

other ships was unprecedentedly reduced, and the most ruinous depression of freights caused in almost every part of the world. Nor can this over-production be regarded as likely to prove an isolated case; for while in this country ships are built chiefly by those who are interested in their employment, and the supply is likely therefore to be in the long run reasonably proportioned to the demands of maritime commerce, it must not be overlooked that those which are imported from the North American colonies are rarely built with reference to such considerations, their construction being either stimulated by any demand for timber the growth of the colonies, for which they literally serve as packing cases, obtaining the bounty of a homeward freight; or resulting from the necessity for remittances to England, in payment of advances made for general colonial objects; in both which cases they are consigned home as articles of merchandize, to be sold with their cargoes at any price on arrival.

I entreat, Sir, your candid consideration to this state of facts: the prudent shipowner, acting on sound principles in the investment of his capital, suddenly finds all his calculations deranged, his property depreciated, and his returns annihilated, by the unexpected competition of a mass of tonnage thrown suddenly on the market; constructed with great rapidity, and forced into sale or employment by a cheapness, partly the result of its intrinsic worthlessness, and partly of advantages extended to the colonial but denied to the home producer. Against such a contingency no caution can avail, no foresight can guard; it is, as shipowners universally believe, one of the prominent causes of the present depression of the shipping interest; it will be the fruitful source of perpetual discouragement to the pursuits of maritime commerce; and I submit that it calls loudly for the prompt and authoritative intervention of the Legislature, on grounds both of individual justice and of national policy.

Having thus, I hope, demonstrated the existence of the evil, and traced its cause, I am next led to the consideration of the compatibility of the remedy suggested by the committee, that of the imposition of a moderate duty on the admission of colonial-built ships to the full privileges of British registry, as being in accordance with those principles of public policy without which it would be as inconsistent for shipowners to ask, as I know it would be impossible for you to grant, that sanction and assistance which it is the object of my present application to entreat.

I am fully aware, Sir, that on this question scruples of a powerful nature exist, but I trust to be able satisfactorily to prove that they rest on no solid foundation; fully persuaded that to discourage, by a moderate tax on importation, the improvident introduction of colonial-built ships into the maritime trade of the mother country, would involve no violation of colonial rights, and an insignificant sacrifice of colonial interests; that it would be in harmony with all the analogies of British law; that it is required for the maintenance of important objects of British policy, and that it is demanded by a just regard for a class of British interests inferior to none in national importance, I appeal with strong confidence to your dispassionate consideration.

I would first briefly advert to the abstract justice of such a measure:—

That the colonies should be treated as integral parts of the British empire, and Her Majesty's subjects therein placed on a footing of perfect equality with those who are British-born, are positions which the shipowners may well afford to admit as incontrovertible; but in making this admission it is obvious that the equality is supposed to be real, and not one existing in name alone: to its existence no condition can be more indispensable than that burthen and privilege should be co-relative and co-equal; but the burthens imposed on Her Majesty's subjects at home and abroad are not and cannot be made equal. Not only is the colonist exempted from contribution towards the enormous taxation levied on the native subject for payment of the interest of the national debt and the maintenance of the dignity of the Crown, but his very protection from foreign aggression is provided at the cost of the mother country. He is free to import for his use articles of foreign production, without the cost being enhanced, as at home, by those fiscal exactions and regulations which the necessities of revenue or protection impose on the home consumer. Until recently the very timber of which his ship is composed was subject to duty on importation into this country; and although this and many other discrimi-

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