

this room, and, therefore, make it necessary that I should, without delay make a brief reply to some of the observations which have been addressed to this meeting. Sir Hastings, I am very grateful to the various speakers for the favourable terms in which they have been pleased to refer to my paper. I may honestly say it is the result of days and nights of study of a literature, which, however important it may be, is certainly not particularly attractive. I refer to the Blue Book literature under which the shelves of my library have long groaned. The volumes of Parliamentary literature upon maritime subjects during the last quarter of a century, are something quite amazing. I hope that now the public attention is at last rivetted upon this great question of the safety of life at sea, and the condition of our maritime population, some good fruit will be gathered from the abundant literary seed which has been sown in previous years by Parliament. We have heard deplorable statements with reference to the deficiency and the inefficiency of seamen, and we are all met together here to make suggestions, with a view to remedy these very serious evils. I have said in my paper that which I must now repeat, that in the first place it is a question of wages, including in that term not merely the money paid to the man but the conditions of life which are offered to him, the accommodation on board ship, fair and just treatment by his Officers, and a fair and reasonable amount of labour to perform. Those are various elements which may be grouped together under the head of wages, and I say, unless the shipowner offers to those whom he employs, terms and conditions which will compare favourably with the terms and conditions offered by other employers to the same class of men, he cannot expect to obtain their services. Indeed, unless the terms and conditions offered are adequate, it is perfectly idle to undertake any artificial or other system of training, with a view to produce the men that are required. Having trained men for the sea, and made them handy men for almost any purpose on shore, the shipowner must necessarily lose the services of the men thus placed in his hand. We have heard to-day of 400 trained seamen being employed in the collieries of the north, and we know that there is an annual loss of seamen, from the fact that men seek shore employment in preference to the sea. Then you have another competitor in this matter, I mean shipowners of the United States. I do not know how the wages compare at this moment, but I believe, until a very recent date, it was the case that the wages in American ships were somewhat higher than those in English ships, and as a consequence, the American Merchant Navy was largely manned by men who had left the British Service to sail under the American flag. Therefore I say, unless the wages are adequate, it is idle to expect our merchant vessels shall be properly manned. The question of wages I need not refer to at greater length, it being especially a question with which the shipowner has to deal. The other point to which I should like to refer is the question of training. The question is whether the Government can assist the shipowner in this important work. We are all agreed that the Government cannot interfere simply to enable the shipowner to obtain labour on cheap terms. The action of the Navy must be limited, with a strict reference to our naval requirements, and having regard to the essential importance of creating a sufficient reserve of well-trained seamen to man the Navy in case of the emergency of a great naval war; the question is whether it might not be a national duty, which devolves upon our statesmen to consider, how best the Government may combine with the private shipowners in order to provide this Naval Reserve. At the present time I believe the Naval Reserve is up to the strength laid down by the Admiralty Regulations, but the strength required under the present Admiralty Regulations is considerably less than the strength recommended by the Manning Commission of 1859; and it is a debatable point whether the Admiralty have been well advised in reducing the strength of the Naval Reserve to the standard at present adopted. I think that if the Government is to assist in training seamen with the view to providing an adequate Naval Reserve, of all plans which I have ever seen, the best and the most practicable appears to be the plan recommended by the last Manning Commission. As I sketched out the details of that plan in my paper, I do not think I shall be occupying your time satisfactorily if I go over the ground again. It does certainly suggest itself to me, that it would be a great advantage to the shipowners and to the Mercantile Marine generally, if there was established in every great port a thoroughly efficient training vessel, con-