

Enclosure in No. 22.

Mr. W. KENNAWAY to the AGENT-GENERAL.

Ship from Belfast.

MR. COCHRANE has frequently pressed upon the notice of the Agent-General the desirability of ships being despatched direct from Belfast. In the case of the last vessel therefrom—the “Conflict”—some difficulty was encountered in filling the vessel, although more than three months’ special notice was given of her sailing. There is always difficulty, also, in getting such vessels away punctually, and unless the ship loads at London, and is then towed round to Belfast, she is compelled to take ballast, which is a source of loss to the shipowner. In considering the reduced numbers of emigrants which are likely to be sent out, I am inclined to think that the North of Ireland emigration is sufficiently provided for by vessels sailing from Glasgow, while emigration from the South of Ireland can go from Plymouth. If, however, it is decided to send a vessel from Belfast, its destination should, I think, be Auckland, as the fact of Mr. Stewart’s settlement being in that province would bring forward a larger number of immigrants than there would be in the case of any other province. Mr. Cochrane should avoid holding out any prospect of a direct ship until it is definitely fixed.

Local Agents.

Mr. Cochrane refers to the “remodelling and replacing” the local Agents, and I quite agree with the spirit of his remarks. There is no doubt that to maintain an efficient staff of local Agents it is very desirable for some one experienced in the matter of emigration to occasionally visit the districts from which the class of emigrants most required can be obtained, for the purpose of conferring with the local Agents, or, if he is not sending in emigrants to the extent he ought, to see about replacing him.

In Ireland there are nominally sixty local Agents; out of these sixty, thirty only have during the past year supplied emigrants. Through these thirty Agents 781½ statutory adults have been obtained, the total number of Irish sent during the same year (1876) being over 2,300 statutory adults. Twelve out of the thirty supplied under ten each; six out of the thirty supplied under twenty each; eleven out of the thirty supplied under fifty each.

One (Mr. Turbitt, of Strabane) supplied 284 adults, being more than one-third of the number obtained through all the local Agents in Ireland. The total amount of commission paid for these emigrants was £321. It is quite possible that by means of the placards, papers, &c., distributed through the local Agents, many applications are made direct to this office, for I believe that in a great number of cases people of sufficient intelligence prefer applying direct to going to a local Agent. The advantages derived from local agencies are not therefore to be measured solely from the actual number of emigrants supplied by them, but still the amount of success in that direction is a good test as to the general efficiency of each agency. It would therefore, I think, be desirable that the list of Agents should be examined from time to time with a view of replacing those who do not efficiently represent this office. I am inclined to suggest, considering the diminished amount of emigration, that during the slack months of the year, the Agent at Edinburgh, for instance, might visit Ireland for the purpose of inspecting and organizing the local agencies preparatory to the next emigration season. Mr. Turbitt, at Strabane, has proved himself an active and reliable local Agent, and, with him and other local agencies, periodically inspected. I think that the Belfast special agency might be dispensed with. The North of Ireland is the part where very desirable emigrants can be obtained, and can, I believe, be worked from Scotland both as regards the local agencies and the shipment of emigrants by the Clyde ships. As regards the South of Ireland, which the Belfast agency has not touched, it has been found that a sufficient number of suitable emigrants, and proportionate to the extent of the country and population, can be obtained through local agencies and by means of advertising. The same system of periodically visiting the principal local agencies should, I think, be also adopted with advantage as regards both England and Scotland, and if the emigrants are to start from Plymouth, the agencies in the best centres, in the Western Counties more particularly, require looking after. To obtain an adequate number of applications from which to select and finally ship from 5,000 to 6,000 suitable emigrants, it is, I believe, still necessary to give publicity to the matter by means both of good local agencies and advertisements. It is to be hoped that the nomination system will eventually supply all that are wanted; but, so far, that class of emigrants have formed only a small portion of the emigrants sent. The nominations may be numerous enough, but for some reason or other a large number of those nominated do not avail themselves of the privilege. It would perhaps be interesting to ascertain how many of the persons applying for free passages finally embark. I believe, from my own personal observation, the following to be a fairly approximate estimate, viz. :—

Out of 100 applications—

- 15 are rejected or do not proceed further.
- 15 are approved but do not pay the outfit money.
- 10 are approved, pay their outfit money, but at the last do not go.
- 60 finally embark.

100

If, therefore, 6,000 emigrants are required, 10,000 must apply before the requisite number is made up. (See note at foot.) This may appear to be travelling outside the subject of local agencies, but I mention it to show that it is still necessary to maintain them for the purpose of obtaining the requisite number, more particularly as it would seem probable that the period during which the emigrant ships will be despatched will be limited to six months in each year. As far as I have been able to judge, the local Agents, as a rule, are reliable; but no doubt the applications sent in

NOTE.—Out of 5,183 adults despatched in June to December, 1876, only 826½ were nominated.