

2. The letters sent out with information were 101 in number.
3. The forms of application for passage issued were 32, and of these were returned and sent to London 25, representing 44 persons.
4. The return made to the Government comprised only 22 emigrants, 11 in January, 9 in February, and 2 in March.
5. The emigration from Ireland having commenced to America, the practice was introduced of sending the emigrants chiefly in spring; and although the circumstances connected with our emigration are very different, this practice is still adhered to, and inquiries are now becoming more numerous. 8 applications, representing 21 persons, have been sent since the beginning of the present month, and a good many are out which will probably be returned before the end of it.
6. The number of applications sent during the last quarter contrasts very unfavourably with the corresponding quarter of last year. This I attribute to various causes: that named in my report of 1st July, part 5; the discontinuance of advertising, and to the diminished emigration from the country. This last, however, should not affect us, as that to America having been greatly checked, we should have more. Those coming forward are chiefly from the connections made in the two last years, as I understand the emigrants then sent have written home with favourable accounts.

I have, &c.,

PATRICK MASON,
Agent.

The Agent-General for New Zealand, London.

No. 134.

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

(No. 240.)

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,
15th April, 1875.

SIR,—

I have the honor to enclose you a copy of a letter which I have addressed to the President of the Board of Trade, suggesting certain amendments in "The Imperial Passengers Act, 1855," which at present, with the Amending Act of 1863, regulates the administrative surveillance exercised at the ports of the United Kingdom over emigrant ships. The circumstances which transpired on the inquiry into the burning of the "Cospatrick" have led me to the conclusion that, apart from the precautions recommended by the Court of Inquiry, the Act itself needs amendment in certain ways, upon which, after careful consideration, I have submitted my opinion to the Board of Trade. I have also communicated a copy of this letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; and I further enclose copies of the replies I have received from both departments.

The Board of Trade have already instituted inquiries with regard to the propriety of increasing the number of articles to be classed as combustibles, and so excluded from such ships; and I have reason to hope that effectual legislation may take place, in the sense I have ventured to suggest, in the course of this session.

I have, &c.,

I. E. FEATHERSTON,
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

Enclosure 1 in No. 134.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PRESIDENT of the BOARD of TRADE.

7, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W.,
23rd March, 1875.

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Gray's letter of the 8th instant, transmitting a copy of the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry held into the loss of the emigrant ship "Cospatrick," and I think it my duty, as representing the Government of New Zealand, in whose service that ship was chartered, to submit, for the consideration of the Board of Trade, some observations and suggestions on the report of the Court.

2. I have, in the first instance, to state that I entirely concur in the conclusion, as to the origin of the fire, at which the Court arrived. It is notorious that the broaching of cargo for the purpose of getting at spirits or beer is only too common on board of Australian and New Zealand ships. In the fore hold of the "Cospatrick" "there was a quantity of bottled beer stored in straw in casks, and closely adjoining to a number of barrels of varnish. It was proved to the satisfaction of the Court that it was possible to reach the fore hold through the bulkhead which separated them from the fore peak. A light dropped in the straw, a slight leakage from a barrel of varnish in the vicinity, would thus suffice to account for a conflagration which, in the course of two hours, utterly destroyed the ship and 370 people who failed to reach the boats. If it be true, as I believe, that the fire originated in the vicinity of the varnish, the complete and rapid destruction of the ship was, from the first moment, inevitable—for the difference in inflammable quality between varnish and petroleum, or naphtha, is only a difference of degree. There were also, as the report of the Court states, in addition to 178 gallons of varnish, 95 gallons of turpentine on board. Putting out of account the more or less inflammable character of the general cargo, which was largely composed of alcoholic spirits, I am hardly exaggerating when I say that here were combustibles enough to account for the utterly uncontrollable character of the fire.

3. When I turn to the Passengers Act and examine the list of articles which is given as a guide to the Emigration Officer, who is bound to certify that there are no combustibles on board, I find gunpowder, vitriol, lucifer matches, specified as of this class, but not one of the highly inflammable oils whose tendency it is to produce sudden conflagration. Gunpowder may destroy a ship by explosion,