

It turns out, although the Commissioners were unable to obtain evidence of the facts in the Colony, that the provisions, water, and medical stores were duly surveyed and passed by the proper officer, and it is admitted that no well-founded complaint was made as to the quality and quantity of the provisions supplied. It also turns out that the passengers' lists and the Emigration Officer's certificate of clearance were duly made out, signed, and given to the Brokers, to enable them to clear the ship at the Custom House.

The medical inspection of passengers before embarkation has always been a matter of anxious consideration with us, and, looking at the exigencies of the service, we have not been able to suggest any better method for conducting it than that adopted by the Medical Officers in London and Liverpool. This method was followed in the case of the "England," and is substantially described in Captain Forster's report. To judge of the state of health of a passenger while passing before the Inspector, may appear at first sight a mere form, and illusory. Our Medical Officers, however, affirm that it is not so, and that a passing scrutiny by a practical eye, though not a perfect, is by no means an ineffective check. In fact, the emigration of ailing passengers is constantly arrested by the Inspector, and suspicious cases thus arrested, subsequently receive a more searching examination. General results, moreover, practically support their view. The amount of sickness and mortality in the vast emigration from this country during many years past (save in one or two exceptional years, when cholera and infectious epidemics extensively prevailed) has been remarkably small, and rarely attributed to disease which could have been detected at embarkation. Indeed, unless depôts be established, as in the assisted emigration to Australia, carried on by this Board for many years, in which the emigrants could be maintained and watched for two or three days previous to embarkation, I do not see that any more stringent examination could be enforced without causing great complaints, both on the part of the emigrants themselves and of the shipowners. Take the case of Liverpool, through which port upwards of three-fifths of the whole emigration flows. More than 95 per cent. of the passengers are carried in steamers, many of them mail steamers, where delay and want of punctuality in sailing would be a serious public inconvenience. In the busy months of the year, between 3,000 and 4,000 persons sometimes embark in a day. If each person were to undergo a medical examination lasting only one minute, it would take the two Medical Examiners, acting separately about three days of ten hours each, to get through the work which is required to be done in one day. It is true this could be, to a certain extent, met by a large medical staff, but then as the emoluments, which by law are derived from a small *per caput* fee, would have to be divided amongst them, the services of the most efficient men would not be secured. During the last two years the 344,945 emigrants who left Liverpool and the northern ports of Ireland for all parts of the world (the great majority to North America) were subject to the system of transient examination. The mortality at sea nevertheless was astonishingly small, it averaged about '05 per cent.

In the case of the "England" small-pox and measles may have been conveyed on board, but it must have been in a latent form, as the first case of disease is stated to have occurred on the 20th December, twelve days after the ship left Gravesend. I am informed by a competent medical authority unconnected with the service, that from ten to sixteen days is the usual limit of the period of incubation both for measles and small-pox. Individual and close examination, therefore, of the passengers of the "England" would have failed to detect the existence of the disease at the time of their embarkation.

With regard to Mr. Leigh, the surgeon of the ship, whose fitness for the service is brought into question on the score of impaired health, I may remark that there was nothing in his appearance or known to the Emigration Officers to warrant their exercising the power vested in them by the Passengers' Act, of vetoing his appointment by the charterers. On the contrary, the Medical Officer, Mr. Humphreys, states in his letter that during an hour's interview he discovered nothing that would give him reason to suspect that Mr. Leigh was the subject of epileptic attacks, or incompetent for the duties of his post.

On the whole, while agreeing in many of the conclusions of the Commissioners, I am unable to acquiesce in the one which, founded on the evidence of persons imperfectly informed on the points to which they spoke, implies that the method of procedure with regard to the fulfilment of the requirements of the Passengers' Act is most unsatisfactory, and that the inspections by the Imperial authorities are mere matters of form.

R. G. W. Herbert, Esq.

I have, &c.,
S. WALCOTT.

Enclosure 3 in No. 2.

Captain FORSTER to ASSISTANT SECRETARY, Emigration Board.

SIR,—

Government Emigration Office, London, 17th September, 1872.

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 5th September, with an enclosed report of the Commissioners appointed by the Government of New Zealand to inquire into certain matters connected with the immigrants by the ship "England." The Commissioners direct your special attention to those parts of the report which relate to the observance, before the ship sailed, of the requirements of the Act.

The "England," a ship of 853 tons, 168 feet long, 34 feet broad, 21½ feet depth of hold, built in 1863, has made two successive voyages from London to New Zealand, with emigrants, under the command of Captain Harrington. She left Gravesend on the second voyage, the one under consideration, on 8th December, 1871, with 102 passengers, equal to 81 statute adults, and arrived in Wellington on 9th March, having lost 16 persons from small-pox and other diseases.

With reference to the several points brought forward in the evidence, I beg to report as follows:—