

The Constitution

Saturday Morning, September 30, 1854

SHIP NEWS

QUEENSTOWN, SEPTEMBER 29

ARRIVED FROM
Ben Nevis, Heron, for Texas, salt and emigrants,
(cholera on board)..... Liverpool

The Constitution

Saturday Morning, September 30, 1854

ARRIVAL OF AN EMIGRANT SHIP WITH CHOLERA

The *Ben Nevis*, Captain Heron, from Liverpool, with a large number of emigrants, had to put into Queenstown yesterday with cholera on board. She left Liverpool on Tuesday, and had not proceeded far on her voyage when the disease made its appearance, and some cases proved fatal. At the time of her arrival in Queenstown there had been six deaths; and 16 cases were under treatment. A telegraph was instantly dispatched for Captain De Courcey, the Government Emigration officer, and it is understood he has made arrangements for the medical treatment of the patients.

Freeman's Journal

Saturday, September 30, 1854

MEDICAL MEN ON BOARD EMIGRANT SHIPS. (FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT).

Liverpool, Friday.

Much dissatisfaction is at present felt at the way in which emigrant ships are supplied in regard to medical men and the coroner of this borough gave expression to his feeling in no very measured terms, at the close of business yesterday, the following observations having fallen from him: -- "I wish (he said) to make an observation on the case of the female in the deadhouse: and really I hardly know how, in any language of mine, to bring it sufficiently under your notice with a desire to have it remedied, if it be possible to have it remedied: for the number of cases that are now occurring, and as it appears to me in some measure arising from the very inefficient medical staff on board emigrant ships, renders it necessary that something should be done. A short time ago -- in fact with in the last two or three days -- cases were brought under my notice where there were medical men on board vessels and parties have died from natural causes. Elderly persons have died -- but the majority from natural causes -- almost immediately after they got on board. Elderly females and children have died in the same way, and certificates to that effect were forwarded to me. Having those certificates, I did not hold inquests, considering the medical certificate was sufficient, if the death was from national (sic) causes, to satisfy me, and therefore there was no necessity for public inquiry. But now the cases are becoming so very numerous, I am compelled, from the facts that come under my notice, to go very rigidly into all cases of death occurring on board emigrant ships. It will be within the last two or three days, two children, the children of a German emigrant -- one, I believe, twelve years of ages, the other some years younger -- died in the river on board a ship called the *Ben Nevis*. I believe there were no less than two medical men on board that vessel. I do not want to say anything of the professional qualifications of those gentlemen, but it was their duty to have a proper and authentic certificate on shore accounting for the death of those children. A certificate, I believe, was sent on shore only on Sunday last, and it was taken, I think, to Major Greig. Major Greig, from the nature of the certificate, considered it was only a case that required parish attention, and gave directions accordingly. One of the two medical men certified

that the children had died from cholera, whilst the other said that they had not died from cholera, but he did not say what the children died from. I directed an inquiry to me made from the owners of the vessel, and the result was, that a proper certificate was to have been sent to me by ten o'clock on the following morning. In the meantime, Mr Gray, finding the discrepancy between the two medical certificates, said he would not interfere until the coroner was informed of the circumstances. At ten o'clock next morning no certificate came, and I directed further inquiry, the result of which was, that the ship had gone to sea, surgeons and all, and the owners knew nothing about it. I then directed a post mortem examination of the bodies to be made by the surgeon attached to this court, and lo and behold you, he discovered that neither from cholera nor any other disease had the children died -- they died of starvation (sensation). I heard a fact this morning which really startled me, and I did not at all thank the gentleman who gave me the information. I am told there is a class of men who go and represent themselves to be surgeons, and who are not surgeons at all (sensation). I believe that chemists go with a desire of getting a free passage, and being paid besides, and represent themselves as being properly qualified to take charge of the passengers on board those ships. In a recent case, the number of passengers on board a ship might be two hundred perhaps; a great number of whom were females, and as the matter turned out, married females, many of them in an advanced state of pregnancy. A person of this class had been appointed surgeon of the ship, and he found there was a great responsibility, which might turn out very seriously to him, and he went to my informant, and said, "What shall I do under the circumstances?" "Well" said the other, "you had better do nothing." In fact, doing nothing was best, and leaving them to the charge of the females on board. I told that gentleman that he was morally responsible for anything which may happen in the case, for it was his duty, on hearing this, to have informed the owners of the ship, so that a proper person might be appointed to take charge of these females and of the people on board. I hope that no casualty will occur; but we do not know what may happen. It is not long ago, at one of our principal hospitals -- I will give you the name, the Northern Hospital -- I missed, in one of my visits there, the door porter, and I said, "Where has he gone? Has he left you?" "Yes, sir" was the reply, "He has gone out physician on board a ship" (laughter). "What!" I said, "Gone as an M.D.! Do you mean to say he has taken charge of a ship?" "Yes. That was what I was informed." The house porter had absolutely taken charge of the passengers on board a ship, and "M.D." was his qualification. This is a state of things which most certainly ought to be at once remedied. Take the case of the female today. She dies on board the *Ben Nevis* also, and there is the certificate. One party signs his name "Blennerhasset," the other signs something like "Hankey," but both use the very vague title, "M.D." It means really a doctor of medicine, but I could put another construction on it, which, perhaps, would be a better and more appropriate one; but I will not trust myself to do so. He then read the following certificate:

