

1853.

VICTORIA.

FEMALE IMMIGRATION.

LAI'D upon THE COUNCIL TABLE by THE COLONIAL SECRETARY, by Command of HIS EXCELLENCY THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, and ordered by THE COUNCIL to be printed, 27th October, 1853.

REPORT of the Immigration Agent relative to Immigrants introduced into the Colony of Victoria by the "Society for Promoting Female Emigration," under the auspices of the Honorable Sidney Herbert.

No. 511. 53. 1381.

Immigration Office,
Melbourne, 24th October, 1853.

SIR,

It having been intimated to me by the Assistant Colonial Secretary that you wished to be placed in possession of my views with reference to that class of Female Immigration which has been introduced into the Colony by the "Society for Promoting Female Emigration," under the auspices of Mr. Sidney Herbert, I have now the honor to state them briefly for your information.

2. As far as my experience goes, the young women hitherto introduced into this Colony at the expense of the above Society, are very far from being well adapted to its wants or deserving of the charity of the benevolent institution to which they were indebted for their passage out.

3. Among the 183 young females so introduced during the year 1852—to which may be added the number of 120 during the current year—there were doubtless many virtuous and estimable young women; but in almost every ship there have been a number of girls among them whose language and habits on the voyage prove them to have been drawn from the very dregs of society; while in watching the career of these girls after their arrival it is too evident that by far the greater number of them have either been used to habits of dissipation and debauchery, or that from predisposition or some contaminating influence they have rapidly fallen into them.

4. How some of these girls have contrived to evade the strict examination which is stated to be made by the Society into their previous life and character, I cannot imagine; but that it is continually evaded there is no doubt. In the very last ship that arrived here with passengers of this class, two of the girls had been long known to some of the officers and crew in London, as prostitutes of the lowest caste; and there were several others whose conduct was equally bad.

5. Within the last few days a girl named Maria Brock, who came out in the *Roxburgh Castle* some fifteen months ago, coolly applied for admission to the Immigration Hospital for the purpose of being confined; and another young lady who has only been in the Colony two or three months had amassed sufficient property to engage a cabin passage home in the same ship she came out in, only the Captain on discovering who she was, and being aware of her conduct on the passage out, refused to take her.

6. I am aware that there is an intention of applying to the Government for pecuniary aid to this Society to the amount of ten or twenty thousand pounds, and provided certain restrictions are imposed upon the Society (whose benevolent intentions are above all praise, but who have proved themselves too liable to imposition), I would most gladly recommend that the request should be acceded to, or that assistance should be rendered to them in some other form, more especially as the great disproportion in the number of the sexes here is increasing to a degree of the most serious importance.

7. In the first instance needlewomen, milliners, governesses, &c., who have hitherto formed the great bulk of this class of immigrants, should be rigidly excluded: they have proved totally ignorant of domestic service, and their dislike of such duties and disappointment at not meeting employment in their trades has doubtless been one cause of their falling into evil courses. In my opinion no girl should be sent out who would not be eligible for a free passage under the regulations of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners.

8. In the second place, I think it would be always advisable that these girls should either come out in a Government immigrant ship, or else in what might be perhaps still better, a vessel carrying no other passengers, under the charge of an experienced Surgeon, appointed by Her Majesty's Land and Emigration Commissioners. The system adopted at present of sending them out in parties of forty, in vessels carrying crowds of intermediate and steerage passengers, is in many points of view, objectionable.

9. I would, however, suggest whether instead of giving any direct pecuniary aid to the Society, it might not be better to place a certain number of free passages, say 500 or 1000, in some of the ships chartered by the Land and Emigration Commissioners, and under their control, at the disposal of the Society; this would secure the girls being selected in accordance with the regulations of the Government, and would also be the means of placing them under the management of a Surgeon whose previous experience would prove of the greatest value.

(Signed)

I have, &c., &c.,
EDWARD GRIMES,
Immigration Agent.

The Honorable the Colonial Secretary,
&c., &c., &c.

By Authority: JOHN FERRES, Government Printer, Melbourne.