

*Halifax, Nova Scotia, 6th June, 1866.*

SIR,—

Without remarking on the general tone of the despatches from the Emigration Office on my report of the S. S. "England," I will only add in answer to the letter forwarded by your despatch, No. 28, of the 25th ult., that the number who died on board that unfortunate vessel was understated at 240, and has since been ascertained to be 280.

I do not enter into the question of troops and emigrant ships, between which I conceive there is no real comparison, inasmuch as the one embarks in a state of cleanliness, and under perfect discipline, the other totally the reverse; and I consider that the letters of Admiral Kerr and Captain Prior (stating the "England" received a thorough inspection by them) fully bear out the opinion I have expressed as to the culpability of allowing such large shipments of that class of human beings as were placed on board the steamships "England" and "Virginia."

I would therefore respectfully urge that the attention of the Emigration Office be called to this point, and so render to Her Majesty's Government that assistance as will enable them to prevent or modify a recurrence of so fearful a mortality, and the diffusion of such a dangerous and contagious disease.

I have, &c.,

(Signed)

W. F. WILLIAMS.

Mr. SECRETARY CARDWELL.

(No. 44.)

*Downing Street, 23rd June, 1866.*

SIR,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch No. 46, of the 7th inst., offering further remarks on the S. S. "England."

The number of emigrants which can be carried in an emigrant ship is regulated by the express provisions of an Act of Parliament, called the Passengers' Act. On the one hand, it is desirable that the number admissible should not be so large as to engender sickness; on the other hand, it is important that it should not be needlessly restricted, lest the price of conveyance be so enhanced as to prohibit the humbler classes from removing to those places where their industry commands the highest remuneration; for this would not be a benefit, but an injury to those classes. Nearly 3½ millions of people have been conveyed from this country to North America in the last 20 years, with, for the most part, a very moderate rate of mortality. This vast experience proves that in ordinary seasons the space provided for emigrants by law is not incompatible with health.

In case of the prevalence of an epidemic disease in the United Kingdom, the Crown possesses certain exceptional powers of reducing the number of passengers, which Her Majesty's Government would be prepared to exercise if they should see sufficient reason. At present, happily, cholera does not prevail as an epidemic in this country. Means have been taken to arrest the transport of emigrants from Germany.

With regard to your allusion to the Emigrant Commissioners, I have merely to explain to you that they have no power to act otherwise than according to law, and that in the present case they have discharged the duty entrusted to them by the law.

I have, &c.,

(Signed)

EDWARD CARDWELL.

His Excellency the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR of Nova Scotia.