

it would be desirable to preserve to our own people the existing privileges. With respect to the intentions of foreign powers, the Government had not thought it expedient to enter into communications with other powers besides those he had alluded to, until they knew the sentiments of that House on the subject. It was better that the House should decide on general views and principles, than that the Government should go through Europe asking, "Who will assent to these principles?" The first was the more likely method to attain the object in view. The Right Hon. Gentleman had adverted to the important subject of the examination of shipmasters. The system of voluntary examination had been in operation for some time, and he was generally able to say that that system had been adopted to a considerable extent. Persons desirous of becoming shipmasters had availed themselves of it, and a considerable number had passed their examinations, and there had been manifested an increasing disposition to take advantage of the system. Under these circumstances he should hesitate to propose to the House that which was very much objected to by persons connected with the merchant navy, a compulsory system of examination. Parliament might be obliged to have recourse to that at last, but he was disposed to give the voluntary system some further trial. With regard to the suggestion of the desirability of encouraging schools in the sea-ports to give useful instruction for the seafaring life, he