

Noumea, complaining of certain practices connected with the engagement of seamen at ports in New Zealand, and in New South Wales and Victoria.

I request that you will bring these papers under the consideration of your Ministers, and ask them to obtain the explanation in the matter desired by the Board of Trade, so far as regards the colony under your Government. Similar despatches have been addressed to the Governors of New South Wales and Victoria.

I have, &c.,

M. E. HICKS BEACH.

Governor the Most Hon. the Marquis of Normanby,
G.C.M.G., &c., &c.

Enclosure in No. 20.

THE BOARD OF TRADE TO THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

Seamen Abroad.

SIR,—

Board of Trade, Whitehall Gardens, 18th February, 1878.

I am directed by the Board of Trade to transmit herewith copies of two despatches received from Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Noumea, complaining of certain practices connected with the engagement of seamen at ports in New Zealand, New South Wales, and Victoria, and to request you to move Sir Michael Hicks Beach to obtain an explanation on the matter from the proper authorities.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS GRAY.

The Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, Downing Street.

Sub-Enclosure 1 to Enclosure in No. 20.

CONSUL LAYARD TO THE BOARD OF TRADE.

SIR,—

British Consulate, Noumea, 13th December, 1877.

In reply to your letter M. 13122, of the 11th of October last, I have the honor to acquaint you that I first obtained my information respecting the withdrawal of Form Discharge 1 from seamen, and the charge of a fee of five shillings for permission to ship, from a seaman being discharged from a New Zealand vessel on account of her sale at this port. His comrade confirmed his statement, as did the captain and two other masters of vessels, well known and respected here, who happened to be present, Messrs. Brady and Brown. They also told me that the same practice prevailed in Sydney and Victoria, and I think Adelaide also, but of this latter I am not quite sure.

On the Sydney case occurring I determined to report to you, as I did in my despatch of the 8th August.

There happens to be an Auckland vessel in the port now, and, on referring to her papers in my hands, I find one of the permits to re-ship alluded to, of which I annex a copy. It is torn from a "fly," as may be seen by the perforated edges, and all except the name of the man is printed. I cannot make out the shipping master's name, which occurs also in the articles, but it is that of the Auckland port. The practice is not confined to one port, but is the colonial custom.

I have, &c.,

E. C. LAYARD.

The Assistant Secretary, Marine Department,
Board of Trade, Whitehall Gardens.

COPY OF PERMIT TO SHIP.

(No. 6278.)

(Fee five shillings.)

New Zealand—Port of Auckland.

PERMIT.

Issued at the Customhouse, Port of Auckland.

THE bearer, Thomas Jones, has no certificate of discharge, but is permitted to re-employ himself.—28th November, 1877.

(Signed)

[Illegible],

Shipping Master.

Memo.—This is crossed, "Ada C. Owen," the name of the vessel in which the man has come here.—E. C. LAYARD, H.B.M. Consul.

Sub-Enclosure 2 to Enclosure in No. 20.

SIR,—

British Consulate, Noumea, 8th August, 1877.

Lately, when giving a British seaman a certificate of discharge (Dis. 1), as supplied by the Board of Trade, the man refused it, saying it would be of no use to him, and would be taken from him by the shipping master at the colonial port (Australian) whither he was going,