

Immediately on the arrival of the "Palmerston" and "Christian McAusland" at Otago, with sickness reported on board, the Government telegraphed to the Immigration Commissioners, asking whether these vessels had scuttles, and received from the Commissioners the following telegram:—

"Dunedin, December 7, 1872.—Under Secretary of Lands and Immigration.—Ships have not side ports or scuttles on lower deck."

On receipt of this answer, Mr. Waterhouse addressed to me his Memorandum of 18th December, (No. 45, 1872), in which he attributed the mortality on board the two vessels to the absence of scuttles. A few days afterwards Mr. Waterhouse addressed me a further Memorandum on the arrival of the "Jessie Readman," in which he stated that, "so far as he had been able to ascertain, the 'Jessie Readman' was the most suitable emigrant ship that had yet arrived at the Port of Wellington.

Now, I beg respectfully to call the attention of the Government to the following facts:—

(1.) That the Government, at the time of making the complaints, had in their possession Mr. Carter's report (July 29, 1872), in which, among other things, he mentions that the Palmerston "has sufficient scuttles on her sides."

(2.) That, although the Commissioners had in a previous telegram reported that the "Palmerston" had no scuttles, they subsequently in their report (dated 23rd December, 1872,) stated that "The ventilation of the hospital is by a large skylight and two port-holes, one on each side of the ship. . . . The married people's compartment is separated from the single women's by a strong bulk-head, the ventilation being carried by three hatchways, six side-ports and two deck ventilators. The single men's compartment is separated by a bulk-head from the married people's, the ventilation being carried by hatchway, one deck ventilator, and two port-holes." And further, "that no emigrant ship had ever entered the Port of Otago better fitted in every respect for the conveyance of emigrants."

(3.) That the "Christian McAusland," which may undoubtedly be considered the crack ship of the splendid Clyde fleet, has no scuttles.

(4.) That the "Jessie Readman," which Mr. Waterhouse, in his Memorandum of 17th December (No. 42, 1872), pronounced "the most suitable emigrant ship that had yet arrived at the port of Wellington," has no scuttles.

And here, perhaps, I may be permitted to observe that the statements in Mr. Waterhouse's Memorandum of 23rd November, that the ship "Palmerston," after having been out from Hamburg only 109 days, was long overdue, and that she was not classed A1, coupled with the eagerness of the inquiry on the arrival of this vessel and the "Christian McAusland" at Dunedin, as to whether they had scuttles,—the immediate response, "No scuttles,"—the silence observed as to the discrepancy between Mr. Colin Allan's telegram, "No scuttles,"—and the subsequent report of the Commissioners, —seem to indicate an earnest desire to support a foregone conclusion in regard to the "Palmerston."

Be, however, this as it may, it is perfectly clear that the mortality on board the "Palmerston" was not owing to the absence of scuttles; and that the excellent health of the emigrants on board the "Jessie Readman" was not due to the presence of scuttles.

With respect to Mr. Waterhouse's observation, in his Memorandum of December 17th (No. 43, 1872), that "under ordinary circumstances no ships should be chartered for the service which are not provided with ports or scuttles on the lower or immigrants' deck, sufficient to insure thorough ventilation in ordinary weather," I have simply to make the following brief remarks:—

Ventilation dependent on scuttles must necessarily—especially in such a voyage as that from England to New Zealand—be wholly imperfect, for during the greater part of such a voyage the scuttles must remain closed; and therefore no ship can be deemed suitable for emigrants in which perfect ventilation cannot be secured irrespective of scuttles.

For many years past the building of wooden ships has almost entirely ceased, and iron ships have taken their place, in which, generally speaking, there are no scuttles. Shipowners almost invariably object to have scuttles cut in the sides of their ships; and in wooden vessels there is often what is called the "stringer-beam" in the line in which the scuttles ought to be, and to cut through which would materially weaken the vessel. I know as a fact that the ships best suited for the conveyance of emigrants, whether sailing from the Clyde, the Mersey, or the Thames, are not provided with scuttles.

Mr. Ottywell, who was engaged for some years in the conduct of emigration to Canterbury, informs me that in 1869, when he invited tenders for emigrant ships for the whole of that season, Messrs Patrick Henderson and Co., after inspecting the conditions of contract, intimated to him that the provisions requiring side-scuttles would prevent them tendering their vessels.

I submit that the conclusions which are fairly deducible from the above statements are:—First, That no vessels ought to be deemed suitable for the conveyance of emigrants in which the ventilation cannot be made perfect independently of scuttles; and, secondly, that to insist upon emigrant ships having side-scuttles would exclude from the service the highest class of vessels, and would necessarily increase to an enormous extent the cost of emigration.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,  
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington, N.Z.

### No. 30.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(No. 214.)

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S. W.,  
11th April, 1873.

SIR,—

Referring to the Hon. Mr. Waterhouse's Memorandum of 31st December, 1872 (No. 50, 1872), forwarding copy of the report of the Commission appointed to board emigrant ships on their arrival at Port Chalmers, and directing my special attention to the remarks of the Commissioners with reference to the hospital accommodation, I beg to offer the following remarks:—