

alarm. Smoke was found to be issuing from the lower fore-castle (the apartment just described), and to be making its way through the partition into the quarters occupied by the single men, who were the first to give the alarm. It was discovered that some clothes and other materials were on fire in the lower fore-castle. The burning heap was extinguished and thrown over-board, and providentially the fire did not extend farther. No cause for it could be ascertained. I visited the place and found it crowded with sails, coils of rope, and casks apparently of pitch. Standing upright on a piece of wood, its only apparent hold on which was its own grease, I found a naked emigrant's lamp candle half burned. Looking at the contents of the place, it is to be feared that had a fire occurred here at night it would have gained considerable hold before being discovered.

In the next place there is no provision made for the use of locked lanterns in the hold, or in the ship's lazarette or store-room, although these places are being entered every day for the purpose of issuing stores. On the "Countess of Kintore," at my request, locked lanterns were from an early date of the voyage used below in getting up emigrants' stores, but not in the lazarette, where much straw and combustible material were lying loosely about. Lastly, the arrangements made for securing the hatches leading to the hold are very defective. Sometimes the hatches are not locked at all. Frequently, however, they are locked, but the locks used are of the most paltry make, and sometimes they may be found knocked away altogether by the passage of the emigrants over the hatch to the ladder leading to the upper deck. In the lower fore-castle, in the "Countess of Kintore," a small hatch gave passage to the hold. This remained quite unprotected during the passage, no lock being placed upon it. A ship is thus sent to sea with its hatches protected by such locks that half a dozen are needed for a single hatch on the outward run to keep up even an appearance of its being secure; and, further, with part of its crew berthed in an apartment by which access can be readily obtained to the cargo, and it is wondered at when the ship takes fire! Why, to my mind, considering the well-known proclivities of ships' crews for broaching cargo, especially when aware that beer or spirits are below, the marvel is that the ship does not take fire. It is at the least clear that considerably more care should be exercised in protecting the hold, and thus removing in the future one highly probable source of fire on ship board.

I have, &c.,
W. J. DAVIDSON,
Surgeon-Superintendent.

Enclosure 3 in No. 1.

The GENERAL MANAGER, New Zealand Shipping Company, Christchurch, to the Hon. the MINISTER for IMMIGRATION.

The New Zealand Shipping Company (Limited), Christchurch,
7th June, 1876.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, annexing a copy of a part of the report of Mr. Surgeon-Superintendent Davidson, lately in charge of the ship "Countess of Kintore," while conveying emigrants from the mother country, bearing chiefly on the subject of the danger of fire, and the want of precaution to prevent the occurrence of so dire a calamity in passenger ships. I am charged especially by my directors to convey to you their thanks for forwarding this document, which has been perused with interest and concern, and the suggestions of so experienced an officer as Dr. Davidson are of value and duly appreciated.

I am glad, however, to be able to inform you that the code of instructions regulating this Company's fleet, and adapted to the guidance of such ships as may be hired by us, embraces nearly all Dr. Davidson's precautionary suggestions; and the arrangements of our vessels, and those insisted on by the Agent-General in such ships as we have chartered for emigration purposes, preclude the possibility of such irregularities as have apparently occurred on board the "Countess of Kintore." In all our vessels there is ample and proper accommodation for the extra hands which the necessities of the service compel us to carry with emigrants, and the masters are most especially charged to vigilantly guard against and prevent the reckless and careless use of unprotected lights, which is a highly censurable practice, and one never now permitted in a well-ordered and regulated ship. I shall not fail to urge on our masters the importance of continued care, and I earnestly hope none of our vessels, or indeed any ship, may be exposed to the danger of fire, from which it appears to me the "Countess of Kintore" escaped more by providence than from the care of those responsible for the safety of the lives of the passengers and crew confided to them.

The Hon. the Minister for Immigration,
Wellington.

I have, &c.,
H. SELWYN SMITH,
General Manager.

No. 2.

The Hon. the MINISTER for IMMIGRATION to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(No. 153.)

SIR,—

Immigration Office, Wellington, 26th June, 1876.

Referring to your letter No. 249, of April 1st ultimo, I have the honor to forward a report by the Immigration Officer at Auckland on the subject of tobacco culture in the Province of Auckland.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

I have, &c.,
H. A. ATKINSON.