

THE VENTILATION OF EMIGRANT SHIPS.*

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As the chief officer of a medical inspection service, specifically appointed to examine all the immigrants entering Canada, with the idea of preventing the admission of persons suffering from acute communicable diseases, or from other diseases communicable but less acutely so, such as eye and scalp diseases, and with a view further, to allowing the landing of none not at the moment physically fit to earn a livelihood, my attention was early directed to the conditions existing on shipboard during a voyage, and their relation to outbreaks of disease which from time to time take on the character of an epidemic. During an active experience of over six years, I have naturally formed certain conclusions; one of the most positive of these is that conditions on shipboard in the emigrant quarters of many ships are such as demand radical changes, if very serious injustice to a poor, and, under the circumstances, helpless class of intending citizens of this or other new continents is to be prevented. To illustrate: I recall the S. S. "Montrose," tonnage 4,000, which arrived in Quebec, May 6, 1906, with 1,532 passengers; of these 124 were detained, 64 on account of conjunctivitis and 60 on account of trachoma, or one in every 12 immigrants.

When it is further understood that today at the great British and Continental seaports very complete equipment exists for the housing, inspecting, cleansing, and treating of thousands of emigrants at a time, (5,000 may be housed at Hamburg in suburban premises of many acres in extent, in separate buildings owned and equipped by the Hamburg-American Line) and that for days before arrival at these ports inspection has gone on at the borders and in the interior of Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and other countries, it is apparent that the emigrant going on shipboard at any of these ports today probably represents a higher absolute degree of immunity from disease than would a similar number of persons taken at random in any country in the world. It is evident, therefore, that when such persons have purchased passage on a transatlantic steamship, they have rights which the government of every progressive country should secure to them so far as is consistent with scientific knowledge and the actual practical difficulties of the situation.

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