

1883.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE IMMIGRANT SHIP "OXFORD"

(REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON).

Presented to the House of Representatives by Command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Dr. GRABHAM to the Hon. the MINISTER for IMMIGRATION.

SIR,—

Wellington, 29th August, 1883.

I have the honour to forward herewith the report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the origin and existence of infectious and other disease on board the barque "Oxford" during her voyage from Plymouth to Port Nicholson, together with the Commission issued by His Excellency the Governor, the evidence taken by us, Surgeon-Superintendent's report, and Parliamentary Paper, D.-4.

I have the honour to request that you will be good enough to forward these documents to His Excellency the Governor.

I have, &c.,

G. W. GRABHAM, M.D.,

The Hon. the Minister for Immigration.

Chairman of the Commission.

Enclosure.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Wellington, 29th August, 1883.

We, the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the origin and outbreak of typhoid fever and other circumstances attending the voyage of the barque "Oxford" from England to Port Nicholson, having proceeded to make inquiries intrusted to us, and having taken evidence, have the honour to report that we have elicited the following facts:—

The Commissioners regret that they have not had the advantage of seeing the detailed report of the circumstances attending the first voyage of the ship, promised by Sir F. D. Bell, but not yet to hand. (*Vide* Parliamentary Paper, D.-4, 1883, page 6.) In the absence of this important information they have felt it necessary to make some inquiries regarding the dépôt at Plymouth, the condition of the ship when joined by the emigrants, and other matters which might throw light on the origin of the outbreak of typhoid fever.

The Dépôt.—While complaints of the dirty state of the establishment and the want of such ordinary comforts as the severity of the weather would render essential are almost universal, it would appear that good health prevailed amongst its inmates previous to the first voyage, and that the cause of the disease must be sought elsewhere. The establishment, however, was faulty in various respects: the sleeping accommodation as described by the married witnesses being absurdly small, and the filthy condition of the bedding almost incredible; vermin appear to have abounded; a proper supply of bed-clothing for the existing cold weather was not forthcoming; and a considerable amount of unnecessary harshness seems to have been displayed in the management, more particularly with regard to the women and children. A considerable amendment is stated to have occurred during the visit of the Agent-General, for whose inspection special preparations were said to have been made. The Commissioners would, however, point out the evidence of Henry Jay and others, as showing the filthy state of the establishment and the bedding.

The Ship.—Suggestions have been made that hides and other offensive matters had been carried as cargo on a previous voyage, but evidence and examinations of log-books clearly prove that corn and seeds only had been taken on the two last occasions. The vessel herself is roomy and airy between decks, and certainly gives the impression that she is well suited for the conveyance of emigrants. It is right, however, to state that the fittings had been removed before our inspection, in accordance with the usual practice on going into quarantine.

First Voyage.—The quality of the water carried on this occasion calls for no remarks from us, as the certificate furnished by the Board of Trade sufficiently condemns it as unfit for use. (*Vide*