

former we embrace the possibility of more continual exertions, including, especially, the diffusion of accurate information on the whole British Navigation system, with a view, by the correction of prevalent errors, to bring the influence of a sound public opinion to bear on the legislature, in defence of a policy, which however bitterly assailed on the private judgments of theoretical individuals, has never, as has been loudly but erroneously asserted, been condemned by public opinion, and which, we believe, will be supported by the popular voice, in the precise proportion in which its real merits are understood.

To accomplish these objects effectually, we know from experience that considerable funds are necessary. We repeat our belief, that if vigorous exertions in the direction we indicate are not made, the Navigation Laws will be repealed, or so materially altered, as that the remnant may scarcely be worth retaining. We add our conviction, that if such a change take place, the value of all existing British ships will be greatly restricted in extent, and the return on capital invested in them be greatly reduced. To avert such consequences, any reasonable expenditure, judiciously made, would be, in reality, the most obvious economy on the part of the shipowner.

We suggest, therefore, that you should without delay convene a meeting of the shipowners of your port, and if they should concur in the views I have stated on the part of this committee, that you should forthwith appoint an auxiliary committee—collect subscriptions—appoint a secretary—place your committee in communication with us, and inform us, as soon as possible, what amount we may rely on receiving from you in aid of the general fund. We should be glad also to receive the name of any gentleman possessing the confidence of the shipowners of your port who would be willing to act with us as a member of the committee, and we invite the most candid and unreserved communication of any suggestions calculated in your judgment to forward the objects I have thus hastily endeavoured to explain, assured that they will receive our impartial and careful consideration. And in conclusion, I would only very earnestly press on you the great importance of promptitude and decision of action, without which no effort will, in this crisis, be available to practical good, as the select committee has actually commenced its labours,

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

DUNCAN DUNBAR, Chairman.

(From the Shipping Gazette, London, February 27, 1847.)

Referring to our remarks of yesterday, relative to the active measures taken by the General Shipowners' Society in defence of the Navigation Laws, a correspondent reminds us that, in December last, circulars were sent to the principal ports, requesting replies to certain queries on this very subject; and, for the information of our readers, we cannot do better than publish the questions put, and answers returned in writing by a gentleman then applied to, whose experience in shipping matters is most extensive, and whose opinions, in all that relates to the maritime commerce of the country, are deserving of the highest consideration.—

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RELATING TO NAVIGATION.

**FIRST.**—The comparative cost of ship building, and expense of navigation, in all or any of the undermentioned countries, viz.:—Great Britain, United States, Russia, Norway, Sweden, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Prussia, and Spain?

**ANSWER.**—The comparative cost of ships, and expense of navigation.—

Great Britain,.....	According to class and materials, varying from 3 to 13 years
United States,.....	A 1, at from £6 to £18 per ton, for a Baltic outfit, and 30s. extra per ton, if coppered.
Russia,.....	
Norway,.....	Ships built of fir, about £6 to £7 per ton.
Sweden,.....	
France,.....	
Belgium,.....	About £12 per ton.
Holland,.....	
Denmark,.....	About from £11 to £12 per ton.
Prussia,.....	
Spain,.....	About £12 to £14 per ton.

In Denmark, the exportation of oak timber for ship building is prohibited; and in France the export duty on oak is also prohibitory, having been imposed on this country importing largely some six or eight years ago, when the French government took alarm and stopped the export.

**SECOND.**—Whether there are any peculiar advantages enjoyed by any of these countries?

**ANSWER.**—Yes, in some being free from port charges for the first two years, and in America and France the light dues are borne by government. Spain virtually excludes us, but we do not exclude Spain.

**THIRD.**—Whether the late alterations in the tariff, particularly in the timber duties, have reduced the cost of ship-building in this country?

**ANSWER.**—No. A twelve years British-built ship is constructed of English and African oak, or East India teak. The decks only are of yellow pine from our colonies, and the price now is higher than when the colonial duty was exacted, varying, as prices always will do, according to supply and demand. Copper is cheaper, iron is dearer, as well as labour.

