

CANADA.

Report of the Agent
for Emigration.

to 60 per cent. This has tended materially to increase the expenditure under this head at the Montreal agency; and owing to an agreement among the steam-boat proprietors on the route from hence to Montreal, the rate for the passage by steamers between these places was fixed at 5 s. each adult, while last year the emigrant was conveyed for 1 s. 3 d. This has, in proportion to last season, thrown on this agency a much larger number of claims than would otherwise have been presented, and increased also the proportionate expenditure involved in their relief. Owing to these numerous and heavy demands on the funds at the disposal of the department, it was found necessary to close several of the agencies in the western section of the province at a date much earlier than usual. Mr. Hawke consequently closed the Cobourg and Port-Hope agency on the 15th August, that of Hamilton on the 31st, and Bytown on the 30th September; conceiving that it was better to deprive settlers of supervision and information, than to withhold from newly arrived immigrants food, transport, or medical attendance.

Table No. 8, of the Appendix, furnishes the usual tabular statement of the length of passages from the United Kingdom during the past season, the average of which was 44½ days.

Paper No. 9, furnishes a return of the trades and callings of the male adult emigration of the past season. This table I have been enabled to compile, owing to the improvement which has taken place in the manner of making up the passenger lists. From it will be seen that the proportion of mechanics and tradesmen is about one-eighth of the whole.

From a return received of the arrivals at New York, during the past season, it appears that the emigration to that port has decreased as much, in proportion, as that to this colony. Up to the 1st December, the number of arrivals from the United Kingdom was 25,876, against 51,800 who were reported last year; and the emigration, during the same period, is estimated at 15,000 persons, 3,000 of whom are supposed to have returned with the intention of bringing out their families in the spring. The extreme lowness of the charge for a homeward passage from the port of New York, and the facilities which are afforded by the numerous packet ships, sailing regularly at stated periods, encourage the return to Great Britain of a large proportion of the emigrants who meet with disappointment in their removal to the United States. They permit also the return of many heads of families who leave the mother country, in the first instance, as pioneers. The passage from New York to Liverpool has been, and continues, at the low rate of 10 dollars, inclusive of supplies, and seven dollars without them.

In the weekly reports which have been transmitted to your Excellency, throughout the season, I have had occasion to notice the condition and immediate prospects of the immigrants as they arrived in the country. The beneficial operation of the new Passenger Act has been apparent in the diminished proportion of disease and mortality on the passage from Europe, as well as in the total absence of cases of privation. The state of poverty, however, in which so many of the immigrants landed, could not fail to involve them in some difficulties, and perhaps distress, even under the most attentive superintendence and assist. It has been fortunate that every article of subsistence has borne an extremely low price, and that there has existed everywhere an abundance of all the necessaries of life. These circumstances have precluded the possibility of destitution to any considerable extent, among the recent immigration, and may have permitted opportunities of favourable settlement, in the new districts, to many even of the poorest families.

The existence of a surplus of labour, as compared with the demand, has for some time past offered great discouragement to all immigrants depending on immediate employment for their support. The public works have been constantly supplied with experienced labourers, and have consequently offered no openings for the employment of those recently arrived by this route. There has been also a decreasing demand for agricultural servants in the rural districts. The farmers, of all classes, deterred by the low prices borne by their produce, and the doubtful prospects of future markets, have been disposed to diminish the scale of their operations, and avoid liability to be called upon for money payments. In almost every line of employment the amount of labour sought for has been lessened. A progressive reduction of the wages of every class of operatives has been necessarily experienced; and although from the cheapness with which their wants may be supplied, mechanics and labourers of experience and character, who remain in steady employment, may find their resources but little diminished, the result following such a change is much more detrimental to the immigrant, whose employment must be casual, and whose situation necessarily precludes the best economy and management of his means.

Had the number of families depending on early employment, compared with the aggregate immigration of the year, not been very much less than in former seasons, there must have arisen great difficulty in their distribution and maintenance. There has been amongst the labourers on some of the public works occasional distress, arising from interruption in their employment. These persons, as I have already mentioned, however, do not come within the class to which the attention of the department is principally directed. Indeed their knowledge of the country relieves them from many disadvantages to which the entire stranger may be subjected.

The information which I have from the several districts of the province leads me to feel confident that, under every unfavourable circumstance existing, there is no extensive distress.