

No. 4.

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

(No. 461.)

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,

26th June, 1876.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 99, of 6th April, transmitting the official reports, &c., relating to the ship "Salisbury." With reference to the point on which you specially remark—namely, the flimsy character of the bulkheads dividing the hold from places accessible to the crew at night, I herewith enclose the report of the Despatching Officer, who is responsible in these matters. In accordance with your instructions, he has received directions to furnish me for the future with a special report upon the condition of the bulkheads separating the hold from places accessible to the crew and emigrants in each ship. The report to be sent in previous to the embarkation of the emigrants, and in sufficient time to enable the alterations to be made, if thought necessary. Clauses such as you mention in your letter respecting regular practice in fire-drill will for the future be inserted in the instructions given to captains and surgeon-superintendents.

I enclose copy of report from the Despatching Officer recounting the measures which have been taken with regard to boat and fire drill on board the emigrant ships despatched by me to New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister for Immigration,
Wellington.

W. TYRONE POWER,
Agent-General.

Enclosure 1 in No. 4.

Mr. E. A. SMITH to the AGENT-GENERAL.

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,

8th June, 1876.

SIR,—

With reference to the report No. 99, of 6th April, 1876, of the Hon. the Minister of Immigration on the "Salisbury," calling attention to "the flimsy character of the bulkheads dividing the hold from places accessible to the crew at night, resulting in the broaching of the cargo at the imminent risk of the lives of all on board," &c., &c., and to your instructions that I should make a full report to you thereon, I beg to state that the "Salisbury," as in the case of all ships chartered by you for the conveyance of emigrants fitted out in the port of London, was stowed under my superintendence, the stowage of the cargo being daily inspected either by myself or by one of my assistants, who report daily to me what has been done on board the several ships they may have visited. The whole of the wines, spirits, &c., carried as cargo in the "Salisbury" was stowed in the after-hold, blocked off by a bulkhead of cargo (bales, &c.), and could only be got at by pulling down a lot of that cargo, involving the work of hours. The bulk of the medical comforts, wines, spirits, and beer, as well as the like articles supplied for the cabin, was in the after-part of the between-decks, separated from the single women's compartment by a double bulkhead, against which the after block of single women's berths was built; a portion was in a store cabin in the cuddy, and the remainder (beer), for which there was not sufficient room in those places, was stowed in the square of the after-hatchway, and the only access thereto for the crew was by going down the after-hatch, which was fitted with strong hatches, secured by a strong iron hatch bar and a good lock; and to gain access thereto the sailors must have passed through the married compartment, and could not have got into the hold without the knowledge and connivance of those berthed in that compartment. Access to the hold in the fore-part of the ship was only into the coal-hole, and there was a strong bulkhead separating the coal-hole from the rest of the hold. Next to this aft was the water and salt provisions, and then cargo was stowed close up to the deck, nearly as far as the main hatchway. As it appears clear that some beer was pillaged, it must have been by the crew getting down through the main or after hatch at the medical comforts, and if proper watch had been kept by the constables this should not have been possible, as by the regulations a light should be kept burning at each hatch during the whole of the night, making it impossible to get at the hatches without being seen. Of necessity, a portion of the medical comforts (beer) must be kept accessible. If there is connivance at the removal of the hatch bars and hatches, it is a matter of small trouble after that to open a door of a bulkhead in the hold, let that bulkhead and lock to the door thereof be made as strong as possible. I feel confident, from the manner in which the cargo was stowed, that none of the cargo, beer, wine, or spirits could have been pillaged; and I can assure you that the very greatest care is taken in the blocking of all beer, wines, and spirits in all ships; in fact, no greater care could be taken, except by building a strong iron-lined bulkhead. To insist upon this in every ship would involve very considerable expense; still it can be done if I have your authority for insisting upon it.

I append a draft of the stowage of the hold of the "Salisbury," handed to me when I despatched the ship, and copies of letters and memoranda received from Captain Ashby, ship's husband, Mr. Anderson, cargo-superintendent of the New Zealand Shipping Company, and from Captain Davis, ship's husband of the Merchant Shipping Company, owners of the "Salisbury," in reply to my inquiries relative to the stowage of that ship's cargo.

I have, &c.,

EDWARD A. SMITH, R.N.,
Despatching Officer

The Agent-General for New Zealand.