

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE WITH

No 7.

AGENT-GENERAL to HON. COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Hamburg, 25th May, 1872.

I have the honor to enclose you a list of vessels at present laid on for the conveyance or emigrants, with their ports of destination, and dates of sailing.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. W. Gisborne,

I. E. FEATHERSTON.

SHIPS TO BE DESPATCHED.

For Auckland	...	...	" City of Auckland "	...	...	28th May
" do.	...	...	" Robert Henderson "	...	...	10th June
" do.	...	...	A Ship	...	...	16th July
" Wellington	...	...	" Lady Jocelyn "	...	...	29th June
" do.	...	...	A ship (" Chile " ?)	...	...	24th July
" Napier	...	...	" Ballarat "	...	...	14th June
" Nelson	...	...	" Asterope " ?	...	...	24th July
" Canterbury	...	...	" St. Leonards "	...	...	19th June
" do.	...	...	" Zealandia "	...	...	31st July
" Otago	...	...	" Hydaspes "	...	...	21st June
" do.	...	...	A Ship	...	...	13th July.

No. 8.

AGENT-GENERAL to HON. COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Hamburg, 25th May, 1872.

I have the honor to inform you that a short time previous to my leaving London I requested Mr. Seaton to proceed to the Orkney and Shetland Isles, for the purpose of inducing some of the fishermen there, with their wives and families, to emigrate, with the view of their being located in the special settlement contemplated by the Superintendent of Otago on Stewart's Island.

The accounts previously rendered to me of the prospects of emigration from those islands were far from encouraging. Poverty, ignorance, and especially distrust of a proffered boon, were sad stumbling blocks in the way of persuading these people to move from a land of starvation to a land of plenty. But a new, and, I am afraid, to the minds of the colonists, a more serious difficulty or obstacle has arisen.

Mr. Seaton, in a letter addressed to Mr. Morrison, and forwarded to me here, dated Portree, 16th May, says:—" There seems to be good ground for the report I wrote you of, that smallpox is very prevalent in Stornway, and said to be of a very bad type. The fishing boats are not to be allowed to assemble there as usual, and it is also asserted that fever has broken out. A gentleman who came down from Strome in the steamboat with me, intending to go to Stornway, called this morning and told me that he was going to return, as he had met a gentleman at the Portree Hotel, who informed him that it was dangerous for parties to visit the place, and he advised me to turn back also. I intend to see for myself, but in the meantime will you be kind enough to lay the matter before the Agent-General, and let me know his opinion on the subject, as I would be very sorry to act in such a case upon my own responsibility."

Under ordinary circumstances I should have had no hesitation in instructing Mr. Seaton to carry out the mission entrusted to him, and to ignore the existence of smallpox, but after Mr. Seaton had declared the disease to be of a virulent form, I felt that there was no other course open to me than to withdraw him from the field until further enquiries are made.

But this raises the question—Is emigration to be prohibited from all countries in which smallpox is known to exist?

I enclose you the Registrar-General's last report, from which you will learn that smallpox has been raging for the last two years, and is still raging in every country of Europe—in country districts equally as in towns.

But, in considering this question, I venture, as a medical man, to lay down the following propositions as incontestable:—

1. That vaccination is not an absolute, or anything like an absolute preventive.

2. That, seeing that the incubation extends over a period of from twelve days to fourteen without, in many cases, any perceptible symptoms during a great part of that period, it is seldom, if ever, possible for a medical man to detect the disease at the incipency of its incubation.

If these propositions can be maintained, then it would seem to follow that by no possible precautions can you prevent the disease occasionally developing itself on board an emigrant vessel—it may be a few, or fourteen days after the vessel has sailed. The wonder is that the disease, when it is so prevalent as it at present is, does not break out on board every emigrant ship.

It is urged by some that you can prevent this by establishing depôts and keeping the emigrants there a certain time, but it is more than probable that the depôts would prove mere hatching nests. Others urge, ship the emigrants from a port where the disease does not exist, but, unfortunately, no such port is to be found; but, at any rate, why not revaccinate them all round before embarkation. The reply usually given to this suggestion is, that revaccination will have no effect upon the disease