, Dr. Ralston Huxtable, further conveyed to him the opinion of the Council that the course of procedure adopted by the court-martial was such as to deny him a fair trial on the real issues involved. This opinion will, I feel convinced, be shared by every reasonable man except certain martinets whose one idea of naval military administration is embodied in Mr. Bagnet's maxim, "Discipline must be maintained." The principle is sound enough, no doubt, but its application must be controlled by common sense, otherwise it is apt to become a screen for official tyranny and injustice. By refusing to receive evidence as to the captain's state of health, the court simply ignored the vital issue in the case they had to try. Justice is proverbially blind, but it is to be hoped that she does not often wilfully shut her eyes in this amazing fashion. The Admiralty