



THE years of the Irish famine and the great movement of population to which that calamity gave impulse will always be a part of the study of him who would trace the story of Irish colonization. It will therefore be not out of place to here insert some information of an exact character bearing upon the subject. The letter from which copious extracts are here made was considered of sufficient importance by the Colonial Secretary of the time, Earl Grey, to warrant his enclosing it to the Earl of Elgin, then Governor-General.

“The fearful state of disease and debility in which the Irish emigrants have reached Canada must undoubtedly be attributed in a great degree to the destitution and consequent sickness prevailing in Ireland ; but has been much aggravated by the neglect of cleanliness, ventilation, and a generally good state of social economy during the passage, and has been afterwards increased, and disseminated throughout the whole country, by the meal-arrangements of the Government system of emigrant relief. Having myself submitted to the privations of a steerage passage in an emigrant ship for nearly two months, in order to make myself acquainted with the condition of the emigrant from the beginning, I can state from experience that the present regulations for ensuring health and comparative comfort to passengers are wholly insufficient, and that they are not and cannot be enforced, notwithstanding the great zeal and high abilities of the Government agents.

“Before the emigrant has been at sea a week he is an altered man. How can it be otherwise? Hundreds of poor people, men, women, and children, of all ages from the drivelling idiot of ninety to the babe just born, huddled together, without light, without air, wallowing in filth, and breathing a fetid atmosphere, sick in body, dispirited in heart ; the fevered patients lying between the sound, in sleeping places so narrow as almost to deny them the power of indulging, by a change of position, the natural restlessness of the disease ; by their agonized ravings disturbing those around and pre-disposing them, through the effects of the imagination, to imbibe the contagion ; living without food or medicine except as administered by the hand of casual charity ; dying without