"SHIP BEN NEVIS. -- We hereby certify that Regina [Rosina Schatte] Sahatta (sic), 37 years of age, died this morning at half-past seven o'clock, on board this ship, from effusion on the brain caused by excessive grief of losing a child.
(Signed) "RICHARD BLENNERHASSET, M.D.
HANKEY, M.D."

The Coroner -- I know the examination is very strict in the navy. But here is almost a population of a whole village going out in one of these ships, and

there is nothing about the medical man, except that his name is So-and-So, "I am a surgeon or an M.D." My object is to have properly qualified medical men appointed to the ships going out of the port. On the abdomen of this poor woman there was a large mustard poultice, which was a very extraordinary way of treating her for an effusion of the brain.

A Juryman thought the remarks of the coroner would apply to American vessels chiefly: it would be found the Australian vessels were better in this respect.

The Coroner said this vessel, the *Ben Nevis*, was going to Australia.

A Juryman stated he had been sailing in ships out of Liverpool for eighteen years, and he never knew a proper doctor to be on board. Ask them for medicines, and they said nothing was the matter with you. He had seen from ten to fifteen bodies thrown overboard for want of proper medical attention.

The Foreman said the jury agreed entirely with the coroner, as to the want of proper inquiry as to the qualifications of surgeons on board emigrant ships.

The subject then dropped.

The Constitution

Tuesday Morning, October 3, 1854

THE EMIGRANT SHIP BEN NEVIS

This vessel, which sailed from Liverpool on the 26th September, with, it is stated, 448 emigrants on board, most of whom were German, is now lying in Queenstown harbour, cholera having broken out among her passengers. Her crew numbers 42 men. Previous to her departure from Liverpool, four cases of Asiatic cholera occurred; and the Emigration-officer at that port directed the passengers and crew to quit the vessel and ordered the ship to be fumigated. The passengers were then permitted to go on board the vessel again, but on the following day two other passengers were seized with cholera and had to be removed from the vessel. On the 26th ult, no fresh cases having made their appearance for three days, the Emigration-officer deemed that the pestilence was eradicated from the vessel and allowed it to proceed. On that day, however, no fewer than eight of the passengers were taken ill; next day four more were added to the sick list, and on the following day three others were attacked. This made 14 cases, seven of whom died. On the 29th there were seven new cases. On this day the vessel arrived in Queenstown, and her condition being reported, Dr. Scott proceeded on board and rendered every assistance. Her agents, Messrs. Scott & Co., dispatched a telegraphic message to Captain De Courcey, Government Emigration officer, who was at the moment in Cork. Captain De Courcey instantly proceeded to Queenstown and on his arrival, Admiral Carroll ordered the *Inconstant* hulk to be towed alongside the vessel. No time was lost in preparing the hulk for the reception of the healthy passengers, and on Saturday they were all removed to the hulk, where they have every advantage of good diet, warmth, cleanliness and ventilation. As a consequence, the number of new cases has been comparatively few. The sick on board the *Ben Nevis* also receive every possible attention and many are recovering. The following is an accurate account of the number of new cases, deaths, and convalescent cases: --

Cases Deaths Under Treatment				
From 26th to 29th}				
inclusive.	}	7	7	17
30th September,	2	2		18
1st October,	4	5		19

Yesterday no deaths were reported, and but one new case has been added, which is likely to recover.

