

No. 51.

(No. 344.)

The Hon. H. A. ATKINSON to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Immigration Office, Wellington, 19th November, 1874.

I have the honor to transmit the following documents relative to the ship "The Douglas," which arrived in Port Nicholson upon the 22nd ultimo :—

1. Immigration Commissioners' report.
2. Surgeon-Superintendent's report.
3. Correspondence between the Immigration Office and Surgeon-Superintendent relative to the "Feilding" immigrants.
4. Certified list of births and deaths upon the voyage.

1. The unusually large number of deaths on board this ship and the "Cartvale" enforces the consideration that the frequently repeated instructions of my predecessor, as to the necessity of a proper medical inspection of the emigrants before embarkation, have not been attended to. The perusal of Dr. Purcell's report leaves little doubt that "The Douglas" left England with the seeds of infection on board, and that there were cases of organic disease which even a cursory examination must have detected.

2. You will observe that the Commissioners again call attention to the inconvenience and trouble caused by passengers other than Government immigrants being carried in ships chartered for the conveyance of the latter. I desire that you will, subject to Mr. Vogel's approval, stipulate in all future charter-parties that the whole passenger accommodation of ships should be at the disposal of the Government. Many advantages will result from such an arrangement. The hospitals can then be under the poop, and the other annoyances which have frequently resulted from the presence on board of persons not subject to the control of the surgeon-superintendent will be avoided.

3. It is unnecessary that I should particularly remark upon the other points raised in the enclosed reports. These are ably written, and speak for themselves, and I trust will receive every consideration at your hands. Probably, also, by this time many of the defects and omissions complained of will have been rectified in accordance with instructions given to you in former letters.

4. I forward copies of correspondence between the Immigration Officer and the surgeon-superintendent of the ship, in order that you may be officially informed of the unsatisfactory physical character of the immigrants sent out by the Colonist's Aid Society. As these immigrants were approved by you, I have to request that an inquiry be made into the several cases specially cited by Dr. Purcell, in order that it may be ascertained who is responsible for shipping so undesirable a class of persons.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

H. A. ATKINSON.

Enclosure in No. 51.

IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONERS' REPORT on Ship "Douglas."

SIR,—

Wellington, 10th November, 1874.

We have the honor to report the arrival of the ship "The Douglas" on the night of the 22nd ultimo, with 362 adults. Thirty-three deaths, equal to seven and a half statute adults, occurred on the voyage and during the lay days in quarantine, and two deaths, equal to one and a half statute adults, after the expiration of the lay days in quarantine. As the health of the passengers was reported generally bad, measles, hooping-cough, and other diseases having prevailed, we had no alternative but to send the vessel and her passengers to quarantine, where she was at once towed by the Government steamer "Luna." Having given the captain and surgeon-superintendent instructions to land all the immigrants, have their luggage disinfected, and the 'tween-decks of the ship thoroughly cleaned out and painted, we inspected the immigrants on the 26th October, and were pleased to find the single men and women a fine healthy body of people; but we regret we cannot say so much for the married people, many of whom were quite unfit to undertake the sea voyage, much less to be of any benefit to the colony, even though they succeeded in reaching their destination. On the 27th we inspected the ship, and finding that our instructions as to cleaning and painting had been carried out, we at once admitted her to pratique. We have on a previous occasion inspected this fine vessel, and reported that she was in every way suited for the immigration service of this colony. It is, therefore, needless for us again to enumerate the advantages she possesses for lighting and ventilating the 'tween-decks; the single women, married compartment, and single men were berthed as usual in immigrant ships; but there was one alteration with regard to the single women which we think was a judicious one, namely, the entrance to their compartment being direct from the poop, which prevented them having any excuse for going on the main deck. We regret to say that there were no alley-ways in the vessel, as on the previous voyage, and it will be seen from the surgeon's remarks herewith, that he comments upon this, saying that the "arrangements of the berths in the 'tween-decks were radically bad." We append a summary of the voyage by Dr. Purcell, and we would direct especial attention to every one of his suggestions, which are of a practical nature, he having had a large experience in emigration. It will be seen that he distinctly states how the measles and hooping-cough were brought on board the vessel, and that the medical inspection was of the same cursory nature, as it was when emigration to this colony first commenced. In fact, from his remarks respecting the hospital accommodation and its position, the position of the surgery, flimsy hatches, want of charcoal and sand, and deficiency of certain medicines, we can only imagine that no experience has been gained in emigration matters, notwithstanding that some thousands of people have been sent to the colony during the last two years. A perusal of the printed papers during the period named will show that over and over again have the very same deficiencies and bad arrangements been complained of. Another matter which has been brought under our notice was, the bad stowage of the cargo, a quantity of railway iron being placed in the bottom of the hold, which caused her to roll very much, which greatly incon-