**FOURTH.**—Whether there are any, and what, advantages to the shipowner in the present Navigation Laws?

**ANSWER.**—The only advantages are the exclusive trade to and from our own Colonies direct, and, under the reciprocity treaties, where treaties exist, the trade on equal terms with reciprocating states to and from direct.

**FIFTH.**—Whether there be any, and what, advantages or disadvantages to the merchant and manufacturer in the present Navigation Laws?

**ANSWER.**—For a lost five years shipping property has been a losing investment all over the world, and the only parties who have gained are the merchants and manufacturers, by low unremunerating freights, and the entire earnings being spent in the purchase of the manufacturing requisite for the supply of ships' materials—victualling, labour, and clothing of seamen; all, or nearly all, being purchased in this country.

**SIXTH.**—Whether there be any advantages or disadvantages to the colonies and colonial trade in the present Navigation Laws?

**ANSWER.**—Taken in the aggregate, the Colonies have an advantage, all colonial ships enjoying the privilege of British ships, the North American colonies possessing peculiar privileges, having not only the exclusive carrying to Great Britain, in common with all British ships, but all the other privileges of trading to other countries under reciprocity treaties, whilst exempt from rearing and maintaining apprentices. Any disadvantage they labour under arises from their own legislative enactments, for instance, Quebec is a free port, and Montreal is not. This is attributable to the jealousy of the legislatures of Upper and Lower Canada, when separately united as they are now, local jealousies will, it is to be hoped, give way to national good. Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, should be united and formed into a Federal Union, having one common interest in the mother country.

**SEVENTH.**—What loss, inconvenience, or disadvantage to the British shipowner, would be the consequence upon opening the ports of Great Britain and its dependencies to ships of all nations, upon equal terms?

**ANSWER.**—Such a question could only be put by a fool, or a traitor to his country. It would not only involve the destruction of our mercantile marine, and the supply of

seamen for national defence, in times of both peace and war, but be the first step to repudiation of the national debt. It would compel our shipwrights to emigrate, and make our tradesmen bankrupts.—Shipowners are compelled to maintain apprentices by law, to employ British seamen, whilst manufacturers may erect machinery, and employ men, women, and children, without being obliged to support the latter as apprentices, whether the mill is in operation or stopp'd. But, as a shipowner, I am prepared to state, that if expediency demands the national defence of the country to be jeopardised, and our British artisans to be sacrificed, I should at once say, by all means, let us have entire free trade with all the world, if other nations will grant it. Let us trade from England to America, and thence to France, Holland, and Belgium; permit us to buy our ships, and build them in the cheapest market. Don't oblige us to rear apprentices; allow us to run our ships with foreign seamen; place no more burdens on British shipowners than the heaviest levied on any foreign nation, and the British capitalist will be able to maintain his ground, whether sailing under the British flag or under that of any more powerful nation that may subdue this country. After the late war, free trade was first tried on the shipping interest, and it ruined what might be termed the legitimate shipowner—that is, the man who embarked his all in shipping, on the faith of the Navigation Laws being upheld, and which, during the reign of Napoleon, secured to this country the command of the ocean, whilst all the Continental powers were subjugated. And if the mania for free trade is encouraged and permitted to ride rough shod over the nation, what remains of the Navigation Laws will be erased from our statutes."

#### THE NAVIGATION LAWS.

[From the London Daily News.]

Washington Irving, in his pleasant idle way, tells us that he was one of a party of Americans who, for a while secluded from the world of disputes and dollars in a stream-cooled region of the Alleghanies in Western Pennsylvania, took to reading old Isaac Walton instead of the newest prices current and the latest Liverpool circulars. So charmed were Knickerbocker and his friends with the pictures of gentle rapacity sketched by the venerable Englishman, that bamboo rods, silk worm gut, and kirby hooks, were forthwith ordered from Philadelphia, and the pleasant streams that splash down the shady wooded hills of that lovely region were assiduously flogged for a whole summer's day.