Irish Nation

Saturday, October 7, 1854

Emigrant "Surgeons"

Great dissatisfaction is at present felt at the manner in which emigrant ships are supplied with medical men and the coroner of Liverpool gave expression in no very measured terms, at the close of business on Friday week: --

"I wish (he said) to make an observation on the case of the female in the death-house: and really I hardly know how, in any language of mine, to bring it sufficiently under your notice with a desire to have it remedied, if it be possible to have it remedied: for the number of cases that are now occurring, and as it appears to me in some measure arising from the very inefficient medical staff on board emigrant ships, renders it necessary that something should be done. I am compelled, from the facts that come under my notice, to go very rigidly into all cases of death occurring on board emigrant ships. Within the last two or three days, two children, the children of a German emigrant -- one, I believe, twelve years of ages, the other some years younger -- died in the river on board a ship called the Ben Nevis. I believe there were no less than two medical men on board that vessel. I do not want to say anything of the professional qualifications of those gentlemen, but it was their duty to have a proper and authentic certificate on shore accounting for the death of those children. A certificate, I believe, was sent on shore only on Sunday last, and it was taken, I think, to Major Greig. Major Greig, from the nature of the certificate, considered it was only a case that required parish attention, and gave directions accordingly. One of the medical men certified that the children had died from cholera, whilst the other said that they had not died from cholera, but he did not say what the children died from. I directed an inquiry to me made from the owners of the vessel, and the result was, that a proper certificate was to have been sent to me by ten o'clock on the following morning. In the meantime, Mr. Gray, finding the discrepancy between the two medical certificates, said he would not interfere until the coroner was informed of the circumstances. At ten o'clock next morning no certificate came, and I directed further inquiry, the result of which was, that the ship had gone to sea, surgeons and all, and the owners knew nothing about it. I then directed a post mortem examination of the bodies to be made by the surgeon attached to this court, and lo and behold you, he discovered that neither from cholera nor any other disease had the children died -- they died of starvation (sensation). I heard a fact this morning which really startled me, and I did not at all thank the gentleman who gave me the information. I am told there is a class of men who go and represent themselves to be surgeons, and who are not surgeons at all (sensation). I believe that chemists go with a desire of getting a free passage, and being paid besides, and represent themselves as being properly qualified to take charge of the passengers on board those ships. In a recent case, the number of passengers on board a ship might be two hundred perhaps; a great number of whom were females, and as the matter turned out, married females, many of them in an advanced state of pregnancy. A person of this class had been appointed surgeon of the ship, and he found there was a great responsibility, which might turn out very seriously to him, and he went to my informant, and said, "What shall I do under the circumstances?" "Well" said the other, "you had better do nothing." In fact, doing nothing was best, and leaving them to the charge of the females on board. I told that gentleman that he was morally responsible for anything which may happen in the case, for it was his duty, on hearing this, to have

informed the owners of the ship, so that a proper person might be appointed to take charge of these females and of the people on board. I hope that no casualty will occur; but we do not know what may happen. It is not long ago, at one of our principal hospitals -- I will give you the name, the Northern Hospital -- I missed, in one of my visits there, the door porter, and I said, "Where has he gone? Has he left you?" "Yes, sir" was the reply, "He has gone out physician on board a ship" (laughter). "What!" I said, "Gone as an M.D.! Do you mean to say he has taken charge of a ship?" "Yes. That was what I was informed." The house porter had absolutely taken charge of the passengers on board a ship, and "M.D." was his qualification. This is a state of things which most certainly ought to be at once remedied. Take the case of the female today. She dies on board the Ben Nevis also, and there is the certificate. One party signs his name "Blennerhasset," the other signs something like "Hankey," but both use the very vague title, "M.D." It means really a doctor of medicine, but I could put another construction on it, which, perhaps, would be a better and more appropriate one; but I will not trust myself to do so. He then read the following certificate:

"SHIP BEN NEVIS. -- We hereby certify that Regina [Rosina Schatte] Sahatta (sic), 37 years of age, died this morning at half-past seven o'clock, on board this ship, from effusion on the brain caused by excessive grief of losing a child. (Signed)....."Richard Blennerhasset, M.D.

