

follows: All passengers by ships from infected ports are carefully inspected by the Port Health Officer before pratique is granted. Where no sickness exists on board, the passengers are allowed to land on condition that they report themselves for medical inspection twice until ten days have elapsed from the time of departure from the infected port. Ten days was chosen as being the extreme period of incubation of plague. All the personal luggage of the passengers is carefully fumigated before it is allowed to be taken ashore. The passengers may then proceed to any part of the colony, provided they report themselves at the appointed times set forth in their licenses. Should a passenger fail to report, his name is immediately handed over to the police. For not reporting a passenger is liable to a fine of £300. The system is now working very well. Now and again we have some trouble, arising mainly through the ignorance or forgetfulness of passengers. Such a system of surveillance seems to me to give the maximum amount of safety to the colony, while it causes the minimum amount of interference with our lines of communication with the outside world. Were it possible for us to live unto ourselves alone, the procedure often urged by the unthinking makers of history might be capable of adoption—that is, to have nothing to do with those countries in which any dangerous infectious disease exists. This, of course, is quite out of the question.

In addition to the careful examination of the passengers and crew at the port of arrival, and the fumigation of their personal luggage, the ship herself is held in the stream for eight hours, during which time her cargo is fumigated. When she comes alongside certain precautions are taken, so that not only is no invitation held out to rats to come ashore, but every obstacle is placed in their way. After working-hours the ship is held off at least 4 ft. from the wharf, lights are placed between the ship and the wharf, and rat-guards are placed upon all hawsers. Though all these things are done, and thereby a considerable measure of safety is assured, there is no need to disguise the fact that they fall far short of offering an impregnable front to that enterprising “undesirable immigrant,” the rat. Fumigation while the ship is empty is by far and away the best time for the operation, and this is always done by the Union Steamship and Huddart-Parker Companies. It has been alleged by those who sit in high places that the fumes cannot possibly reach the inside of the packages, even if it affects the outside. While agreeing in the main that something more powerful than  $\text{SO}_2$  is desirable, it is difficult to reconcile this alleged inertness with the many claims which now and then are proffered by the indignant lady passenger who asserts that her costume from Worth’s has been utterly spoilt, though it was packed in a tin-lined case, or the baker who threatens the Department with an action because the “life has been knocked out of his flour.” Experiments have been and are being made with other disinfectants, the result of which I shall communicate later.

The only objection offered against this system of allowing passengers to land under license—namely, the monetary one—was overcome by our asking the shipping companies for the money. Under “The Public Health Act, 1900,” the cost of most matters pertaining to quarantine is cast upon the shipping companies. Here I would like to put on record the extreme courtesy by which any suggestions of the Department have always been received by the agents of the various shipping companies. Looking to the fact that the steps taken to protect the colony against infectious diseases from the outside must necessarily interfere more or less with the shipping and commercial lines, it says much for the tact and good sense of all parties that the system now at work should have been inaugurated and is now working as well as it is. In order to cover the expenses of the medical examination of passengers, all the larger passenger-boats are required to deposit £100 with the Department before pratique can be granted; smaller vessels, £50; and the coalers trading to the smaller ports, £25. These deposits are made in order to cover fumigation charges as well. As soon as a ship’s account is finished any balance that remains is handed back to the shipowner. The colony in this way is provided with a scheme of defence against infectious diseases at absolutely next to no cost to the State. Some idea of the work involved in carrying out this system may be gathered from the fact that in every town, large and small, from the North Cape to the Bluff, there had to be appointed a medical examiner. Not the least difficulty in closing a ship’s account is the difficulty in convincing the various medical men that in order to pay them it is necessary that they should send in their accounts for such work more frequently than once in three months.

As has been already stated, we find that almost all passengers help the departmental officers in every way they can. As, however, at the inception of this scheme one or two seemed to labour under the impression that for the 13th the 15th might be read, or for the 20th the 24th, just as it seemed best to them, that 12 noon might stand for any hour up to 9 or 10 at night, it was decided to prosecute one or two of the offenders as an object-lesson for the rest. One gentleman was fined £5 and costs, one lady 1s. and costs, and since then we have had little cause for complaint. The police have been of the very greatest assistance to us in hunting up the non-reporters. They have helped us in these and other measures which have been taken, and the thanks of the Department are due to the Commissioner and his staff.

As was pointed out in my last report, the danger from plague lies not so much in our communication with infected countries as it does on our unpreparedness should the disease break out. Plague has rarely been transmitted from one human being to another directly; the main object, therefore, of this elaborate system of supervision is that the Department may know at once should a case manage to pass our first line of defence. Small-pox, not plague, is the disease we have most to dread. I will, however, refer to this matter in a later part of my report.

#### *Internal Precautions against Plague.*

While the careful guarding of our seaports against the possible introduction of a case of the disease is a most important matter, we must not forget that it is within our walls that the main dangers lie. If we be clean, if our houses be well ventilated, and we have our vermin under control, it would not greatly endanger the public health even if cases of plague were landed. The