

REPORT OF BELFAST AGENT.

(MR. HENRY MERRICK.)

VICTORIA CHAMBERS,
CORNER OF VICTORIA AND WARING STREETS,
BELFAST, 30th December, 1889.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit herewith my annual report for the year 1889.

I regret to say there has been a considerable falling off in the number of emigrants from Great Britain to Canada during the past year, owing to a variety of causes and circumstances to which I shall refer more particularly hereafter.

I have distributed quite a large number of pamphlets during the past year and am not aware of any very great diminution in the general correspondence of this office, nor has there been any noticeable decrease in the number of persons calling at the office to obtain special and detailed information regarding a particular Province or locality, and, therefore, so far as the ordinary and regular duties of my office would indicate a change or reduction in the number of emigrants likely to go to Canada during the year, it was not perceptible by any means as the actual numbers, as returned, would indicate.

I may say, however, in explanation of this fact, that by far the largest proportion of those who emigrate do not, as a rule, decide very hastily, but continue to make enquiries and seek all kinds of information for months before coming to a definite and final conclusion after one or two years, consequently the number emigrating in any one year does not necessarily indicate the perseverance or general activity of your agent for that particular year, and is but the result of the decision come to after frequent interviews and an indication of the careful consideration which intending emigrants give to every detail of information they receive, and their desire to have the fullest possible knowledge of the climate, soil and general character of the country to which they contemplate emigrating.

I was in communication for nearly eighteen months with a small party of tenant farmers before they finally decided to emigrate. Part of them went to southern Manitoba, and the others chose Victoria, B. C.; nearly all took considerable money with them, as indeed most of the tenant farmers who do go out now. Another party of seven farmers, with their families, one or two of whom were among my first visitors when I came here in the summer of 1887, and have since that time been periodical visitors, only decided in February last to try their fortunes in Canada, and sold out their tenant rights and left this spring. I therefore think your agents are not blameable or in any way responsible for the falling off in the numbers this year. The High Commissioner sent me, in July last, a copy of a return issued by the Board of Trade, showing the extent and description of the emigration from the United Kingdom in the month of June, 1889, also for the six months ending at the same date, compared with the corresponding periods in the year 1888, and requested me to report to him the reasons which, in my judgment, produced so large a falling off in the emigration.

I carefully examined the details of the return and was glad to observe that the falling off was of a general character, and that Canada was not exceptional in any way, but that the decrease was even more observable in the case of the United States, and therefore the reasons were to be found in the changed and improved condition of the country. In every part of the United Kingdom there was a marked improvement in the demand for agricultural and mechanical labourers, as in fact for all kinds of labour. The crops were, upon the whole, much better than they had been for some years before, and a great improvement was noticeable in nearly every one of the