

PAPERS RELATING TO THE INTRODUCTION OF SCANDINAVIAN IMMIGRANTS.

No. 1.

The Hon. the NEW ZEALAND COMMISSIONERS to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

London, 9th September, 1870.

Enclosed we do ourselves the honor to forward a Memorandum on Emigration and Railways, in connection with a recent visit to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and North Germany.

This Memorandum will acquaint you with the steps we have taken towards inducing emigration from those countries to New Zealand.

We have, &c.,

The Hon. W. Gisborne.

F. D. BELL,
I. E. FEATHERSTON, } Commissioners.

Enclosure in No. 1.

MEMORANDUM ON Emigration.

NOTES of a Trip to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and North Germany, with a view of making inquiries respecting Emigration and narrow-gauge Railways.

Emigration.

In Norway, the following information was obtained in Christiania, the capital of the country:—The average number of emigrants from Norway (the chief ports of embarkation being Christiania and Bergen) is about 12,000 souls a year. Last year it amounted to 15,000; but emigration has, during the present year, very materially slackened, owing to the reports from their friends in America being less favourable than formerly. Both Norwegians and Swedes emigrate almost exclusively to Chicago, and the neighbouring States of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois, where there are large settlements of their countrymen, who have apparently done well, for they remit annually considerable sums to enable their relatives and friends to join them. They move in large bodies, or rather in whole communities, or as one party expressed it, "in whole church-congregations,"—old and young, single and married, able-bodied and the most infirm. Very few go from the towns. They are chiefly agricultural labourers or small farmers. They are first-rate axemen and sawyers, and understand the lumber trade thoroughly; expert boat and ship builders and fishermen; first-rate sailors (the Norwegian mercantile navy being the third largest in Europe); excellent joiners and carpenters; in short, owing to the suspension of all agricultural operations during so many months of the year, they are obliged to turn their hands to all kinds of indoor work, and to learn and follow some trade or other. They are represented as being extremely honest, frugal, and industrious, and all are more or less educated: for education is compulsory, and all are obliged to undergo an examination when they present themselves at about sixteen years of age for confirmation (a rite to which great importance is attached). If they fail to pass the examination, confirmation is refused, and they are obliged to attend the schools until they have attained the required standard; and until confirmed they cannot marry, and are subject to other disabilities. They seem to have great facility in acquiring the English language, and in habits, manners, and customs resemble very closely our own countrymen, especially the Scotch.

They pay the whole cost of their passage from Norway to New York, and thence to the State to which they are destined; in fact they are not allowed to land in any port of America unless they have the means of defraying the cost of their journey inland. They nearly all (at least four-fifths) go by steamer; the cost of the passage to New York is £7, or to Chicago £10. By sailing vessels they pay rather over £3 to New York; but they find their own provisions, and have only deck accommodation—the expense of the journey inland being, as already stated, about £3.

The emigration season commences in April and terminates at the end of October, most of the ports by that time being closed by the ice.

In seeking to divert a portion of this stream of emigration from America to New Zealand, two difficulties presented themselves. First, the inability of the people to pay the increased cost of their passage; and second, their unwillingness to go to a country where they have no friends, and of which they know nothing. These objections were started, not only in Norway, but also in Sweden, Denmark, and North Germany; the second being the one on which the greatest stress was laid.

To the suggestion that the first difficulty might be got over by the New Zealand Government paying the difference between the cost of the passage to America and that to New Zealand, it was replied that such an inducement would entirely fail to meet the case, inasmuch as the emigrants would still lose the assistance of their friends; and further, that the Norwegians, as a people, are exceedingly cautious, difficult to move out of the ordinary track, and very suspicious of mere Emigration Agents and their reports. It was proposed that two or three agents should be sent out to New Zealand, at the expense of the New Zealand Government, to report upon the Colony as a field for emigration; but it was evident that these reports (even if they were of any value) would not carry the same weight as those coming from actual settlers, and would probably not circulate very widely; besides, a delay of at least a year