

## No. 35.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the Hon. the MINISTER for IMMIGRATION.

(No. 1578.)

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S. W.,

4th September, 1874.

SIR,—

I was unable, owing to the absence of Mr. Hill from London, to give by last mail a detailed reply to your letter of 4th June, No. 317, in which you express your regret at the agreement I have made with that gentleman for the establishment of an Emigration Depôt at Blackwall, and say you will be glad to receive any proposal which Mr. Hill may be ready to make for transferring to the Government his interest in that depôt.

2. I have considered with all due care and attention the reasons which you have assigned for the conclusion at which you have arrived; and while ready, should you adhere to that conclusion, to take all necessary measures to give it effect, I must add that the judgment which I formed "as to the advantages of that agreement," from a review of all the circumstances on the spot, rests unchanged.

3. I should certainly have gravely erred if, as you seem to suppose, I had, in arranging for the establishment of such a depôt, omitted to provide for due control over its management, and for the power to make my own regulations as to its discipline. But the agreement expressly provides that the depôt is to be conducted under the same regulations as are now in force at the emigrant depôt at Plymouth. As to the practical efficiency of those regulations, I have had abundant and eminently satisfactory evidence, especially from the Agency of the Colony of Victoria, which for upwards of twenty-five years constantly employed, through the Emigration Commission, and since directly, that depôt; and I have also had a certain amount of experience myself as to the working of the regulations in force there in connection with New Zealand emigration. I may, besides, draw your attention to the clause in the agreement, which provides that Mr. Hill is to carry out any further rules which the Agent-General may lay down for his people.

4. I did not desire to assign in the arrangement I made any undue place to the consideration of economy, but as to the comparative economy of establishing and maintaining the depôt as a Government institution, or of availing myself of its advantages at a fixed charge and for a limited period, I do not entertain a doubt. I feel very certain that in adopting the latter course I have not been merely loading the department with Mr. Hill's profit in addition to the necessary ordinary expenditure. True economy here, it appeared to me, was concerned with somewhat larger considerations, and especially with the question whether subsidised emigration is certain to continue at its present expenditure for the period of seven years, which I may state as the minimum period on which I must have based my calculations for the establishment of the Blackwall depôt in direct connection with this office. Mr. Hill, having had the experience of many years as a depôt contractor in connection with emigration not confined to one colony, may see a fair prospect of profit on other contracts of the same kind, should not a single emigrant for New Zealand beyond the 30,000 conditioned in my agreement pass through his depôt. But I could not legitimately enter upon such a speculation. I have named a period of seven years, because I may say it is quite impossible to obtain a suitable building in a proper site for a less term. The outlay which I should have incurred in adapting the building at Blackwall, formerly a hotel, for the purposes of a depôt, would have amounted to upwards of £2,000. Mr. Hill is in a condition to prove that he has already expended this amount. The annual charges, independent of the staff, would be £1,180. The charge for salaries and board of staff may be taken at £810. Mr. Hill is, moreover, bound at the expiry of his lease of seven years to reinstate the building in its original condition; and it is estimated that this may involve a further outlay of not less than £400. Dividing the above sum of £2,000 and this further sum of £400 over the entire period of seven years, and adding to it the charges for establishment and staff which I have specified, I find that the annual cost of the depôt would exceed £2,300. Let me suppose the depôt to be maintained exclusively for New Zealand emigrants, and that during the whole period of seven years they should be passed through at the rate of 10,000 a year, a rate which presupposes the expenditure of a million during that period on State-aided emigration. The cost of the depôt establishment and staff would be at that rate 4s. 6d. per head independent of rations. I have carefully inquired as to the probable cost of rations. I am informed that when the Emigration Commissioners last took tenders for similar depôt accommodation to that which Mr. Hill has agreed to furnish me, the lowest tender was at the rate of 2s. 6d. a day, and the price of provisions in London has since very considerably increased. I do not believe I could obtain a really reliable tender for rations alone at less than 1s. 6d. a day. Taking the normal period of two days for each emigrant's stay in depôt, the cost of the establishment and rations would thus be 7s. 6d. per head, or 3s. 9d. per head per day, as against the 2s. 3d. per head per day which I am bound to pay under my agreement with Mr. Hill for the use of the depôt and for rations.

5. With the economy involved in the calculation I have just stated, is connected the consideration of the question of a permanent staff. I certainly believe, and my assertion is grounded on the experience of Mr. Hill's other depôt, that I can get the work done as efficiently and more cheaply by contract than by attaching to this office a permanent depôt staff entitled to settled salaries, irrespective of the extent to which emigration may be proceeding for the time being. I certainly find it desirable, as you observe, to have my own officers at the depôt, but I do not propose on that account to make any addition to my present staff, which I find sufficient for all purposes of superintendence.

6. Especially I do not at present contemplate the appointment of a permanent medical officer at Blackwall. On the point of medical supervision in connection with the Blackwall Depôt, and also of the suitability of the depôt for its special purpose from that point of view, allow me to submit to you independent evidence of the very highest authority. I refer to the report of the Medical Officer of Health for the port of London, to the Port Sanitary Committee of the City Corporation, of which I append a copy. You will see by the marked paragraphs at page 10, which I quote below,\* what very

\* During the past eighteen months the New Zealand Agency have been sending to that colony a large number of emigrants from this port, no less than 3,978 statute adults having started during the past month, and 21,400 since the beginning of the current year. Having regard to events that occurred last autumn, when cholera appeared among a party