

the merchant is determined in selecting tonnage for his shipments ; and if, while the ships of other nations are advancing, British tonnage be allowed to deteriorate in quality, how can it be expected that it should maintain its position in general estimation ? A reference to the rules of Lloyd's registry of British and foreign shipping will prove that, in the opinion of those on whose judgment the most deserved reliance is placed, North American colonial ships rank in quality with the most inferior in the world ; and hence it is clear that if that class of vessels be allowed gradually to supersede tonnage of British build, the evils I have adverted to will become imminent and inevitable. I know it may be urged that motives of interest will, by the very arguments I have advanced, operate to induce the English shipowner to maintain the quality of his ship on a level with that of the shipping of other countries. If left to the simple exercise of his unfettered judgment, the reply would be unanswerable ; but I have shown that it is from causes irrespective of his volition, and beyond his control, that these ships are produced ; and being admitted to perfect equality of privilege with British-built vessels, cheapness will force them into employment, in spite of the acknowledged inferiority of their quality.

The last argument with which I shall trouble you, is one which I am persuaded will with you, Sir, be by no means the least forcible ; that of humanity. The fearful loss of life and property consequent on the insufficient state in which ships are sent to sea, is an evil so deplorable as to have powerfully excited public sympathy, and to have induced, on two recent occasions, the intervention of legislative inquiry. A reference to the records of those inquiries will confirm all that has been advanced as to the inferior quality of these ships, and will show how large a comparative portion of the losses that annually afflict humanity, occur in the cheap and inefficiently-built ships imported from the North American colonies. The competition they introduce compels the owners of other ships to vie with them in inefficiency, instead of rivalling each other in excellence ; and I scruple not to say that all endeavours to check the evil will be vain, unless the system be rendered such as to afford encouragement to the production of the best, instead of stimulating the construction of the worst description of vessels. In the name therefore of humanity, still more strongly than on the plea of policy or the claims of interest, I would venture to express a hope that, disregarding those obstacles which the supposed necessity for adherence to certain economical principles may interpose, you will be disposed to afford your sanction to the measure which we suggest.

Finally, Sir, in advocating the check on improvident and pernicious production we propose, it is right that I should explain that it is by no means the desire of the committee that any impediment should be thrown in the way of the colonial shipowner in the fair pursuit of his trade as a colonist. For all such purposes we believe a colonial register will suffice ; but if there be any case in which, either in his intercolonial or foreign intercourse, the want of a British register would injuriously affect his interests, the regulations of colonial registration may easily be extended to meet the difficulty. Nor is exclusion of colonial-built ships our object ; but just and salutary regulation alone. We ask only, therefore, such a tax on their admission to the full privileges of British registry, as shall place domestic and colonial production on a footing of reasonable equality ; a tax which the better class of such ships could without serious inconvenience bear, and which would only operate as a discouragement to the production of those which I have endeavoured to prove ought equally to be discountenanced on principles of justice, of policy, and of humanity.

I have, &c.

(signed) *George Frederick Young,*
Chairman of the Committee.

72, Cornhill, 28 May 1844.