

4. The recommendations with which the Commissioners wind up their report are very valuable, and strongly confirmatory of many similar suggestions made at various times by the medical officers of our emigrant ships, Immigration Commissioners, and others. Many of these suggestions appear to me to be practicable, and the carrying of them out need not of necessity entail any important increase in the cost of passage. I proceed to detail those to which I specially direct your attention, with the view of your endeavouring to give them effect in your future arrangements with shipowners:—

(a.) “A supply of soft bread to be issued for women and children, and for the latter an abundant supply of farinaceous food.” The surgeon-superintendents who have brought out emigrants to this colony are, as you have no doubt observed by their reports, unanimous in the recommendation of the necessity of amending the children’s dietary scale in the direction indicated by the Commissioners. The very large amount of infantile disease amongst our emigrants has been almost universally attributed to the want of sufficient nourishing food. I wish it, therefore, to be distinctly understood that an abundant supply of such articles of diet is to be a *sine quâ non* in all future charter-parties.

(b.) “The children should be messed together by themselves.” It has frequently been brought under my notice that the children suffer from the negligence or ignorance of their parents, in improperly cooking the food, or in diverting to their own purposes the farinaceous articles of diet. I am not in a position to say how far a separate mess, under proper supervision, may be in all cases practicable, but the subject is a very important one, and I leave it for your consideration whether or not such an arrangement might not be made, at all events in ships carrying a large number of children.

(c.) “Abundant means for a bath should be supplied.” It is not to be presumed that the recommendation implies the construction of bath-rooms other than those already provided for in the charter-parties, but that strong tubs suitable for bathing purposes should be shipped, and canvas screens provided. All the compartments should be so supplied; and I would further suggest that, as great difficulty is sometimes experienced by the surgeons in enforcing cleanliness, that a rule to the effect that a complete bath be taken by every emigrant at least once a week, should be included in your “Regulations to be observed on board emigrant ships.” I am convinced, from perusal of the reports of surgeons and Immigration Commissioners, that a great deal of the disease and discomfort on board the ships has arisen from the neglect of personal cleanliness on the part of the emigrants, and therefore I am decidedly of opinion that this should be provided for and enforced.

(d.) “An ample supply of sawdust and sand, for the better cleaning of the lower deck, should be on board.” I would add to this “charcoal.” I have already, in a previous communication, directed your attention to the necessity for placing a supply of these on board the ships, and no doubt you have carried out my instructions.

(e.) “An exhaustive series of medical questions, as thorough as in a case of life assurance, should be prepared, to be put to intending emigrants, to be filled up by the examiner, and forwarded for consideration of the Agent-General’s Department. In addition, there should be a minute and careful personal examination before acceptance.” This points to a complete reform in the present system of medical inspection. Of the necessity of a reform I have no doubt whatever, but whether it should take the exact form recommended by the Commissioners, is a question upon which I am not prepared immediately to give an opinion. I desire, however, that you will give the matter your very earnest consideration, and lose no time in taking such steps as may most commend themselves to your judgment, in order to prevent, in future, the grave consequences of insufficient medical examination and inspection of the emigrants.

(f.) “An experienced medical officer should be attached to the Agent-General’s Department, who should make a personal inspection of the emigrants in London or at the depôt. At or immediately after entry at the depôt, a careful examination should take place. The habits as well as the health of the emigrants should be considered, and untidy persons rejected.” This, although much to the same effect as the recommendation under (e), is distinct upon one point, viz., the appointment of a medical officer permanently upon the staff of your department. I have for some time been of opinion that this would be a judicious arrangement, and I propose taking the opinion of the Assembly upon the subject.

(g.) The Commissioners make very reasonable recommendations with regard to the Plymouth depôt, and expressed their dissatisfaction with the site. I have already advised you, in my letter No. 157, of the 4th instant, that I am not all satisfied with your arrangements with regard to the projected depôt at Blackwall, which, so far as I am informed, is to be occupied upon the same terms as the one under consideration. The depôts should be exclusively for our own emigrants, and entirely under our own control, and I shall hope to hear from you promptly in reply to my letter referred to.

I have, &c.,

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

JULIUS VOGEL.

Enclosure in No. 6.

REPORT of ROYAL COMMISSION on Ship “SCIMITAR.”

To His Excellency the Right Honorable Sir James Fergusson, Baronet, a Member of Her Majesty’s Most Honorable Privy Council, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over Her Majesty’s Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies, and Vice-Admiral of the same.

WE, the undersigned Commissioners appointed by your Excellency, on the 11th day of March, A.D. 1874, “to inquire into the origin, outbreak, and existence of any infectious or other disease or bodily ailment on board the ship called the ‘Scimitar,’ during her voyage from Plymouth, in England, to Port Chalmers, in the Colony of New Zealand, and into the state of health of the passengers, immigrants, and other persons at the time of their embarkation on board the said ship at Plymouth aforesaid, or immediately prior thereto; and also as to the mode and time of the medical examination of such passengers, immigrants, and other persons, before or after such embarkation as aforesaid; and into all the facts and circumstances attending the death of all or any of such passengers, immigrants,