

No. 98.

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

(No. 143.)

SIR,—

Immigration Office, Wellington, 2nd June, 1875.

I have the honor to transmit herewith the following documents relative to the ship "Tintern Abbey," which arrived at Lyttelton upon the 3rd ultimo:—

1. Preliminary report of the Commissioners, pending an inquiry into certain complaints made by the immigrants.
2. Commissioners' final report, covering the surgeon's statement with regard to the complaints, his report upon the voyage, and extracts from his journal.
3. Certified list of births and deaths.

The complaints of the immigrants as to the conduct of the surgeon-superintendent appear to me to have been fully and satisfactorily disposed of by that gentleman; but it is to be regretted that there is apparently so much foundation for what has been alleged with regard to the embarkation of the emigrants before the ship was properly fitted to receive them, the condition of the condenser, the quality of the plumbers' work, the stowage of the stores, and the incapacity of the person appointed to act as matron—these being all matters which have so often been the subject of complaint by surgeon-superintendents, and of remonstrance on the part of Immigration Commissioners and of this department. I may say, indeed, that the circumstances generally attending the despatch and voyage of this ship, as reported to me, appear most unsatisfactory; and so far as they are in any way within the responsibility of your department, I desire that you will cause inquiry to be made, and report the conclusion you arrive at. I would specially notice that Mr. Smith, in his memorandum to you of 9th January, remarks that on going on board the day after the emigrants were embarked, he found "a great many things required to be done to put the vessel in a fit state to go to sea." As the charter-party requires that the ship shall be completely ready for sea twenty-four hours before the passengers embark, I am at a loss to understand why the emigrants were hurried on board at Gravesend instead of being detained in the depôt, the shipping company being liable for the expense of their maintenance from the date upon which the ship had been appointed to sail.

I have caused a letter to be sent to Dr. Dunkley, informing him that the Government consider him exonerated from all blame in connection with the complaints of the immigrants, and I shall be glad to hear of his receiving the charge of another emigrant ship, should he be inclined to apply for it.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

H. A. ATKINSON.

Enclosures in No. 98.

PRELIMINARY REPORT of IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONERS on Ship "Tintern Abbey."

THE Commissioners beg to report the arrival of the above ship at the port of Lyttelton, on Monday the 3rd instant, after a passage of 115 days. This ship embarked 323 souls, equal to 270 statute adults. During the passage there have been six births, and seventeen deaths, equal to five and a half statute adults. Two children, who are included in the ship's book, named Morris and John Flannery, died at the depôt at Blackwall. The mortality has been principally amongst the children, many of whom appear to have been in a sickly state on embarkation. The immigrants complained generally of the want of proper accommodation at the depôt at Blackwall, and from their statements it would appear that the building was very much over-crowded during the time they were located there. It also appears that this ship was not properly prepared to receive the emigrants when they were ordered to embark. The decks are reported to have been exceedingly wet, and the fittings were not completed. The cooking apparatus had not worked satisfactorily, and the condenser would only distil 200 gallons in twelve hours. The provisions were reported as good, but grave complaints were made that the children's dietary was not served out to them during the first week of the passage, and that the issue was very irregular. A general complaint was made that the surgeon-superintendent had not properly attended to his duties, and several of the parents attributed the deaths of their children to neglect. The surgeon was present at the inspection, and the Commissioners have sent a copy of the complaints to him, with the view of giving him the fullest opportunity of explaining the charges brought against him by the emigrants. For the present the gratuities to the officers are withheld.

Lyttelton, 7th May, 1875.

WM. DONALD, }
J. E. MARCH, } Immigration Commissioners.

FINAL REPORT of IMMIGRATION COMMISSIONERS on Ship "Tintern Abbey."

REFERRING to the preliminary report made on this ship, the Commissioners have now to state that they have fully investigated the complaints made by the immigrants, and are of opinion that the explanation offered by the surgeon-superintendent, in reference to charges brought against him, is satisfactory; the Commissioners are also of opinion that the complaints are without foundation, or that the facts have been greatly exaggerated. The surgeon appears to have had no assistance rendered him by any of the officers of the ship, with the exception of the captain, who, however, had no previous experience with emigrants, not having had the command of an emigrant ship before.

The ship is reported to have been built at Quebec, and sent to Liverpool to be fitted. In the passage round to London she was delayed longer than expected, and her emigrants were thus waiting some considerable time at the depôt at Blackwall. Here the accommodation (owing to over-crowding) appears to have been very insufficient. It was reported to the Commissioners that families, including infant children, were placed in out-buildings, cold, damp, and draughty. Inflammation of the lungs amongst the children became general, and three died from those causes before the ship sailed. It was further reported that the bread supplied in the depôt was exceedingly bad.