

FURTHER PAPERS RELATIVE TO THE LOSS OF H.M.S. "ORPHEUS."

MEMORANDUM by MINISTERS.

The Despatches from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State (No. 70, 28th May, 1863; No. 72, 26th June, 1863; No. 71, 26th June, 1863) on the subject of the wreck of H.M.S. "Orpheus" at the Manukau Heads, have been referred by His Excellency the Governor to the Ministers.

The delay which has occurred in the reply to these Despatches, has arisen from the enquiry which was required to be instituted into circumstances referred to therein.

Ministers respectfully submit to His Excellency the following observations on these Despatches, respectively:—

The first Despatch (No. 70, 28th May, 1863) refers to the report of Mr. Wing, the Harbor Master at Manukau (forwarded in the Governor's Despatch, No. 14, of the 11th February, 1863), which report contains a statement that "Had the late Provincial Government supplied the necessary requirements of the Pilot Station, many valuable lives would, in all probability, have been saved on this occasion." The Secretary of State requires a report from the Governor, what were the particular requirements to which the Harbor Master alludes—whether they were brought under the notice of the Provincial Government, and if so, in what manner, how often, and at what dates; and what steps, if any, were taken by that Government in consequence.

The accompanying papers (D.—No. 1., D.—No. 1A., D.—No. 1B.) relative to the loss of H.M.S. "Orpheus," which were laid before the General Assembly show (See pages 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, D.—No. 1A., and D.—No. 1B., *passim*) the steps which have been taken since the receipt of the Despatch, and which had been taken previously, to enquire into the charge made by the Harbor Master against a former Provincial Government of neglect to furnish the Manukau Pilot Station with proper requirements.

The report of the Select Committee of the Auckland Provincial Council (See pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, D.—No. 1B.) it will be seen, fully exonerates the late Provincial Government of Auckland from the charge made against it by Mr. Wing, and states that on a review of the whole of the evidence taken on the subject of the wreck of H.M.S. "Orpheus," the Committee find nothing to justify Mr. Wing in having made such a charge.

From the enclosed copy of the letter, dated 6th instant, from the Superintendent of the Province of Auckland to the Colonial Secretary, it appears that the Provincial Council have not as yet taken any steps in reference to this report, either by formal adoption or otherwise.

The second Despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies (No. 72, 26th June, 1863) transmits a copy of a letter from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty enclosing extracts from the minutes of proceeding at a Court Martial held at Portsmouth to enquire into the particulars of the loss of H.M.S. "Orpheus," and calling attention to the discrepancy which exists between the statement advanced by the Harbour Master at Manukau respecting the signal made to the "Orpheus," and the evidence which was elicited by the Court Martial.

The explanation furnished by the Harbor Master at Manukau (Mr. Wing) as to this discrepancy is contained in the accompanying papers (See pages 17 and 18, D.—No. 1A.).

Ministers also enclose, as bearing on this subject, copies of certain statements made on board of H.M.S. "Miranda" by certain of the survivors of H.M.S. "Orpheus," before a Commissioner appointed by His Excellency the Governor, which Commissioner, however, in consequence of the sudden departure of H.M.S. "Miranda" to Sydney with those survivors, who went there *en route* to England, did not take further evidence beyond that now transmitted.

The third Despatch (No. 71, 26th June, 1863) draws attention to the arrangement suggested by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for the security of vessels entering the Manukau Harbour, and informs the Governor that their Lordships have offered to instruct a surveying Officer, who is about to be ordered to New Zealand, to afford the New Zealand Government all the assistance in his power in devising measures for the above purpose.

That officer has been for some time engaged in that duty, and Ministers have rendered to him all the aid they can towards its satisfactory fulfilment. A copy of the Despatch of the Secretary of State and of the enclosed letter from the Lords of the Admiralty has been transmitted by His Excellency the Governor to Sir Wm. Wiseman, the Commodore on this station, with a request that in order to the carrying out the recommendations of their Lordships without delay, he would cause a report to be made to the Colonial Government as to what particular signal it would be most desirable to adopt at Manukau Heads, and would furnish any other information on that subject he may consider necessary (See page 20, D.—No. 1A.).

Auckland, 7th March, 1864.

FREDK. WHITAKER.

Enclosure No. 1.

Superintendent's Office, Auckland, 5th March, 1864.

SIR,—

In reply to your letter of the 24th February ultimo, referring to the enquiry by a Select Committee of the Provincial Council of Auckland into the conduct of the Pilot at Manukau in connection with the loss of H.M.S. "Orpheus," I have the honor to inform you that, from enquiries I have made, it appears that the Provincial Council took no action in reference to the report of the Select Committee above mentioned.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT GRAHAM, Superintendent.