

we hold, has been up to the present time just under £21 10s. per adult, and about £17 13s. per head.

As I have stated, promissory notes have been taken from immigrants for extra children; and, in some cases, for any member of a family who might be over age, or otherwise considered unsuitable as a free immigrant. Honorable members will also recollect that before we introduced the system of free immigration, promissory notes were taken for part of the passage money of assisted immigrants. The total amount of promissory notes taken by the Government up to the present time is £57,767. I am sorry to say that the total amount collected, notwithstanding that very great efforts have been made, is only £6,100, and there is now outstanding about £51,600 on promissory notes. The Government have therefore set their faces as much as possible against receiving promissory notes, and intend rather to take a much smaller amount in cash, so that there should be nothing hanging over an immigrant on his arrival, but that he should be able to settle down. I think, and the House will agree with me, that it is demoralizing that a man should give a promissory note, and then when he comes out here he should think—as apparently a very large number of these men do think—that he is hardly dealt with because he finds that other men have got out free, and there is always something hanging over him, which must tend to check his usefulness as a citizen, and must tend to injure his morality.

As honorable gentlemen know by the papers laid on the table, the Agent-General, with the advice of Sir Julius Vogel, has entered into a new contract for the introduction of immigrants, and the price per head has been increased. The contract as we have it at present has not been signed, and according to our last advices it was awaiting the return of the Agent-General from the Continent, where he had gone, not being in very good health. The letters received yesterday said that the contract would come into operation in August, but it was not stated whether it had been actually signed or not, so I am not able to supply the House with certain information on the subject. We have been paying hitherto for passage money £14 10s. per statute adult for each immigrant landed, half that price being paid for persons shipped but who died upon the voyage; and under the new arrangement we have to pay £16 per adult, and £9 for children between one and twelve years. Now, although we have been nominally only paying £14 10s., the cost was really over £16, for we had found it necessary, upon the recommendation of the doctors, and also from the death-rate which had occurred, to put other and extra provisions on board, which amounted in round numbers to £1 11s. per head. Thus, though there is an apparent increase, there is practically a slight diminution in the price per adult: but the whole contract is really at a slight advance in price, because children would, as a rule, cost £9 under the new contract, instead of £8 under the old. But the children are provided with a much more liberal scale of diet than formerly. Under the new scale, each child receives fresh bread instead of biscuit, and also one pint of milk daily. I believe, when honorable members consider this arrangement, they will think it a wise one, for it is a great mistake to attempt to cut down the price per head to such a rate that it is impossible to feed the immigrants properly. To my mind it is far better and far cheaper to spend a pound or so more upon the dietary scale than to have men arrive here in a weak state, subject to fever and all sorts of other diseases.

Honorable gentlemen will remember that there was a contract entered into by the Agent-General to introduce a certain number of Scandinavians to the colony. It is the intention of the Government, and probably action has already been taken in that direction, to cancel that contract, it having been found that we can get as many immigrants from England, Ireland, and Scotland as the country may require. Therefore we shall probably have only one or two more shipments of Scandinavians. The number of Scandinavians who have arrived up to the present time is 3,327. In that term I have included persons from all the Continental nations who may have been picked up the various ports where they were collected; and as a whole they have been found to be a very satisfactory class of immigrants. Of course there are a few who have not proved satisfactory immigrants, but, taken as a body, they are quite as good as they were expected to be.