"Hankay, M.D.

"September 26th, 1854."

You heard the medical evidence given today, that the woman died from an inflammation of the lungs. Just imagine this poor woman being treated for an effusion of the brain, while inflammation of the lungs was the cause of death.

A Juryman thought the remarks of the coroner would apply to American vessels chiefly: it would be found the Australian vessels were better in this respect.

The Coroner said this vessel, the Ben Nevis, was going to Australia.

A Juryman stated he had been sailing in ships out of Liverpool for eighteen years, and he never knew a proper doctor to be on board. Ask them for medicines, and they said nothing was the matter with you. He had seen from ten to fifteen bodies thrown overboard for want of proper medical attention.

The Foreman said the jury agreed entirely with the coroner, as to the want of proper inquiry as to the qualifications of surgeons on board emigrant ships.

The Cork Examiner has the following particulars of the arrival of the Ben Nevis emigrant ship, with cholera on board, at Queenstown: --

"In our last publication we were only able briefly to announce the information conveyed by a telegraphic dispatch of the arrival of this vessel in Queenstown, with cholera on board; we are now able, from the report of Dr. Scott, the medical officer in Queenstown, to supply the full particulars. It appears that this vessel sailed from Liverpool on the 29th of September with 446 German emigrants on board, and carrying a crew of 12 in number. The vessel, before leaving Liverpool, was lying in the Sandon dock, and there, on the 17th ult., cholera made its appearance, four cases having been reported. In consequence the passengers were landed, and measures were taken for the necessary cleaning and purifying operations. The passengers were then re-embarked, but on the 23rd two fresh cases again broke out, and these were removed. No additional cases having occurred up to the 26th, the vessel was cleared and allowed to proceed to sea. Soon after sailing, however, some of the emigrants

began to sicken, and as many as eight on that very day. The captain, however, observes, that on the first it was conceived to be sea sickness. On the next day, four more persons were seized, and on the 28th, three. On the 29th (Friday last) she arrived in Queenstown, and on that day seven persons were taken ill. Among those taken ill on that day was Dr. Blennerhasset, the surgeon, son of Dr. Blennerhasset, who, we regret to say, died yesterday. Seven persons died on the passage between Liverpool and this port, and seven (including the surgeon) since her arrival in Queenstown. Up to the present time, nineteen cases remain under treatment, the majority of which are proceeding favorably. Immediately on the arrival of the vessel she was visited by Dr. Scott, and a telegraphic message was sent by their agents, Messrs. Scott and Co., to Captain De Courey, who was in Cork. On that gentleman going down to Queenstown, the Admiral, Sir W. F. Carroll, placed at his disposal the hulk of her majesty's ship Inconstant, the destination of which up to that time had remained a mystery.

Freeman's Journal

Wednesday, October 11, 1854

DEATHS

September 30, of cholera, on board the Ben Nevis emigrant vessel, in Queenstown harbor.

R. Blennerhasset, Esq., M.D., son of Henry Blennerhasset, Esq., M.D., formerly of Tralee.

The Constitution

Tuesday, October 17, 1854

CHOLERA IN QUEENSTOWN

The cholera on board the *Ben Nevis* has decreased. The number of new cases does not average more than one per day, and the deaths since the 6th inst. number only 9. The following is the official return: -- New cases since 6th October, 9; deaths since same period, 9; under treatment on 12th October, 4. Every possible care is taken of the patients on board the ship; they are supplied with the best diet and medical attendance, and it is hoped that after the lapse of a few days the disease will be eradicated.

The Constitution

Tuesday, October 24, 1854

SHIP NEWS

QUEENSTOWN, OCTOBER 23

SAILED	TO
Ben Nevis, Heron, emigrants, etc	Texas

Cork Examiner

Wednesday, October 25, 1854

DEPARTURE of the EMIGRANT SHIP BEN NEVIS --

ADVANTAGE of a FLOATING HOSPITAL in CORK HARBOUR.

