

the 29th instant. After providing passages to this extent, it was estimated that there would be a mixed number of emigrants for various ports, which (including those likely to go under the nominations received by last mail) would make up a further number of about 250 statute adults (principally for the Northern Island); and these I have arranged shall go in the steamer "Victory," starting also about the end of the month, for Wellington and Otago. I propose then to suspend sending out any more emigrants until July next, except such as it may be expedient, for special reasons, to forward by the regular steamers of April, May, and June.

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No. 22.

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

(Memorandum.) 7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 29th February, 1884.

REFERRING to the report of the Royal Commission respecting the ship "Oxford," and to my letter (No. 407) of the 19th December last concerning the immigration dépôt at Plymouth, I herewith transmit copy of a letter which I have received from Dr. Wasse, the Surgeon of the "Oxford," in which that officer reports on the condition of the dépôt during the time he was there in charge of the "Oxford" emigrants. Dr. Wasse also gives his recollection of what passed between myself and the emigrant M— at the interview I had with him and other emigrants, and to which I more particularly referred in my letter (No. 280) of the 15th October, 1883. F. D. BELL.

The Hon. the Minister of Immigration, Wellington.

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Enclosure in No. 22.

DR. WASSE to the AGENT-GENERAL.

SIR,—

London, 28th February, 1884.

I beg to tender my thanks for the opportunity of perusing the papers respecting the Plymouth immigration dépôt, and the emigrant ship "Oxford," which you have been good enough to afford me.

In the evidence given by certain immigrants before the Commission appointed by His Excellency the Governor of New Zealand to inquire into the case of the ship "Oxford," many statements occur concerning the Plymouth Dépôt, which would lead persons to suppose not only that it is much mismanaged, but that it is a totally unfit place for the reception of colonial emigrants. Moreover the Commissioners, acting on these statements, express a very strong opinion of this nature.

These allegations are quite contrary to the facts as observed by me while in charge of the "Oxford" emigrants at Plymouth for several weeks. I need scarcely say that during that time I was constantly in and out of the dépôt, and had ample opportunity of observing the existing state of things in every part of it. I was often in the dormitories and noticed the bedding, and never found it other than clean, and free from vermin.

Owing to the unusual number of emigrants passing through the dépôt about the time the "Oxford" sailed, some of the beds were unavoidably overcrowded; and for the same reason the floors of some of the mess-rooms were at times very dirty: this was, however, by no means the rule. Every means was employed by the dépôt officials to secure cleanliness, and carbolic acid soap was constantly used for washing the floors, benches, &c.

With regard to the vermin, many of the "Oxford" emigrants, on their second arrival at the dépôt, brought them with them in large numbers on their clothes; great pains were taken by the matron and other dépôt officials to get rid of them.

I never observed unnecessary harshness in their treatment of the emigrants, and, what appears to me the most significant fact of all is that never once, during the time I was in charge, was any complaint made to me by any emigrant with reference either to treatment or accommodation. The master and matron always appeared to me most attentive and painstaking. It is to be remembered that the "Oxford" emigrants, on account of their misfortunes and long sojourn at Plymouth, had become especially discontented; this was seen in their being often exceedingly troublesome at the dépôt, and in the querulousness of their evidence before the Commission.

With regard to the statement made by the emigrant, G— M—, that you promised to send him out in a steamer and make him some recompense if he would say nothing concerning a letter sent by him to a friend in New Zealand and returned thence to you, I can only say that I was present at the interview you held with the emigrants at Plymouth and heard what passed between yourself and M— at that meeting, and that, to my certain knowledge, you made no remark of any such nature.

Of course if the dépôt had been dirty, or abounding with vermin, it would have been my duty to report to you. I contradicted in my evidence the statements made against it, and there was no indication of their having made a special impression on the Commissioners' minds so as to make it advisable for me to press the matter. I think it much to be regretted that no copy either of the evidence given or of the Commissioners' report was submitted to me in New Zealand. The report had already been submitted to the Governor, and even published, before I had any opportunity of becoming acquainted with its contents; I was still detained in quarantine at the time, and my only information was gleaned from the Wellington papers, information which I now find to have been incomplete, consisting only of extracts.

I have, &c.,

GERVAS MILLS WASSE,

Late Surgeon-Superintendent of the ship "Oxford."

Sir F. D. Bell, K.C.M.G., Agent-General for New Zealand.