

Enclosure in No. 5.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT on Ship "La Hogue."

SIR,—

Wellington, 11th June, 1874.

We have the honor to report the arrival of the ship "La Hogue," on the 26th May, with 348 statute adults, and two stowaways who may be reckoned as immigrants, as they were coming to friends in the colony. There were five deaths (equal to two and a half statute adults) during the voyage, and six births. Owing to the arrival of the "Wennington" on the previous day, with a large number of immigrants, we were unable to make arrangements for immediately landing the passengers, there not being sufficient accommodation in the depôt for them; but we are happy to say we landed all by the 30th, and thus incurred no expense for demurrage beyond the lay-days allowed by the charter-party.

On inspecting the ship we found her well suited for the conveyance of emigrants, having large and numerous side ports and other means of promoting ventilation. The "La Hogue" is so well known in the Australasian trade that it is needless for us to say anything respecting her capabilities.

The single women were berthed in a portion of the saloon: they had plenty of light and ventilation, their bunks were in blocks, and the compartment was exceedingly clean and tidy. The matron had a comfortable cabin, and the closet and bath-room were good; but we regret to say that the hospital was badly placed, being next the water-closet.

The married people were berthed between the after and main hatches, having the use of both hatchways: the bunks were partly in blocks and partly in the centre of the ship, with alley-ways. Dr. Russell thus had an opportunity of expressing an opinion on both—he prefers the alley-way system. There was plenty of light and ventilation in this compartment, but all the new dead-lights in the ship leaked, having been carelessly fitted. The hospital was badly placed, and we cannot too strongly condemn its position, it being in the most noisy part of the ship in the 'tween-decks. We are at a loss to understand how it is, after the repeated remonstrances as to placing hospitals in the 'tween-decks, and so many ships having arrived lately in which the hospitals have all been on deck, that in a large ship like the "La Hogue" the old system should be reverted to. Is it that the cabins under the poop and the saloon were required for first-class passengers, of whom there were ten single men on board? The height of the 'tween-decks is 7 feet 3 inches, and there was plenty of cubical space in the compartment.

The single men were located under the fore hatch. Their bunks were in blocks, but the compartment was badly lighted and ventilated, and not very clean; but Dr. Russell explained that, owing to the roughness of the weather on the day the "La Hogue" arrived, water was shipped in this compartment, and in consequence of the excitement and confusion on arriving in port, he had not been able to get the compartment cleaned in the way he would wish.

The condenser (Graveley's) worked well, and there appears to have been a liberal supply of water. There were two galleys, which afforded ample convenience for cooking purposes; but we regretted to hear that, owing to there being so much deck hamper, the bakery could not be erected.

The immigrants had no complaints of any kind to prefer, and we are pleased to be able to report very favourably of them as a whole. There were several cases of organic disease amongst them, and although, fortunately (owing, we believe, mainly to the energy and ability of the surgeon-superintendent), there was no epidemic during the voyage, yet Dr. Russell had a great deal of sickness to contend with, there being at this moment four adult passengers under medical treatment, and two deaths occurred after arriving in port. The fact that there has been no difficulty in disposing of the immigrants by the last two ships speaks well for the character of the people. Some few cases of misconduct occurred amongst the single men during the voyage, but the surgeon did not prefer any charges against them on arrival. This portion of the immigrants seems to have been the worst conducted, many of them having come from the east end of London.

We append a summary, by Dr. Russell, of the more striking events of the voyage; but we would strongly recommend a perusal of his daily journal, nearly every page of which contains some practical suggestion, or points to some gross irregularity in the arrangements for the despatch of emigrant ships at home. It will be found that he remarks upon the hurry and confusion of the arrangements for embarking, the dispensary not even being fitted; the want of proper books and forms; defective gangways, with reference to which he remarks, "Before a fatal accident occurs (many serious and trivial have already), I must record the fact of having complained ere the ship was cleared that the gangway arrangements were defective, but especially did I call attention to the absence of hand-rails to the poop gangway ladders—they were not supplied;" flimsy description of fittings and utensils; and many articles required by the contract not placed on board, amongst others are mentioned soldering-irons and requisites for repair of cans, &c.; lead, nails, spare timber, tarpaulins, scales, scrubbers, &c. The sand and lime were bad; in fact, the whole journal discloses substantial reason for complaining of the manner in which the charter was carried out. But the greatest annoyance Dr. Russell had to contend with was the conduct of the first-class passengers. No less than four times does he refer to this in his journal in the most emphatic terms. Captain Carvosso has also, in the course of conversation with us, indorsed Dr. Russell's statements on this subject.

Dr. Russell furnishes manuscript forms which he was compelled to use during the voyage. We recommend that these should be printed and supplied to surgeon-superintendents of emigrant vessels generally.

In conclusion, we recommend the payment of all gratuities, and we feel that the thanks of the Government are due to Dr. Russell and Captain Carvosso for the admirable manner in which the immigrants were brought out. The utmost good feeling and cordiality existed between all, and yet order and discipline were maintained in a greater measure than in any immigrant ship which has yet come under our notice.

We have, &c.,

ALEXANDER JOHNSTON, M.D.,
H. J. H. ELIOTT,
JOHN HOLLIDAY, } Commissioners.

His Honor the Superintendent, Wellington.