It will be recollected that an emigrant ship called the "Ben Nevis," put into this port about three weeks since, with several cases of decided Asiatic Cholera on board, and on her arrival in was ascertained that, during the passage from Liverpool, several deaths had taken place, caused by the named disease. The "Ben Nevis" had 588 passengers on board, and a crew amounting to 42 persons, which made a total of 630 human beings. Before leaving Liverpool cholera had appeared on board the ship, and four cases were reported to have occurred on the 17th of last month, while the vessel was still in the dock. The passengers were then taken out of the ship, the vessel was cleaned and fumigated, and the people were re-shipped on the 21st. However on the 23rd two fresh cases broke out, but, from that date to the 26th, no additional cases occurred, and the vessel sailed for her destination on that day. Shortly after the ship put to sea, the passengers began to get sick,

and before the close of the day eight passengers were struck down by decided Asiatic cholera. On the 27th, four additional cases were reported, on the 28th three more were placed on the sick list, and on the 29th, the day of her arrival in this harbor, the number had increased to ten. Out of the cases enumerated seven passengers died between port and port, and on the arrival of the ship there were twenty-one under treatment, in various stages of the disease. Scarcely an hour had elapsed from the arrival of the ship, when Dr. Scott, the medical officer of the Colonial land and emigration Commissioners was on board, and after minutely inquiring into the nature of the disease which prevailed on board, and the symptoms which manifested themselves, he at once directed the speedy removal of all the passengers, both sick and well, out of the "Ben Nevis." In the report in which Dr. Scott urged the immediate adoption of this measure, he observed that several days would be required to render the "Ben Nevis" fit for their shipment again, as from the facts which had been reported to him, in addition to the smart outbreak of cholera on the day of her arrival, that disease appeared to be decidedly manifest.

On the receipt of the recommendation as to the removal of the passengers Captain De Coursey, the government emigration officer of the harbor, with the promptitude which had eminently distinguished his conduct since his arrival in the port, applied to Sir William F. Carroll for permission to use her Majesty's ship "Inconstant" as a receiving ship for the healthy emigrants of the "Ben Nevis," to which application Sir William Carroll at once acceded. The healthy emigrants were then, without delay, transferred to the "Inconstant," where, on her ample decks, and, in her airy and well-ventilated sleeping apartments, they quickly regained that health and strength which had been somewhat impaired during their passage from Liverpool; and the sick emigrants were removed to an hospital ship which was provided for the occasion by the emigration commissioners.

We will now permit the interval that elapsed between the day on which those people were transferred and Saturday to pass by without further observation, in order that we may turn to the report of Sr. Scott, which bears brief but emphatic testimony to the excellence of the arrangements which were entered into, and the almost incalculable advantages that may be presumed to have resulted from the presence in our harbor of the means that enabled them to carry out their arrangements. In the medical report dated October 23, 1854, addressed to Captain De Coursey, Dr. Scott says, "I have now the pleasure to announce to you the total disappearance of cholera from among the emigrants of the ship 'Ben Nevis,' no new case having appeared for seven clear days." Dr. Scott continues to state that, in his report of the 29th, he suggested the speedy separation of the sick and the removal of all the people, as the average daily number of cases was then nearly seven, in addition to which the malady made a rapid increase on the last of those days. The credit of the promptitude of the government emigration officer was speedily shown by the fact that the number of cases had diminished from ten to three.

After the arrival of the ship in the harbor the duration of cholera extended over a period of sixteen days in the receiving ships, and, although the cases were not very numerous at any given time, yet the sanitary condition of the people required the closest attention, as, on no former occasion, was a similar duration of disease witnessed by the medical officer under circumstances correspondingly favorable. In explanation of the tenacity which the disease here exhibited it may be stated that it was ascertained that the cholera prevailed among those

passengers during the time they remained on shore in Liverpool, while the ship was being cleaned and fumigated. The presence of cholera must then, in this instance, be traced to the passengers; we understand some cases occurred amongst them before their departure from Germany, it was imported through them to the "Ben Nevis," and acquired that character of fixity and intensity on board that ship which is so peculiar to the disease. From the "Ben Nevis" it followed, through the same material agency, to the "Inconstant."

