

The Imperial Passenger Act of 1855 came into operation this season. This Act is more stringent in its provisions than the Act of 1852.

CANADA.

Passenger Act.

The principal alterations are, firstly, to bring more ships within the operation of the law; second, reducing the number of passengers which a ship can carry; and third, to increase the amount of nutriment in the dietary scale to be used on the voyage. All these changes have tended materially to add to the comfort, and promote the health of the emigrant, during the past season, and but one complaint was brought under my notice, that of the passengers of the ship "Chieftain," Scott, master, from Glasgow, a report of which will be found at page 24 of the Appendix. In this case the master, who was in bad health, and fearing a long passage, placed his passengers on a reduced allowance of provisions; he having died, the charge of the ship devolved on the mate, who at once ordered the full rations to be issued. On arrival here, the passengers made up their claim for the value of the provisions short issued, which was estimated at 8 s. 9 d. sterling each; which demand having at once been acceded to and paid, I did not consider myself authorised to interfere further in the matter.

I find that the 36th clause, which enacts that the provisions requiring cooking should be issued in a cooked state, has not generally been carried out in this particular; and it may be necessary to remark, that in every instance which has come under my notice, the deviation from the law has originated in the request or with the approval and sanction of the passengers themselves, preferring to draw their rations in an uncooked state, and prepare them according to their own taste or pleasure; and although this deviation would appear as a violation of the clause above referred to, yet, as the passengers would not prefer a complaint, I did not take any steps to enforce the law; the more particularly, as my legal adviser entertained the opinion that, in the absence of any complaint on the part of the passengers, a conviction could not be obtained.

The result of the working of this Act, so far, has on the whole been satisfactory, and would appear to have fulfilled the object of its framers; but it is also evident that it has operated unfavourably on the emigration to this province, and especially from the Irish ports, by enhancing the price of passage, which formerly ranged from 3 l. 10 s. to 4 l., to 5 l.; and I ought not omit to observe that the masters of several vessels, who have always heretofore brought out a full complement of passengers, have informed me, that their owners preferred to send them out in ballast, rather than subject them to the increased liability imposed by the Act.

The effect of this may be seen by a reference to Table No. 5 in the Appendix, where it will appear that the emigration from Ireland, which during the past 26 years afforded an average of 17,473, was reduced in 1855 to 4,105 persons, and during the season of 1856 to 1,688 souls.

This decrease, doubtless, may be attributed, in a great measure, to the improved condition of the labouring classes in that country, but other causes must also have operated to produce so great a change, as the same decrease does not appear to have affected the Irish emigration to the United States, which, in 1855, numbered 43,043, and has, during the past year, shown a small increase, the numbers being returned at 44,276, or equal to an advance of three per cent., while the direct emigration from Ireland to this port has fallen off nearly 59 per cent.

The Provincial Act would appear to require some amendment, in order to afford protection to the emigrants arriving here from foreign ports, and who have not the benefit of that protection which has been secured to emigrants from the United Kingdom, under the Imperial Passenger Act. In fact, it may be remarked, that the laws regulating emigration from foreign ports, which annually arrive by this route, are not cognisable by the judicial tribunals of this country, the absence of which cannot fail of proving prejudicial to the interests of foreign emigration. It would therefore be desirable that such provisions should be enacted, as would protect the foreign emigrant on his reaching our shores, and thereby place him on an equal legislative position with the British emigrant.

Provincial Act.

It is true, that our courts of law are always open to the foreigner, as to every one of Her Majesty's subjects; but owing to delays, and the impossibility of