

of foreigners—at least it is so with the ships passing Gravesend. I have known ships myself going to sea with absolutely every one of the crew on board a foreigner, from the Captain downwards. Why the case of the English ship "Lennie," still going on, must be familiar to all, the three murdered men were the only English on board. Last year I obtained a return in the House of Commons, and I think the figures are perfectly dreadful for any Englishman to read,—“Foreign masters, 968; “foreign mates, 595; foreign engineers, 77;” total, 1,630 foreigners in the position of Officers in the British Mercantile Marine, taking ships over the world under the British flag. I ask, where would ships so commanded and officered go in time of war? I do not hesitate to say if, in event of war, we had to collect all the British seamen in the Mercantile Marine, we could not collect more than 20,000 men. I am perfectly satisfied you would be unable to get 20,000 real British seamen, and that would, *malgré* the decimials of my friend, Mr. Brassey, be rather less than one for every British ship. With regard to the Mercantile Marine being a feeder of our Service, the Royal Navy, in the present day, I am afraid that is an idea about as fallacious as the idea that we have a large supply of seamen. We find, by a return, that the number of merchant seamen who entered the Royal Navy in 1873 was 382, and that there were more than 800 deserters. Last year we find that less than 200 seamen entered the Royal Navy, and 1,100 deserted. Mr. Brassey is quite right in saying, there are no less than 16,000 men “waste” in the Mercantile Marine per annum. It is a very sad thing, but there is no doubt the calculation has been made most carefully. I see a gentleman here, not far from me, who is well able to verify this calculation. 16,000 is a frightful waste in this Mercantile Marine of ours, and how is this to be filled up? Taking every boy that you can possibly “scare up” out of the training-ships, you cannot send to sea more than 1,000 at the very outside. The apprenticeship system yields us about 4,500; If my memory is right, in 1845 we had about 16,000 apprentices, while last year there were only 4,500. Adding those to the 1,000 boys from the training-ships, which is far in excess of the mark, you have 5,500 to fill up a gap of 16,000. How do you fill up that gap? Why, with foreigners, or with the outcasts of our own country. Mr. Corry is not the only owner whose captains write home to complain that out of their crew they have only four men who can take the helm. I have known ships of 1,800 tons go to sea with only two men on board who could take the helm. Altogether there is no doubt the present condition of the Mercantile Marine, viewed from that aspect, is as deplorable as it is possible to conceive. I will now touch slightly upon the reasons which, in my humble judgment, have caused this deplorable condition of the Mercantile Marine. In the first place, we do not train any boys at all. In this country, we have 100,000 pauper-boys, under sixteen years of age, more or less on the high road to become criminals, and we have 100,000 boys, the sons of parents who are so poor that they are next door to paupers. Now, you could not by any possibility have a finer material to bring up for seamen. Look at the institution, of which I think the gallant Admiral near me is one of the visiting justices at Feltham; look at the way in which the boys of the county of Middlesex are there trained. If that sort of institution were established all over the country, see how easy it would be to turn out 20,000 good boys every year, to fill up the gap in our Mercantile Marine, if Englishmen would only put their shoulder to the wheel! We want at least 20,000 boys, trained for sea every year, and it could be done with the greatest possible ease. Another reason for this deplorable condition of the Mercantile Marine is the really wretched life that the men live on board ship. As a rule, I do not consider that the merchant seaman is at all properly fed. I do not consider that he is well treated, and I should like to read to you a petition drawn up by the seamen themselves, and presented by me to Parliament last week. The petition is to this effect:—“That your petitioners, British seamen, employed in the British Mercantile Marine, are subject to great disadvantages, by reason of the extensive employment of unqualified foreigners, and other serious drawbacks, which can only be remedied by practical legislation administered by a responsible head.”

This is a petition drawn up by the seamen themselves, and one almost in identically the same words was presented by me the session before last; so that you see it is not all a new thing. These men have considered their case very carefully