

At a Meeting of the CITIZEN'S COMMITTEE for EMIGRANT and SANITARY PURPOSES, held at the COURT-HOUSE at MONTREAL, on Monday, the 23d July 1832, the following important subject engaged its attention :—

“ THE numberless difficulties that have been thrown in the way of the poor Emigrants to prevent or delay their progress from this to the Upper Province has induced the Committee so far to outstep the line of its duty, that, in addition to providing shelter and food for the friendless and destitute on the spot, to endeavour to facilitate their passage onwards, in order that they may arrive in Upper Canada in time to make their services available for the harvest, and thereby procure for themselves a portion of the means to subsist their families through the winter.

In the course of the Committee's inquiries the following particulars have resulted :—1st, That very little zeal has been manifested by the Forwarders, in persuading or encouraging Batteau and Durham boatmen, by extra pay, in the outset of our difficulties, to embark the Emigrants.

2dly, That no special means have been adopted to punish, by fine or otherwise, those who abandoned their boats on their passage upwards, and left their unfortunate passengers to shift for themselves, in a country where they were perfect strangers, and where the inhabitants, from a dread of infection, would naturally avoid intercourse with them ; and for which dereliction of obligation a heavy responsibility ought to rest somewhere.

3dly, When confidence was restored, the poor and indigent were permitted to remain in the Emigrant Sheds, although they had been in possession of tickets for many days, when at the same time boats could readily be procured to convey those who had ample means to pay for the transport of themselves and their luggage.

4thly, That only 30 lbs. of baggage is allowed to an adult, and none for the families of poor Emigrants by the forwarding contract, which scarcely gives a change of clothes to these unfortunates ; and for the remainder 4s. 6d. per cwt. is demanded from those who have very frequently not the means to purchase for themselves, their wives and children, a scanty supply of provisions for the voyage.

5thly, A ticket is, to be sure, given to applicants in need, at the Emigrant Office,—but afterwards they are left to shift for themselves without any information as to their further proceeding ; and but little trouble is taken at the Forwarder's Office to instruct them,—for the most part they obtain from the man in charge of the office, if the Forwarder be not in the way, a repulsive answer, and no information.

These particulars having been ascertained by the Committee, the Chairman has called upon the Steam-Boat proprietors on the Ottawa, to ascertain whether they would be willing, and at what rate, to undertake the transport of distressed Emigrants to Kingston, and its intermediate places through the Rideau.

These gentlemen most willingly lend themselves to the views of the Committee, and have expressed themselves perfectly disposed to convey them on terms not exceeding those granted to the Forwarders on the St. Lawrence, provided the Rideau Canal duty is remitted.

The advantage, therefore, to be gained by this is to the Emigrant two-fold.

1st, In insuring their arrival in Kingston within six days of their quitting Montreal, instead of from eight to sixteen by the St. Lawrence, or longer, according as the westerly winds may prevail, subject during that time to every variation of the season, to the manifest injury of health of the men, women and children, and to have their baggage wet and spoiled ; whereas from La Chine, by the Ottawa, with the exception of the trifling portage between Carillon and Grenville, they are protected and sheltered on board the steam-boats the whole way to Kingston.

2dly, They are put to a less expense for provisions, from the shorter time occupied by their journey on the Ottawa route, and thereby making their labour available so much the sooner.

These advantages are not only to the Emigrants and their families. but they are of importance in other respects.

As regards the Emigrant fund, which will be burthened in a less degree, by the Emigrant Society having to supply provisions for six days instead of from eight to sixteen, and perhaps longer.

And the funds of the Upper Province, which have been placed at the disposal of the different Emigrant Societies and Boards of Health by His Excellency Sir John Colborne, which would be considerably relieved by the Ottawa being made the general route as far as Kingston, as it would only require one point, Bytown, to be looked to instead of so many intermediate ones.

The Ottawa Company is at the same time willing to permit these poor Emigrants to take on a considerable quantity more baggage than they are allowed to convey by the Forwarders on the St. Lawrence line.

As the funds placed at the disposal of the Committee for Emigrant and Sanitary purposes will be spared to a considerable extent by the adoption of this project, from the Emigrants being sent forward so much more expeditiously ; and as it is the peculiar duty of the Committee so to husband them, that they may be able to extend charitable aid to the thousands who may yet ar-

rive in the country, the Committee finds itself called upon to express a warm feeling of gratitude to the Ottawa Steam-Boat Company for the liberality its members have displayed; and as there is very little prospect that the Company will derive any adequate compensation for the trouble it will occasion in conveying merely the poorer classes of the Emigrants, the Committee is strongly impressed with the opinion, that the Government Agent at Quebec should point out to the better classes of Emigrants the advantages they will derive from adopting the Ottawa and Rideau route in preference to that of the St. Lawrence, as these could afford to grant the Steam-Boat Company the same terms that are now given to the St. Lawrence Forwarders.

The Ottawa Company has offered to provide places of reception for all the Emigrants they may convey, at La Chine, Carillon, Grenville and Bytown, which are the only places where, by possibility, a portion of them might be required to land for a few hours. This advantage is too important, as regards the health and comforts of the Emigrants, to be overlooked by the Committee.

