

No. 19.

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

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 18th February, 1884.

I noticed lately in one of the New Zealand papers a complaint by some of the passengers on board the s.s. "Tongariro," on her first voyage, that the ship had been taken into latitude 50° S., where, for several days, they had suffered from sickness and inconvenience from their having made no provision for warm clothing.

I am unable to say what truth there is in the allegation, but, as the question of great circle sailing is one of much importance in the case of ships taking out immigrants, I beg to call your attention to it, in order that any instructions may be sent to me thereon which you may think necessary.

The Admiralty Ice-chart for the southern hemisphere, which I am sending you, gives detailed warnings that a course so far south as 50° involves risk of meeting dangerous ice. The chart points out that the "great circle" course, so frequently taken by ships in order to shorten the distance to and from Australia, has led to a knowledge that the danger of meeting icebergs in high southern latitudes is far greater than had been generally supposed. The chart distinguishes by colour the freer parallels from the more doubtful and dangerous ones, the uncoloured space including the position of icebergs seen during the Austral summer months; thus showing a line to the southward of which dangerous ice is most likely to be encountered. The greatest number of icebergs is usually sighted in November, December, or January, the least number being in June and July; and, as the proportion seen in June and July together is about one to thirteen compared with December alone, great caution has evidently to be observed in navigating a high latitude in the later spring and summer months.

Now the "Tongariro" sailed from Plymouth on the 29th of October, touched at the Cape on the 20th November, and arrived at Port Chalmers on the 11th December. I enclose a chart showing the tracks of the steamers "Ionic" and "Doric" on their recent voyages to New Zealand, from which you will see the difference between their course and the one which the "Tongariro" is alleged to have taken. I need not point out that, whatever dangers exist according to the warnings of the Admiralty Ice-chart, are greatly enhanced in the case of a steamer of 4,500 tons running at a high speed; and I beg you to be pleased to note the position of the Crozets as well as Kerguelen Island, comparing at the same time the tracks of the "Ionic" and "Doric" with that which the "Tongariro" must have taken if the allegation of the passengers is true about her "running for several days in 50° S."

For my own part I should be inclined to insist upon a limit of south latitude being fixed higher than which no ship taking out immigrants should be allowed to shape a course. But I did not think myself justified in exacting this as a condition in the merely temporary arrangements I had to make pending the meeting of Parliament.

The Hon. the Minister of Immigration, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

No. 20.

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

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 26th February, 1884.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th January (No. 29, ~~H. 2~~, D.—4 1884). I entirely agree with you in thinking that whatever difficulties have seemed to beset the intricate question that was before the Joint Committee of both Houses last session, respecting conveyance of Government immigrants and freight, will presently disappear in practical administration. We have been passing through a period of transition from the exclusive employment of sailing vessels to one of part sail and part steam, and now to another chiefly of steam, and are every day gaining experience that will be of the greatest value to every one concerned.

As regards the numbers of people to be sent out, and your wish that the expenditure of the funds allotted to immigration should be distributed over the period of three years more evenly than at present, I shall do my best to give effect to the instructions I am to expect by an early mail. In the meantime I transmit a return showing the numbers which have been sent out by me since immigration was resumed, made up (so far) for each of the two financial years ending 31st March, 1883, and 1884. From this return you will see that in the financial year 1882-83 we sent out 3,220 souls, equal to 2,858 statute adults; while in the financial year 1883-84 (up to this time) we have sent out 5,272 souls, equal to 4,591 statute adults. Adding the number that will go by the steamers "British King" and "Aorangi" up to the end of March, the total number of statute adults that will then have been sent during the financial year 1883-84 would have been as nearly as possible 5,000 (namely, the nominal number you intended to fix for each year), if I had not decided to close the season by sending out all I could so as to arrive well before the winter. This further number will bring up the statute adults for 1883-84 to about 5,250; but, taking the two years together, the total will not be much above 8,000, or an average of 4,000 statute adults a year.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Immigration, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.