

was always stationed at each hatchway during the night, who must have discovered it. Neither do we agree in the suggestion of spontaneous combustion of some part of the cargo itself. It cannot be doubted that the cargo was of an inflammable nature, yet at the same time it was most carefully stowed, and was similar in all respects to the cargoes generally carried in large passenger and emigrant ships trading to the Australian and New Zealand colonies.

Our unanimous opinion is, that the fire originated in the fore hold, which was separated, as before stated, from the fore peak by a wooden bulkhead. It was given in evidence that the two upper boards in this bulkhead had been and could be easily knocked down when required, and an entrance thus gained to the fore hold. The manner in which the cargo was stowed in this fore hold has already been described.

From the very rapid manner in which the fire spread, we can come to no other conclusion than that some of the crew or emigrants must have taken advantage of this access to the fore hold for the purpose of plundering the cargo, and that, using naked lights or matches, they must have set fire to straw or other inflammable material; the scuttle being open, the smoke and flames would probably be drawn to that spot where they would come in contact with the tar, oil, varnish, pitch, &c., which was comprised in the ship's stores, rendering any attempt to get the fire under to prove of little or no avail.

Upon the second question, we are of opinion that the "Cospatrick" had her proper number of boats, the cubic capacity of which was in excess of that required by the law; and though it is to be regretted that at the first alarm of fire being given no steps were taken to have the boats in readiness on their being required, we cannot feel surprised at the terrible result, when we take into consideration that the fire broke out at 1 a.m., when all except the watch were below, the fearful rapidity of its progress, and the panic that would naturally be caused among the men and women at such a time.

Having given our opinion as to what we consider to have been the origin of the fire, as well as the part of the vessel in which we believe it to have first broken out, we are anxious, as requested by the Board of Trade, so far as lies in our power, to suggest some means which may in future be adopted to guard against the recurrence of such a fearful disaster.

1. We think it most important that all wooden vessels, carrying or about to carry passengers or emigrants, should have a coal-hole bulkhead fitted as strong as the ingenuity of shipwrights can suggest, constructed of hard wood, and secured to hard-wood stanchions of suitable dimensions. This description of bulkhead would effectually cut off all communication between the fore peak and the main hold, and any attempt at plunder be frustrated. In iron vessels this object is attained by the collision bulkhead.

2. With regard to the boats, we think the practice of stowing them keel uppermost most objectionable, as it happens in many cases that many lives are sacrificed before they can be turned up and launched. We suggest that they should always be stowed on chocks, and we consider that all ships carrying passengers or emigrants should be compelled to exercise their crew weekly, weather permitting, at fire and boat stations, and that an entry should be made in the official log-book certifying that such had been done. Further, that properly fitted gear for putting the boats over the side should be kept in readiness near them in case of an emergency.

We concur in this report.

JOHN S. CASTLE.  
CHARLES E. PRYCE.  
W. H. TURNER.

J. H. PATTESON,  
Stipendiary Magistrate.

### No. 130.

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

(No. 219.)

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

SIR,—

6th April, 1875.

In continuation of my letter of 22nd January, No. 50, on the subject of Continental emigration, I have the honor to forward, for your information, a copy of the report of my principal agent for this service, Mr. Kirchner, of Darmstadt, on his operations during the year 1874.

2. With reference to Mr. Kirchner's various important suggestions, on the propriety of a translation of the Handbook into German, as to encouraging the emigration of Swedish single females, of railway labourers from Italy, and of subjects of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in general, I should say that I have deferred communicating his report to you in the hope that I might be able to have the advantage of conferring with the Hon. the Premier upon the several questions involved before referring them for your consideration. Mr. Vogel's continued indisposition has, however, hitherto prevented my bringing business of secondary importance under his attention, and I feel that I should not longer delay informing your department on the subject. I will, however, take the first opportunity that offers of bringing the various subjects under his notice.

3. Meantime I do not hesitate to recommend Mr. Kirchner's suggestion, as to transmitting the correspondence of German immigrants settled in the colony through him, to your favourable consideration.

I have, &c.,  
I. E. FEATHERSTON,  
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Minister for Immigration, Wellington, N.Z.

### Enclosure in No. 130.

*Mr. Kirchner's Emigration Report for 1874.*

Darmstadt, 31st January, 1874.

DURING the last year four vessels were despatched from Hamburg to New Zealand, under your first