

PROTECTION TO IMMIGRANTS.

Section 9 of the Act of 1866, enacts "that it shall be unlawful for any agent, runner or solicitor, to visit vessels arriving with immigrants on board for any purpose whatever, until such immigrants have been seen and properly instructed by the commissioner or his clerk, provided for in this Act."

The obvious intention of this section is to afford protection to immigrants landing at this port, whether in transitu or for permanent settlement.

The power thus conferred upon the commissioner is altogether inadequate for the proper prosecution of this important branch of his duties. As has been before stated, the only time allowed him for communicating with the immigrant, is that intervening between his arrival and debarkation. Once ashore he is beyond the control of the State's officer, and is subjected not only to many annoyances, but acts of positive fraud.

A reform in this department is greatly needed. Ample protection is no more than the immigrants landing upon our shores have a right to expect. They are peculiarly helpless, especially those unacquainted with our language and people, will always be found in every community base enough to take advantage of this helplessness. Aside from humane considerations, the State will be benefitted by it. An injury to an immigrant is soon told by letter to his friends at home, and the whole community is disparaged. In a like degree the finding of ample protection with arrangements to facilitate his settlement here or to reach his destination beyond the State, would, through the same channel, favorably impress those who are to follow.

The establishment of an immigrant depot, at which immigrant passengers should be compelled to report on their arrival, and the designation of a landing place, and one only, for such passengers, in the vicinity of said depot would greatly facilitate the operations of the commissioner in this branch of his duties.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

W. R. COLE,

Commissioner of Immigration for the State of Maryland.