

Officers pass through the Navy and spend nine months or a year in our Service as Sub-Lieutenants. By that means, as I said the other day, we should be able safely to reduce our lists of Officers and keep them more *au fait* at their work by employing them more constantly. If I commissioned a ship and there was war to-morrow, I would be quite willing to take a large number of Naval Reserve Officers and men and take my chance with them provided they had been previously passed through the Navy. I think our Naval Reserve is not as efficient as it should be, nor as numerous. You cannot expect a Naval Reserve man to be qualified or disciplined in the time now allowed. If the men and Officers were passed through the Navy you would have a reserve on which you could depend. Mr. Shaw Lefevre said a man in a month's time properly brought up would be very effective; but where are you going to get the month in time of war? In the olden times you had twelve months to rig your ships and train your crew, but now-a-days you will be sent to sea and fight your battles in a week, and there will be no time to make your men; and when on this subject we must not forget that other countries have much larger reserves of trained seamen than we have.

I will conclude by saying I think we have every reason to be very grateful to Mr. Brassey, that with the great knowledge he has of maritime matters he should from an independent stand-point, away both from the Navy or the Merchant Service, give so carefully and so accurately a digest of facts such as he has brought before us in his excellent paper, and which has led to such a very interesting and important discussion.

Mr. JOHN WILLIAMSON: Sir Hastings Yelverton, as I hold the position of Hon. Secretary to the "Liverpool Committee for inquiring into the condition of Seamen," I may be able to lay before you some figures that may be of use in this discussion. I must say how very gratifying it is to myself and to my Committee that so many Naval men are found taking an interest in this subject, because I believe the solution of this training question lies in a connection between the Royal Navy and the mercantile marine. I am also very glad to see gentlemen in the position of Mr. Brassey, who spares neither time nor labour in trying to do something for his country's good, endeavouring to solve this question. Mr. Shaw Lefevre at your last week's debate should not I think have made so strong a statement as is reported, that he looked upon the cry as to the deterioration of our seamen as an exaggeration. If Mr. Lefevre would show us facts and figures for his statement, I would join issue with him. In 1869, the Committee of Inquiry took its origin from similar views expressed by Mr. Lefevre, and a series of questions was issued to men who are capable of giving information, viz., shipmasters of the best character in Liverpool, London, and elsewhere; shipowners, once shipmasters, who are capable of expressing a very good opinion, and others. The result was, 80 per cent. of the replies we received stated that seamen had deteriorated, and only 2 per cent. that they were improved, and 3 per cent. that they were as good as before. I think these figures speak for themselves. I may also just add that the only Government document that has ever been brought forward, stating any contrary opinion, was a report by Mr. Gray and Mr. Hamilton, from the Board of Trade, in 1873, which was presented to Parliament, in which they did not say seamen were as good as before, but that the report of their deterioration was not quite borne out. Now no town in the country can express a better opinion on this point than Liverpool, where, at a crowded meeting to meet Mr. Gray before he issued his report, there was not a single hand held up against the statement that the sailor had deteriorated. Mr. Gray, at a public meeting in Liverpool, in the following September, makes remarks of this sort:—

"Unseaworthy sailors would lose the best of ships."

"It was now time they took into consideration the question of unseaworthy sailors."

"He believed, and those gentlemen who were his colleagues believed, that if it was really wanted to prevent loss of life at sea, they would have to begin with the sailors."