The accompanying letters from the Cedars and Cornwall will suffice to prove an absolute necessity that the system of forwarding every class of Emigrants to the Upper Province should undergo an entire change.

On the line of the Ottawa and the Rideau, which is settling very fast, and where great numbers might find employment in agricultural and mechanical pursuits, there always has existed, and still exists, a great demand for labour. Persons with capital to purchase lands may likewise find on this route a desirable location.

C. J. FORBES, *Chairman.*

(COPY.)

CEDARS, July 27, 1832.

DEAR SIR,

WHAT I am about to state would, perhaps, be more regular in being addressed directly to the Board of Health, but feeling persuaded that, in its passage to that body, it will be certain to acquire additional energy from the medium through which I taken the liberty to submit it for previous consideration; I claim no other shelter from the consequences of the steps I am now taking than the proofs which are so widely disseminated of the earnestness of those endeavours, so beneficially put forth on your part, in the cause of humanity.

The objects of this intimation originate in the united requests of the several gentlemen of this place, whose names have appeared in the public prints as constituting a Board of Health, but whose exertions have, until this late period, been kept under painful restrictions, from the absence of authentic confirmation of their appointments.

I hasten, therefore, to state to you, in the first place, a long train of serious evils resulting (I trust not designedly so) from the manner in which Emigrants are forwarded in boats, by this route, to the Upper Province. I should be sorry to impeach the characters of the persons connected with this important branch of our inland navigation, on the score of charitable feeling, or as men, but from the sad consequences that arise daily to view, there must be a something very wrong somewhere connected with this branch of business;—the whole would, however, seem to have its origin in the overloaded and crowded state of the boats, and the omission to fumigate those that are partially decked, after the voyage upwards. Almost every day there are instances of Emigrants put ashore with cholera; and yesterday a boat passed, from which there were three put ashore at different points, and it would almost seem as if the malady were diffused from the impure state of the boat itself, for fourteen other cases declared themselves amongst the resident inhabitants along the river on the same day:—two of the Emigrants died, and the third is still doubtful,—they have all large families, and were put ashore without any part of the passage-money which they had paid for the whole distance having been returned to them!—thus are we exposed to a dissemination of the disease far and wide, and a comparatively poor population daily becoming more oppressed by numerous objects of poverty. We had been led to expect that the praiseworthy intentions of the Emigrant Society would have checked the spread of disease, but, from some cause not yet ascertained, it manifests itself but too frequently in this quarter, and, if in any degree contagious, there remains no shadow of doubt that it is kept in action, either by the Emigrants coming away from Montreal or La Chine with the malady upon them, or that they contract it from the impure state of the boats; in either case, the numbers falling sick along the river is decidedly influenced by the passing up of the boats having emigrants, and possibly also by those having none, for it frequently occurs that some of the crews are put ashore also. When it is borne in mind that these boats are, to such a great extent, the medium of conveyance for provisions and articles of deposit in the magazines of Montreal, it becomes a matter well worthy of investigation, whether (the principle of contagiousness being admitted) they do not, under the circumstances, constitute a species of revolving disseminators of the disease. There is a certain degree of cruelty in permitting so many Emigrants to crowd into the boats, and particularly so when they are in other respects deeply loaded, for it not only ex-

poses the crews to much additional risk and fatigue, and the property to extra hazard, but is also a great means of engendering disease, of exposing the poor Emigrants to much hardship from the want of shelter, and of vexatious delays from the increased difficulty of getting the boats up the Rapids; the disasters that are of daily occurrence between the Cascades and the Cedars afford ample testimony of the truth of these assertions. In order to lighten the boats sufficiently to get up the Rapids, the Emigrants are (no doubt from the evident necessity of the case) all put ashore at the Cascades, and they are thus compelled to walk, without regard to the state of the roads or weather, as far as the wharf at the Cedars, which, from their being necessitated to carry their provisions and younger children a distance of six miles, they reach in a state of great bodily excitement. *If the boat come up in time*, they are again taken in, under all the disadvantages of being huddled together in the heated state which their system has just acquired! *If the boat do not come up in time*, which most frequently occurs, from the great liability to getting a-ground, or the snapping of the tow-line, which sends the boat back to the foot of the Rapids, the poor Emigrants are divided in the sad choice, whether to remain during the night on the wharf at the Cedars, or walk back to the boat, where some of them may chance to have bedding; but in neither event have they any other shelter than the open air, under all the chances of unfavourable weather, for, of late, so great has been the alarm created by cholera, that every door seems to be shut against them, including even taverns (those legally constituted accommodations for travellers!) several of whose hosts have struck their sign-boards, shut up their houses, and, in some instances, deserted to the back concessions; these causes combined, all contribute to a forced exposure of the poor Emigrants to fatigue, and cold, and disease, the latter of which, but with very few exceptions, terminates in death!

