

"I was informed that the 144th clause of the Penal Code recently passed (which I understood had been rejected) had been passed, and that the Bill, after receiving the Emperor's assent, will be promulgated. I am satisfied that emigration for the future must be carried on if not with the express sanction, at any rate with the friendly connivance of the Government.

"R. Sloman, Esq."

"Believe me, &c.,

"I. E. FEATHERSTON.

6. On the following day, the 27th of February, the Agent-General received the letter from Mr. Kirchner, in which he intimated that his engagements through his agents amounted to 1,500 emigrants; and beside telegraphing to Mr. Kirchner absolutely repudiating all liability, Dr. Featherston addressed the following telegram from Brighton to Mr. Sloman:—

*Featherston to R. Sloman.*

"27th February, 1876.

"I FORWARD, for your information, copy telegram sent Kirchner:—'I absolutely repudiate any liability whatever in respect of a single one of the fifteen hundred you say you authorized your agents to engage, and will, if necessary, take immediate steps to prevent your proceeding further with such unauthorized transactions.'"

7. Messrs. Sloman wrote on the 29th to acknowledge the receipt of this telegram, but without making any reference to the Agent-General's letter of the 26th, which ought to have reached them a day if not two before.

*Messrs. Sloman to the Agent-General.*

"DEAR SIR,—

"Hamburg, 29th February, 1876.

"We have to acknowledge receipt of your telegram, in reply to which we beg to state that, according to our agreements with you about the conveyance of passengers to your colony, we are engaged and bound to ship the same at such times and to such ports as may be appointed by Mr. W. Kirchner, your Agent on the Continent.

"Now Mr. Kirchner ordered us distinctly to supply two ships, for about 320 adults each, for the 10th and 25th April respectively, as the emigrants to fill these ships would arrive at the appointed dates. He further ordered us to keep ships in readiness for about 1,500 adults more. These orders have been strictly attended to by us; we are bound to do so, it being in conformity with our contract with you; and, while reserving all our rights arising out of the same, we beg you will kindly inform us by return how far these arrangements meet your views, as in absence of the same we cannot quite understand your telegram.

"We have, &c.,

"The Agent-General for New Zealand, London."

"R. M. SLOMAN AND CO.

8. To this letter Dr. Featherston replied on the 3rd of March:—

*The Agent-General to Mr. Sloman.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"3rd March, 1876.

"I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th ultimo. I observe that you neither acknowledge nor make the slightest reference to the letter I addressed to you on the 26th ultimo, in reply to yours of the 14th ultimo.

"In that letter I informed you that I refused to recognize any engagements made by Mr. Kirchner's local agents; that I would only grant free passages to those whose applications Mr. Kirchner had himself indorsed with his approval and acceptance; that I had requested him to forward to me all such applications so indorsed; and that I instructed him in the meantime not to take up any ships.

"In reply to your own request (conveyed in your letter of the 14th) that I would confirm the arrangement you said Messrs. Kirchner had made for three ships, I informed you that I declined to confirm any such arrangement, and that I did not recognize Mr. Matthei as being in any way authorized to engage and accept emigrants. It was in consequence of the subsequent receipt of three letters from Mr. Kirchner (dated the 24th, 25th, and 26th respectively)—in which while he admitted that, while he had not himself approved or accepted a single person, he had authorized his agents to engage some 1,500 persons—that on the 27th ultimo I sent him the following telegram:—'I absolutely repudiate any liability whatever in respect of a single one of the 1,500 persons you say you authorized your agents to engage, and will, if necessary, take immediate steps to prevent your proceeding further with such unauthorized transactions.'

"I sent you, for your information, a copy of this telegram on the same day (27th). You had, I repeat, already been advised that I had instructed Mr. Kirchner not to take up ships. The very fact of your requesting me to confirm the alleged arrangement for three ships is sufficient proof that you were well aware that any such arrangement was null and void until it had received my sanction and confirmation. I beg, however, further to notify to you that it is not my intention to charter a single ship for the conveyance of emigrants from the Continent to New Zealand during the present year, 1876. I beg also to inform you that the Queensland contract not having been completed within the time specified, it is not my intention to extend the period for its completion.

"I have, &c.,

"R. Sloman, Esq."

"I. E. FEATHERSTON.

9. On the same day, the 3rd of March, Messrs. Sloman acknowledged the receipt of the Agent-General's letter of the 26th of February, which they state had only reached them on the 1st of March.

*Messrs. Sloman to the Agent-General.*

"DEAR SIR,—

"Hamburg, 3rd March, 1876,

"Our respects of 29th ultimo, in reply to your telegram, crossed your esteemed favour of 26th, which we received on 1st instant. While waiting your reply to the former, we merely beg to observe that we entirely agree with you in regard to Mr. Matthei's position, and that in naming him