

QUARANTINE FACILITIES.

A Reply to Consul Bee and the National Board of Health.

The San Francisco Board of Health, through its committee, has forwarded to the National Board of Health a letter in reply to the inquiry respecting quarantine affairs in this port, which also contained Consul Bee's letter giving "exaggerated and partial statements" as to the quarantined *Altonower*, besides certain clipped newspaper comments. The answer is made that, while vessels with no disease of a contagious character are allowed to proceed to the wharf immediately, "the only exception to this has been steamers plying between this port, Hongkong and Yokohama, which are detained long enough to vaccinate the passengers and fumigate the vessel." When properly vaccinated on the voyage by the ship's surgeon not even this detention is exacted.

The local Board refers to its resolution of April, 1880, requiring the vaccination of all Chinese before landing, experience having taught that the almost continued prevalence of smallpox in the city was largely due to the presence of so many thousands of unvaccinated Chinese in our midst. Since then every passenger is detained on board the ship upon which he arrives until he has submitted to vaccination. The argument is made that if this passenger traffic had remained with the regular steamship lines—whose vessels were constructed for the carrying of passengers—and other ships with equal accommodations had been provided for the transfer of those exposed to the disease, the occasion for Consul Bee's letter would never have arisen. But, unfortunately, the immense hordes of Chinese desiring to come to this country—some 341,000—brought this year into the passenger-carrying business a class of British steamers never intended for such traffic, and presenting on arrival "an appearance much more resembling the slave ship of former times than a passenger steamer of the present day."

The facts of the detention of the *Altonower* are then given—the offer of an old ferry-boat for those who had been exposed to the disease, its unfitness and liability to capsize if a storm occurred on the bay, and the Board's dislike "to assume the responsibility of endangering the passengers' lives for the purpose of releasing the ship and satisfying the representative of the Imperial Government of China." "With regard to the comments of such newspapers as the *Freeman* (Berkeley) and the *Argus* (Petaluma)," the Board very sarcastically remarks: "It requires little strain of the imagination to discover the source of their 'merciful appeal.' We do know that there are two villages in this vicinity with the above names who 'mercifully' send their sick poor to the hospitals of this city for treatment at our expense, but never having before heard of the existence of those newspapers, we may be pardoned for thinking that the copy received by your honorable Board may have exhausted the edition."

Continuing, the Board, in its reply, refers to San Francisco's lack of a quarantine station and facilities of any kind for purifying and disinfecting immigrants with contagious or infectious diseases, a small steam launch and the Quarantine Officer comprising everything at the disposal of the health authorities. In conclusion the Board remarks that it had about concluded further appeals for Congressional assistance were useless, but felt thankful that the Chinese Consul succeeded when it had failed in arousing the attention of the Federal health authorities to the importance and necessity of a quarantine station at this port commensurate with the position it occupies in guarding against the introduction of such diseases as smallpox and Asiatic cholera into the United States.