To the next paragraph in this report we have to direct the especial attention of the public. Dr. Scott says, "with this explanation before us, and to which I beg to draw the attention of the Commissioners the advantage of the receiving ship cannot be too highly estimated, as had those emigrants been sent into the town to lodge, the result would in all probability be most disastrous."

Before the "Ben Nevis" left Liverpool on the 26th, 14 passengers died of cholera; on the passage from Liverpool to Cork seven died of the same disease; and from the time that she anchored in Cork harbour to the day of her departure, 29 persons, including the surgeon of the ship, Dr. Blennerhassett, died of cholera, and three more from other diseases.

In the course of last week the passengers were re-shipped on board the Ben Nevis; their bedding, bed clothes, and wearing apparel cleansed and fumigated, were placed on board, and the captain signified to the authorities that he was ready again to proceed to sea. Captain De Coursey and Dr. Scott went on board the Shipon Saturday. The passengers were mustered on deck, and immediately examined, when all were found to be in the best health and excellent spirits. The provisions, water, and other necessaries were inspected by Captain De Coursey, and found to be unexceptionable, and here it is only a matter of justice to observe that, by the Liverpool agent of the ship, Mr Mayer, from the time of her arrival in this port to the day of her departure, no expense was spared in prompting the health and comfort of the passengers. The "Ben Nevis" was cleared out on Saturday, and sailed on Monday morning, with a fair wind, for Galveston, Texas.

Perhaps no circumstance could more forcibly illustrate the benefits that have been conferred on this locality by the presence of the "Inconstant" in our harbour, and her conversion to the purposes of a receiving ship, than the fact that, during the entire time the epidemic prevailed on board the "Ben Nevis," a period of over three weeks, not a single case of cholera occurred in Queenstown, or at any other place within the harbour. It is also a singular fact, and one for which we cannot be too thankful, that medical men agree in stating that they do not recollect this city to be more free from disease of any kind than it is at the present moment. It was we believe through precisely the same agency, namely - the presence of foreign emigrants, who were landed in the town from their ships - that cholera was introduced into Liverpool a few months since; from which time it has prevailed there with more or less virulence up to the present. The presence of the "Inconstant" in our harbour is another proof, if any were wanted, that where a wrong is to be redressed or a joint and reasonable demand is expected to be acceded to, it will not do for people to sit down contentedly, waiting for relief to be thrust upon them; for, in the present instance we believe it was mainly owing to the constant and untiring exertions of the people of Queenstown, to their united demands in public, and their constant remonstrances, sustained, as those demands were, in the last Session of Parliament, by facts and figures which could neither be contradicted nor denied, that

a demand which has been ignored for years, has at length conceded. In the same spirit which prompted the Government to place the "Inconstant" in our harbour, we are sure they will not now hesitate to render the machinery for the relief of sick emigrants, who may be driven late this harbour, complete, by providing another ship to be used for hospital purposes, and to supply the place of the hired vessel that was employed in a similar manner, for the relief of the passengers of the "Ben Nevis."

In concluding this statement, it would be doing an injustice which we should regret, if we omitted to express the approbation of the public at the manner in which the Government Emigration Officer, Captain De Coursey, and the Emigration Commissioners' Medical Officer, Dr. Scott, discharged the onerous duties that were placed upon them. To the promptitude, energy, and watchful superintendence of Captain De Coursey, and the medical skill and unwearied attention of Dr. Scott, is owing the fact, that the measures necessary to be taken were adopted within a few hours after the arrival of the ship in this harbour, and that those measure were afterwards carried out efficiently and energetically. The result is seen in the departure of the ship, with the crew and passengers in the best of health and spirits, in little more than three weeks after her arrival.

Galveston Weekly News

Tuesday, November 7, 1854

EXPECTED. - The large ship Ben Nevis, sailed from Liverpool, with emigrants on the 28th ult., now thirty-five days out.

Since writing the above we have seen the following dispatch brought by the Africa:

Cholera on Board a Ship Bound to Galveston. -

The ship Ben Nevis, from Liverpool for Galveston, with four hundred and forty German emigrants on board. Had put into Queenstown on account of cholera. Seven persons died on the passage, and seven after her arrival at Queenstown.

As the Africa sailed from Liverpool on the 7th inst., we presume the Queenstown mentioned, must be on the coast of Ireland.
