

14

COLONIAL SHIPS.

RETURN to an ADDRESS of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 26 February 1846;—for,

COPY of a LETTER from the Honorary Secretary of the North American Colonial Association to the President of the Board of Trade, in reference to a Letter, dated 28th May 1844, to the President of that Board, from *G. F. Young*, Esq., Chairman of the General Shipowners' Society, on the Subject of the Admission of Colonial-built Ships to the Privilege of British Registry, and of the Reply thereto.

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 26 February 1846.

LETTER from *R. Carter*, Esq., Honorary Secretary of the North American Colonial Association, to the Right Honourable *W. E. Gladstone*, M. P., President of the Board of Privy Council for Trade, &c.

Sir,

No. 11, Leadenhall-street, 31 December 1844.

THE Committee of the North American Colonial Association having recently had their attention directed to a letter addressed to you by *G. F. Young*, Esq., the chairman of the Committee of the General Shipowners' Society, praying that a tax may be imposed on colonial-built ships on their admission to the privilege of British registry, which has been published in the Appendix to the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on British Shipping, I am instructed most respectfully to request permission to submit to your consideration the views of this Committee thereon.

It appears to them that the proposed tax would be at the same time so unjust, since it would be charged upon the trade and industry of a portion only of Her Majesty's subjects, and so impolitic in singling out for such an infliction the inhabitants of the North American colonies, that they feel it would be both needless and improper for them to trouble you with arguments on the general question, which they are satisfied may safely be left in the hands of Her Majesty's Government; but they think it is their duty to the colonists whom they represent, to offer a refutation of some of the erroneous statements and assumptions contained in the letter of the Shipowners' Committee.

They have observed with surprise that the imposition of a tax upon colonial-built ships, the tendency of which must be to increase the cost of new vessels, is said to be desired by the shipowners in general.

The policy of this country has been directed of late years to the removal of restrictions from foreign trade and navigation, and has had the effect in great measure of reducing the British shipowner to a state of unprotected competition with his foreign rival; for the maintenance of which, economy in the cost and navigation of British ships is indispensable. It is not possible for the timber of Canada to compete with that of Norway, if the freight upon the former (forming a large proportion of the value) is to be enhanced by fiscal regulations increasing the price of the ship in which it is conveyed.

The competition of British with United States ships in the carriage of cotton from the American ports to England, is principally supported by the employment of colonial-built ships by the British shipowners; and the United States ships have so great an advantage, through the operation of their navigation laws, in the return freights to America, that it is impossible for British ships of great value to compete with American ships in the carriage of cotton. The inevitable consequence, therefore, of granting the demand made in the name of