

How far means might justifiably be adopted in the British provinces in America to endeavour to ward off great burthens or sufferings from this source, is a different question to which we shall advert in the sequel. Hitherto, it will be observed, we have only been discussing the causes of the sickness, and how far they could have been defeated by any precautions in this country. But since, even in respect of the voyage, it is commonly supposed that some of the measures adopted this year in the United States were of a very beneficial tendency, and since we believe that a good deal of misconception exists on this subject, it may be convenient that we should state, as far as we can learn, what those measures really were.

Question of Legislation in the Colonies reserved.

The Congress of the United States passed a law by which the number of passengers is limited to one for every 14, instead of one for every 10 superficial feet of the deck. This, we have no doubt, is conducive, so far as it goes, to the health of the people. We shall consider afterwards whether the example ought to be followed.

Review of the American laws on the subject.

At New York half a dollar a-head is payable as hospital money, and the master of each vessel is required either to give bond that his passengers shall not become chargeable within two years, or else to pay one dollar as commutation money: the master always prefers the latter. It is a mistake to suppose that the option on this subject has been withdrawn at New York. Unless we are misinformed by gentlemen who are daily dispatching large ships full of passengers to New York, the practice regularly is to pay the hospital and commutation money, which it will be observed is in substance neither more nor less than the emigrant tax of Canada and New Brunswick. There may be a question of amount, but the principle is the same.

In respect to Boston, we have had some difficulty in getting precise information. The practice used to be simply to levy an emigrant tax of two dollars a-head; but we believe that this year the authorities have in some instances, though not universally, put in force a new law, which empowers them to demand a bond of 1,000 dollars for each passenger apparently indigent, that he should not become chargeable to the state or the city for 10 years. But whenever this measure is put in force to any extent, it must simply become necessary that the ship and passengers should sail away, and go to some other country; and this has, in fact, occurred at Boston in the course of the present season. When it is remembered that a large ship will sometimes carry 400 passengers or more, and consequently that, under such a law as this, the master of a single vessel might be called on to give security for a sum approaching half a million of dollars, the effect will not be surprising. But in the British Provinces, where it could never be contemplated, nor, we are certain, be wished to get rid of immigration altogether, some more measured kind of precaution could alone be available.

We have nothing to add on the recent American laws. And having explained before some of the reasons why we should doubt the possibility of having introduced in England this year any Legislative measure which would have effectually averted the fever, we leave that topic.

Next we proceed to the subject of remedial measures. For although the evil when it raged to so fearful an extent might not have admitted of correction, we shall be most desirous not to miss any instruction which such heavy suffering may afford, and to consider how far it points to any additional precaution in ordinary years against similar disasters.

Remedial measures in this country.

We by no means overlook the caution with which it is necessary to interfere in the detail of such subjects by law. There is always the risk that such legislation must either be so general as to be easily evaded, or so minute as to be vexatious, and that while the sufferings caused by careless or extortionate dealers may never admit of being thoroughly prevented, the attempt to do so may deprive more respectable or judicious persons of the opportunity of conveying poor emigrants, in safety, with the cheapness which would otherwise be practicable. Bearing this in mind, we shall endeavour, before we conclude, to suggest one provision which shall give the dealers themselves a direct interest in bringing over the passengers in good health.