

COLONIAL SHIPS.

COPY of a LETTER from *J. B. Chapman*, Esq., Chairman of the Committee of the GENERAL SHIPOWNERS' SOCIETY, dated 14 February 1845, in reply to the Letter addressed to the Board of Trade by the Committee of the North American Colonial Association, on the subject of imposing a Tax on the Admission of Colonial-built Ships to the Privilege of British Registry.

General Shipowners' Society, London, 72, Cornhill,
14 February 1845.

Sir,

I BEG leave, on the part of the committee of the General Shipowners' Society, to express their acknowledgments to the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade for the transmission of a copy of a letter addressed to their Lordships by the committee of the North American Colonial Association on the subject of "imposing a Tax on the admission of Colonial-built Ships to the privilege of British Registry," which on the 9th ult., by direction of their Lordships, you forwarded to Mr. George F. Young, the late chairman of this committee.

The reply of their Lordships to the North American Colonial Association, which has been published by the committee of that Association, and in which their Lordships, in reference to the proposition offered by this committee in the letter of Mr. Young of the 25th May last, declare, that "they have at no time conveyed on the part of Her Majesty's Government any sanction or encouragement to the project, nor are they now inclined to view it with favour," is too decisive to permit the expectation of any present change in their Lordships' views from further discussion of the question on its merits. Under this conviction the committee would have considered it their duty to have abstained from again troubling their Lordships on the subject, had it not appeared to them indispensable to their own character, and to the consequent maintenance of any claim to the future attention of their Lordships, that they should notice some portions of the letter of the North American Colonial Association, lest their silence should be taken as implying acquiescence in the imputations involved therein.

The committee regret the tone of personality which pervades a considerable portion of the letter of the North American Colonial Association, who, treating the question as one entirely affecting ship-building, connects its introduction by references too clear to be misunderstood, with the fact of the gentleman whose signature the letter of May last bore, as chairman of this committee, being himself a London ship-builder. Their Lordships will at once perceive how erroneous is this inference, by the annexed extract from the report of the committee presented to the annual general meeting of the subscribers to the Shipowners' Society, on the 12th of July 1843, which report was signed by Anty Ridley, Esq., who then held the office of chairman, and who never had the slightest connexion whatever with ship-building, either at London or elsewhere.

A copy of this report was at that time sent to the committee of the North American Colonial Association, and during the succeeding 12 months not the slightest intimation of dissent from the suggestion was received, either from that committee, or from any other of the numerous individuals and public bodies to whom it was transmitted; and on this point I can confidently assure their Lordships that the question has long been regarded with the liveliest interest by intelligent shipowners, far more than by ship-builders, as one deeply affecting the prosperity of the British shipping interest.

But there is another point on which the committee regard it as still more essential that they should stand clear in their Lordships' estimation. The importance of the functions exercised by Lloyd's Registry Committee can scarcely be overrated. It is perfectly true that, by the regulations of that institution, one-half of the committee by whom the rules are enacted are elected by the committee of the General Shipowners' Society, and undoubtedly, if it were possible that, in