

I think it will not be out of place to refer to the view which I understand has been entertained in the colony, that the immigrants ought not to have been re-embarked in the "Oxford." Such a view would entail serious consequences, for, if there was a rule that, on the occurrence of an accident disabling an emigrant ship and compelling her to put back, the emigrants should be transferred to another vessel, it would involve the forfeiture of the whole passage-money. If the owners of such a ship fulfil the conditions of the Passengers Act as to the time of completing repairs and alimony to passengers, and if the Imperial officers of the Board of Trade are satisfied that there is nothing to prevent the ship from proceeding on her voyage, the emigrants must be put on board again, or the passage-money be forfeited. Now, although I should have been very glad from the first to transfer the "Oxford's" people to another ship, and did, in fact, refuse an hour's grace to her owners for completing her repairs, I was not prepared to create a precedent which would have involved such a loss of money. Moreover, a moment's reflection will show that there is no possibility under our existing system of inventing any precaution which shall be really effectual for the purpose that would have been wanted in the "Oxford." No emigrant ship ever leaves Plymouth without more or less danger that there may be lurking among her people some form of contagious or infectious disease. A large number of emigrants are suddenly assembled together from distant parts of the country, and huddled into a dépôt only a few hours before their embarkation; they may be, and often are, mixed up with other large numbers in the same dépôt, who are embarking for another colony; even when they are not so mixed they are certain to occupy buildings which have been just used by others who have preceded them; undetected contagion or infection may exist among them in yet undeveloped germs; the emigrants who sailed yesterday for one colony may be the cause of this undetected disease afterwards breaking-out among those sailing for another colony to-day; there may be the same lurking danger among the crew: when once the ship has sailed all trace is lost, for any scientific purpose, of the true cause of any subsequent outbreak of disease. Typhoid, of all such diseases, is perhaps the one where the danger is most formidable, and the true cause most mysterious and difficult to trace; and an illustration of this is afforded by the "Oxford" itself, where, although the vessel was allowed to leave by the officers of the Board of Trade on the 26th April, because (after specially careful examination) no fresh case had appeared within the recognized term of incubation, typhoid suddenly appeared on the 18th May, continuing among the single men and girls only, and leaving the married people entirely exempt. I shall be very curious to see how this point is treated in the medical evidence before the Commission.

When I receive the report of that Commission it is not unlikely I may have to address you again; but I have been careful only to say here what could not in any way affect the inquiry.

I regret that I cannot send you Dr. Hasard's journal of the first voyage, for I have not got it; he ought to have given it to Dr. Wasse for continuation on the second voyage, and I did not think of getting it from him.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Immigration, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 1 in No. 2.

MEMORANDUM for Mr. KENNAWAY.

WITH reference to your memorandum on the report of the "Oxford," calling upon me to report on the statements made therein relative to the alleged short-shipment of certain stores and articles of food: I beg to inform you that the provisions and stores were surveyed in the East India Dock by the Emigration Officer, Dr. Hasard, and myself. Every package was counted, and found to correspond with the list furnished by the provision merchants, and a certain proportion of each description was examined and all the articles were found good; the Dock Company take care that all the goods examined and passed are shipped.

When the "Oxford" returned to Cardiff the officer in charge of the stores was directed to make out a list of what had been expended. This list was, as far as possible, verified by Dr. Hasard, and all deficiencies were made good. I attach a list of the provisions which were thus supplied. It was to the interest of the owners and charterers that all deficiencies should be made good, as the expenses fell on the underwriters; there could therefore be no object in not supplying deficiencies.

These provisions and stores were examined by the Emigration Officer and the Medical Inspector under the Passengers Act at Cardiff, who told me, when I went there to see to the re-embarkation of the emigrants, that all expenditure had been made good, and that the provisions were the best they had ever seen. Dr. Hasard did not leave a copy of provisions and stores' list with Dr. Wasse, so I gave him my copy, and I furnished him also with a list of the provisions put on board at Cardiff. I am therefore utterly unable to explain how there could have been any deficiency of children's stores and candles, which are the only articles specified by the Surgeon-Superintendent as being deficient, as the full quantity of provisions and stores for 140 days for 266 adults, 68 children, and 4 infants was put on board in London, and the expenditure was made good at Cardiff.

EDWARD A. SMITH,
Despatching Officer.

24th September, 1883.

Enclosure 2 in No. 2.

LIST of ADDITIONAL STORES forwarded to Cardiff for "Oxford" by Messrs. Low, Huckvale, and Co.

Crew: Ex navy biscuit, 13 cwt., 13 bags; flour, 392 lb., 2 barrels; rice, 1 cwt., 1 bag; sugar, 2 cwt.; 1 barrel; coffee, 56 lb., 2 bags; rum, 15 gallons, 1 cask; salt beef, 2,432 lb., 8 tierces; salt pork, 1,600 lb., 8 barrels; butter, 330 lb., 4 firkins; suet, 1 cwt., 1 keg. *Cabin*: Butter, 56 lb., 8 tins in