It has been particularly noticed during the last eight or ten days, that boats passing upwards have been so crowded as to obstruct the proper management of them on the part of the crews;—the day before yesterday there were two, on board of which the poor people could not have found space to change their position!—a few days before, there were several Emigrants left behind in a most distressing situation, having been parted from their provisions, their bedding, and their families. The case was, that their boat, being about to be taken in tow at La Chine, was observed to be so overloaded with stores and passengers as to be nearly in a sinking state, so that many of the poor people had to quit it in a moment of confusion and hurry, and take passage in another, which being lighter, got up the Rapids with ease, and so outstripped the heavier one, that the people were under the necessity of retracing their steps, to join their families again!—thus is there every appearance of disease being permanently nourished along this line of the water communication, and a daily accumulation of destitute Emigrants upon this place, which it is but ill able to maintain. The scenes of wretchedness that continually present themselves are most heart-rending; and what adds much to the distress is the want of medical assistance to meet the number of cases,—hence the great mortality that prevails amongst these poor people,—the greatest number of cases occur at the halting places; but there are also many who, on the first symptoms of the malady, are landed at unfrequented points, there to meet a certain and fast approaching fate! In anticipation of pecuniary aid from being led to expect an organised Board of Health, we erected a temporary hospital, on a small scale, and made the necessary arrangements for the treatment of the sick, and by this means have afforded relief to many of the passing strangers, but the expenses are so fast growing upon our hands, that we really shall not be able to uphold this establishment much longer; and sickening as have been the scenes that we have already witnessed, the consequences of a forced suspension of this act of humanity will indeed be most appalling! Having thus, in a hurried, yet I believe correct, strain brought together circumstances of a nature highly deserving the intervention of some regularly constituted body or institution, we place them at your disposal, with every confidence that they will be put in train to arrest the progress, if practicable, of occurrences so evidently calculated to produce much public inconvenience and calamity.

On my own behalf, and that of the several persons who have requested me to frame this appeal, I beg to remain, Dear Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

C. J. FORBES, Esq. }  
Montreal. }

JAMES THOMPSON.

(COPY.)

CORNWALL, 24th July, 1832.

SIR,

I HAVE to state for His Excellency's information, that a Durham boat, of the second size or class, arrived here early on Sunday morning with one hundred and forty-one Emigrants on board, besides a vast deal of luggage, twenty-five barrels of salt, and the crew. The Emigrants had tickets for a free passage, from the Chairman of the Emigrant Society at Montreal, a Mr. De

Witt, to their forwarding Contractor, W. L. Whiting; they appeared as if they had been huddled into the boat, with about the same feeling that a load of pigs would be shipped at Prescott for the Montreal market. The forwarder, I understand, alleges as an excuse, that they crowded into the boat in spite of him. But he must allow, that he weighed the luggage of each individual before it was put into the boat, for each hundred weight of which he received four shillings from the Emigrant, independent of his ticket, and that if any one of them had shipped his luggage, before it was weighed and paid for, that it would have been instantly unshipped. Surely, then, if, to serve his interests, he could find force and power sufficient to remove the luggage, he could, with the same force and power, have regulated the loading of the boat, with some regard to the common feelings of humanity. Mr. Hawke, who informed me, that he had been sent forward as agent to Montreal, arrived here from thence a few evenings before the boat came; when he had seen her at Montreal, and had remonstrated with Mr. Whiting on the state that she was in, he made the excuse I before stated, and promised that forty of the tickets should be transferred to another boat, and, apparently, took such measures as to convince Mr. Hawke that it would be done; who communicated the circumstances to Mr. Forbes, and was recommended by him to proceed immediately to this place, in order to consult with the Magistrates and Board of Health here and myself, and to ascertain whether there was a power in either, to put an effectual stop to the shameful proceeding. A magistrate, a member of the Board of Health, declared there was no such power; and never did I regret the absence of it more than since I have been in the situation I now hold. It is very painful to be obliged to look tamely on, whilst imposition and brutality are committing uncontrolled depredations upon these poor creatures, in the protection of whom I would not only cheerfully discharge a duty, but feel the utmost pleasure in the execution of it. If I had been authorized, I would have reduced the number considerably in this boat, and employed waggons at the expense of the forwarder. Instead of sending them up by contract, if their conveyance was thrown open to all the forwarders, it is very likely they would get their luggage up at a cheaper rate, and they would, undoubtedly, get up themselves with more comfort.

Mr. Hawke luckily had not left when the boat arrived, and, therefore, had an opportunity of seeing that not one of the number had been taken out, or yet any portion of the baggage or cargo. I have requested that he would represent the circumstance, and the hardship and impositions of this route, in the strongest colours to Mr. Forbes, and to engage the attention of that liberal-minded and noble-hearted gentleman to the subject.

It would be a great relief if the route could be, up the Ottawa and through the Rideau Canal to Kingston.

The boat with this overload of souls remained all Sunday at the foot of the Rapids above the town. I made them all get out, got them under the shade of the trees, and persuaded the mothers to wash their children, and get their bedding and loose clothes out and spread on the bank of the River. They seemed quite refreshed towards the evening.

I have, &c.

Lieut. Col. Rowan, }  
 Civil Secretary, }  
 York.

(Signed) CHEESMAN MOE.

23  
 1893