

GOLDEN TROUBLES.

THE DESERTION OF SHIPS IN AUSTRALIAN PORTS.

To the Editor of the Times.

Sir,—Believing that the state of things which the subjoined extracts portrays is of national importance, I venture upon transmitting it to you.

Since the date of the sailing from England of the ship alluded to in the last letter—say in February last—I believe that I shall be much within the mark if I say that 200 ships, of a burden of 150,000 tons, manned by 5,000 able seamen, have followed her; that 50 of those ships were lying by her under similar circumstances; and the probability is each successive ship, as she arrives out, will find herself in the same position—namely, at anchor, with her master, and, perhaps, mate on board; otherwise deserted, and without a hope of removal.

This is bad enough for the owners of these ships; but what must be the effect on the country generally—I may say what is, for at this moment the difficulty of finding men at this port for ships upon American voyages is sensibly felt, and presently there will be such a difficulty in finding men for the Royal Navy as may be more alarming than is yet thought of.

Surely the relief of the ships ought to be, under these circumstances, as much the object of the Government as if they were blockaded by a foreign foe; and the colonies themselves ought, if they could see their real interest, to co-operate to the utmost, and get them away at all hazards, for assuredly, if even there remained tonnage for the purpose, no shipowner will peril his property in that direction until he sees a better chance for seeing it back again.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

THE UNFORTUNATE OWNER.

Liverpool, Nov. 24.

Melbourne, August 29.

"Sir,—It is with feelings of deep regret that I have again to address you from this place, and I am also sorry to add that the chances of getting away are as bad as ever.

"The bay is full of ships of a high class, and immediately they arrive the crews refuse duty, and in most instances leave the ship with impunity in high day. At present there is no possible protection for the merchant ship; all the gaols are full, and the authorities, considering desertion and refusal of duty on the part of the sailors no very heinous crime, will now scarcely trouble themselves in those cases.

"I yesterday went to the sheriff of Melbourne, and asked whether he would allow me to go to the gaol to endeavour to get a crew from among the prisoners. He readily granted it, and I went and was introduced to forty or fifty seamen. I offered 7*l.* per month for the round from here to England via India, or 35*l.* each for the run to any port in India; but I could not get one of them. They all said they had got into a good country and did not want to leave it, and would rather serve their term of imprisonment out than go aboard ship; in fact, they are intent only on the diggings.—

Although these men are sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor, they give them nothing whatever to do, and feed them well, so that under the present circumstances, it is actually an inducement for them to run.

"The only plan I can see to get the ships away would be for a couple of frigates to come here and man the ships with a portion of their crews and fill up their places with the sailors who refuse duty in the merchantmen. A small man of war would be of little or no use here."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

He was born at Boston in 1706; at a proper age he was placed with an elder brother, a printer; but in consequence of some disputes he went privately, in 1723, to Philadelphia, where he worked in the office of one Kiemer. In 1724 he came to London, and worked at the press for about two years; he then returned to Philadelphia as book-keeper to a merchant; his employer however died, and Franklin became compositor under his old master. Soon after he entered into business with one Merideth, and about 1728 began a newspaper, in which he inserted many of his moral essays; he also formed a literary club, and laid the foundation of an extensive society and library. In 1732 he commenced his "Poor Richard's Almanack," in which he published those maxims so universally known as "The way of wealth." In 1736 he was appointed clerk to the assembly of Pennsylvania, and was subsequently chosen a representative for Philadelphia. In 1737 he became postmaster of that city; and in 1738 formed the first association for preventing fires, which was followed by an insurance company. He next applied himself to the pursuit of philosophy, more particularly electricity, and established a new theory in this branch of science. In 1749 he explained the phenomenon of thunder, and the Aurora Borealis, on electrical principles; and in 1752 verified what he had before asserted by drawing lightning from the clouds by means of an electrical kite. In 1755, the royal society, of which he became a member, voted him the gold medal.—Three schools were opened at Philadelphia on a plan of Franklin's, and a college was incorporated five years afterwards; he also assisted to establish the Pennsylvania Hospital.—He was appointed colonel of the provincial militia, in which capacity he conducted himself with ability.—While in England in 1757 he published a history of the province of Pennsylvania, and a pamphlet on the importance of Canada, which stimulated government to send an expedition to that place. In 1762 Franklin returned to America, after being created Doctor of Laws at Oxford. In 1764 he came to England, as the agent of his province; and in 1766 he was examined before the House of Commons relative to the stamp act; he remained till 1777, when he returned home and was chosen a member of Congress, where he contributed more than any one to the independency of the United States. He proposed an alliance with France, and went thither as an ambassa-