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NEW SOUTH WALES

No. 5

Duke of Newcastle
Governor-
General Sir C. A.
FitzRoy.
9 July 1853

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO EMIGRATION

- No. 5 -

(No. 94.)

Copy of a DESPATCH from the Duke of *Newcastle* to Governor-General Sir C.A. FitzRoy

Sir,

Downing-street, 9 July, 1853

I TRANSMIT for your information the copy of a report which, at my desire, the Land and Emigration Commissioners have furnished respecting the mortality which, during the passage from this country to Melbourne, and afterwards in quarantine, occurred among the emigrants on board the "Ticonderoga," and pointing out the precautionary measures adopted by them for preventing generally the prevalence of disease in Australian emigrant ships.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Newcastle.*

Enclosure in No. 5.

Sir,

Colonial Land and Emigration Office, 29 June 1853.

1. WE have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, enclosing a despatch from Lieutenant-governor Latrobe relative to the mortality which occurred among the emigrants by the "Ticonderoga" both during her voyage and in quarantine.
2. We need scarcely say, that the unfortunate events connected with this ship have been a subject of the deepest concern to us. We have explained at length in our report of the 11th* of February last, the circumstances which alone induced us to employ vessels of the size of the "Ticonderoga", but we may be permitted on the present occasion to add some remarks with reference to Mr. Latrobe's present despatch, and the report of the Immigration Board to which he refers, and which has been transmitted to us direct.
3. Mr. Latrobe says of the ship itself, that "looking to its structure and capacity, no vessel could have been better suited to the purpose, and there can be no doubt but that under circumstances securing the unbroken maintenance of order, cleanliness, and general discipline, a yet larger number of persons might have been conveyed in safety to the colony." But he adds, that "with an unorganised body of emigrants of the classes selected for the "Ticonderoga," little surprise can be felt that no ordinary exertion of abilities could suffice to introduce at once system and order, and overcome that repugnance to cleanliness and fresh air which distinguished certain classes of the labouring population of Europe," &c. The "repugnance to cleanliness" here alluded to is more fully detailed in the report of the Immigration Board, and we are anxious to request the Duke of Newcastle's notice to the extracts from that report which we annex. They detail proceedings on the part of the emigrants which we at once admit are sufficient to account for the virulence of the sickness which took possession of the ship, and which justify the opinion of the colonial authorities that had the voyage been prolonged, the consequences would have been most disastrous. But we hope we may be excused for not having anticipated such proceedings when we state, that although we have in the course of the last six years sent out upwards of 96,000 emigrants, among whom have been many from different parts of the United Kingdom, whose previous mode of life had not taught them habits of cleanliness or order, we never before heard of anything like what is described in the above extracts. It would appear as if from the commencement of the sickness the prostration of the whole body of emigrants was such as to overcome all feelings of decency and propriety and even of self-preservation, and that all the efforts of the officers, who were indefatigable, were powerless to cope with this feeling. The captain is most highly spoken of, and the surgeon was one of our most experienced officers, having given great satisfaction in four previous voyages in our service. We do not question that the number on board served to augment the disease which broke out under such circumstances, but we cannot doubt that with such a state of things, whatever the size of the ship, the sickness and mortality must have been very great.

4. We stated, in our Report of the 11th of February, that on the very first intelligence of the sickness which occurred in the large ships, we issued a notice that we should take no more ships to carry emigrants on more than one deck. We have since added to our notice, that we should take no ship having a house on deck, because we found that even though we put no emigrants in the house, it lumbered up the deck and restricted the space for exercise. In our Report of the 10th ultimo, we explained the steps which we had adopted for testing the efficacy of a ventilating apparatus which had been submitted to us, and we are at present in communication with an engineer who has undertaken to furnish us with a new arrangement of the water-closets, which on board ships of every description are the most unmanageable and unsatisfactory portions of the fittings. We have likewise submitted to Dr. Gream, a physician who has made a dietary of children his particular study, our present scale of dietary, with a view to the amendment of it as regards young children. And we are endeavouring so to arrange the dietary for those classes of our emigrants who are accustomed to live principally on potatoes, as to make less abrupt than heretofore the transition from that bulky but innutritious vegetable to the concentrated but more indigestible articles which necessarily form the staple of the ship's dietary.

5. In the Report of the Immigration Board, allusion is made to the insurance of the lives of passengers in our ships, to avoid the loss of half passage money in case of their death on the voyage, and it is recommended that in our practice, which neutralises one of the principal objects of retaining a moiety of the passage-money, and does away with the pecuniary interest of the owners in the safe landing of the passengers, should be prohibited. With reference to this suggestion, we have to state, that the fact of such insurances having accidentally come to our knowledge last winter, we immediately inserted a clause in our charter-parties to prohibit it. We have, therefore, anticipated the recommendation of the colonial authorities on this point.

6. In conclusion, we can only express our entire concurrence in the eulogy pronounced by the Immigration Board on the master of the "Ticonderoga," and in the additional gratuities bestowed on him and the surgeon-superintendent. We presume that the Duke of Newcastle will express to Mr. Latrobe his approval of this expenditure.

We have, &c.
(signed) T. W. C. Murdoch.
C. Alexander Wood.

Herman Merivale, Esq.
&c, &c, &c.

Sub-Enclosure to Enclosure in No. 5.

EXTRACTS from Report of Immigration Board at Melbourne, upon the Ship "Ticonderoga;" dated Melbourne,,
25 January 1853

25. The ship, especially the lower deck, was in a most filthy state, and did not appear to have been cleaned for weeks; the stench was overpowering' the lockers so thoughtlessly provided for the immigrants' use were full of diet, mouldy bread, and suet full of maggots' beneath the bottom boards of nearly every berth upon the lower deck were discovered soup and bouilli cans and other receptacles, full of putrid ordure, and porter bottles, &c. filled with stale urine, while maggots were seen crawling underneath the berths; and this state of things must have been prevalent for a long time, as the second mate describes the ship to have been in the same state, when he superintended the cleaning of her by the captain's order five weeks previously.

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26. In conclusion, the Board have briefly to state their opinion as to the cause of the origin and progress of the disease. Although they think it possible that scarlatina may have been introduced on board in a state of incubation, as asserted by Dr. Sanger, they have little or no doubt that the fever took its origin from dirt and filth, to which many causes may be ascribed.

Transcribed by: Lynette Begg
East Maitland NSW 2323
Australia