In vain: the return was their own hooks, and not always those. Disappointed, wearied, resolved henceforward to taste only in Walton's pages the pleasures he describes, the future minister at the court of her Most Catholic Majesty, and his party, were sitting by one of the streams they had tortured, when up rambled an urchin from a newly projected Eden just below, furnished with a sapling as a rod, with five yards of packthread as a line, and with a crooked pin as a hook. To complete the difference between this intolerable dissenter from the rules of regular sport and their orthodox selves, the young scamp had speedily pendant, their gills on a twig, more fish than the creels of his rivals would have held after a day's pursuit.

What Irving's vagabond-ling was to the literary anglers, the 700 small, rickety, dirty, home-made, foreign-worked. Yankee whalers are to Mr Charles Enderby's stately, goodly, orderly, British South-sea ships. It can't be the superiority of their craft, for ours are better; nor of their equipment, for ours are more perfect; nor of their crews, for they are more fully foreign, being in great part British seamen; nor that they are more cheaply worked, for stores and provisions are now as cheap here; nor that their ports of outfit are nearer the whaling ground than ours. How, then, in the name of Neptune, is it that these irregularly constituted prowlers contrive to increase and multiply, so that a duty of from 50 to 100 per cent. on what they caught was not enough to keep the supply of this market in the hands of our own "merchant princes" of the southern seas?

Is there any other trade in which (with equal chances for the whole world) the superior capital of this country does not command supremacy? Must not the drawback be most powerful, which, in this particular pursuit, neutralizes the many advantages we have over the northern states of America? Does not the parallel we have drawn from Washington Irving, with the smaller fishing of fresh water, hold good? And can we assign to any other cause than the superior maritime skill of the Americans, our subjugation in the employment which of all most severely and simply tests the comparative seamanship of the two nations?

It is impossible but that this striking instance of the rising superiority of the sailors of the only nation whose position, ports, extent, intelligence, and commercial activity can make her our rival, should not excite alarm. It is our first duty to consider if, by any act of our own, we have contributed to her success. A somewhat more detailed reference to the past than we yesterday made will show.

Omitting mention of the laws affecting shipping during the middle ages (avowedly intended as much to favour classes as to protect the navy of the country), the origin of the navigation laws is, as we all know, a statute of the commonwealth, prohibiting the import of the produce of Asia, Africa, and America, except in English shipping. This was an act of war, directed against the Dutch, who had as their national treasure, instead of broad and productive lands, sunny skies, a numerous people, or the mines of Mexico and Peru, what in their hands proved better than them all—what we have now—what is to civilized Europe that which speech is to man—the conveyance of the products of the earth. The Navigation Act, depriving them of that large share of this precious privilege, which consisted in the transport to England of the productions of our own colonies, was as much an act of war, though unaccompanied by others, as the bombardment of a town or the blockade of a port, and it was accepted as such by the Dutch; for active hostilities broke out shortly after its enactment. The Dutch were in a great measure only carriers; producing little, manufacturing little. We brought little from Holland, we took little to it: they could not, therefore, retaliate by legislation upon our trade. But, even under these, the most favourable circumstances, we were not suffered to derive unmixed advantage from our measure. In very few years after the confirmation, under the restoration of the navigation law, it was remarked that the Dutch were excluding us from some trades in bulky articles, whose chief value was the cost of conveyance; as, for example, the Baltic trade; and especially was it found that we could not compete with them in the fisheries. Our exclusion from these, by the operation of our own act of navigation in making our shipping unnaturally dear, gave them over as a monopoly to the Dutch. Roger Coke, to whom we yesterday referred, notices the fact:—"In two years after the Navigation Act, of the Rump Parliament in 1551," he remarks, "the building of ships in England