

In a recent communication to *The Times*, Mr. Dunlop, a large shipowner, of Glasgow, states that no shipowner finds any difficulty at the present time in manning his vessel; and that, if the number of seamen were materially increased, it could only produce a redundancy.

Having shown that there is no reasonable ground for a complaint of a deficiency in point of number, we have now to consider the allegations as to the want of discipline and seamanship.

It may be pointed out, *in limine*, that the same complaints have been urged before every Royal Commission and Committee of Parliament which has been appointed, since the termination of the great Continental War, to inquire into maritime affairs.

As on all similar occasions in the past, so in the latest inquiry by the Royal Commission on unseaworthy ships, witness after witness dilated on the profligacy, the drunkenness, the physical, the professional, and the moral deterioration of our seamen. The Mercantile Marine is acknowledged to be the true backbone of the fighting Navy; and those who heard the gloomy story could scarcely suppress a misgiving that England had forfeited her claim to be the mistress of the seas.

When, however, we turn over the page of history, we find that the crews even of our fighting vessels have often contained a large proportion of ill-conducted and unskilful men. Many seamen serving in the Royal Navy in the early years of the present century, unwilling captives of the press-gang, were equally destitute of patriotism and fidelity. It has been said that, on one occasion, when the fleet was being paid off at Portsmouth, a large number of the seamen refused to come on shore, and sailed direct to Brest to take service in the French Fleet. In the narrative of the capture of the British frigate "Macedonia" by the American frigate "United States," the historian James gives some details which I shall venture to quote:—

"The great proportion of British seamen among the crew of the American frigate accounted, it is said, for so many of her guns being named after British ships, and some of the most celebrated British naval victories. 'Captain Carden,' says Mr. Marshall, 'observing 'Victory' painted on the ship's side over one port, and 'Nelson' over another, asked Commodore Decatur the reason of so strange an anomaly; he answered: 'The men belonging to those guns served many years with Lord Nelson, and in the 'Victory.' 'The crew of the gun named Nelson were once bargemen to that great chief, and they claim the privilege of using his illustrious name in the way you have seen.' The Commodore also publicly declared to Captain Carden that there was not a seaman in his ship who had not served from five to twelve years in a British man-of-war."

Passing on to the inquiries by the Manning Committee in 1853, the advantages, if any there were, of compulsory apprenticeship should have been conspicuously shown in the high discipline of the Mercantile Marine at that period. What, however, was the language held by the shipowners in regard to their crews? It was most unfavourable. The Chairman of the London Shipowners,