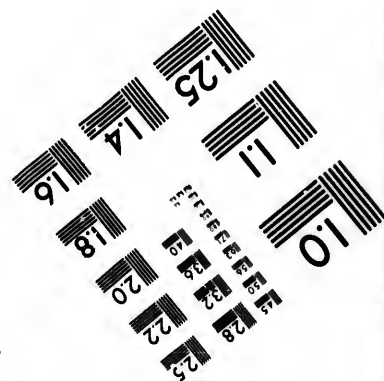
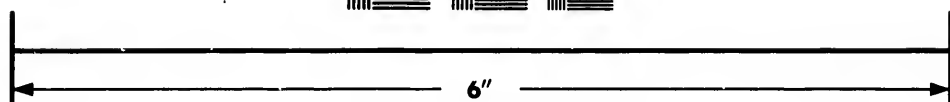
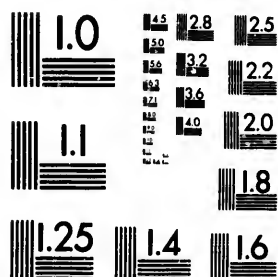


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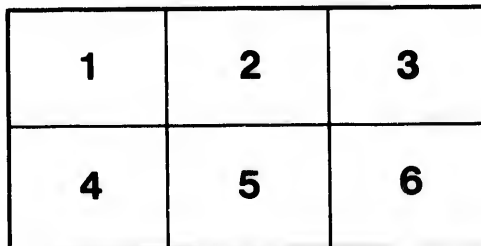
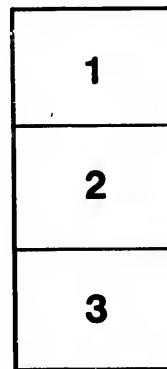
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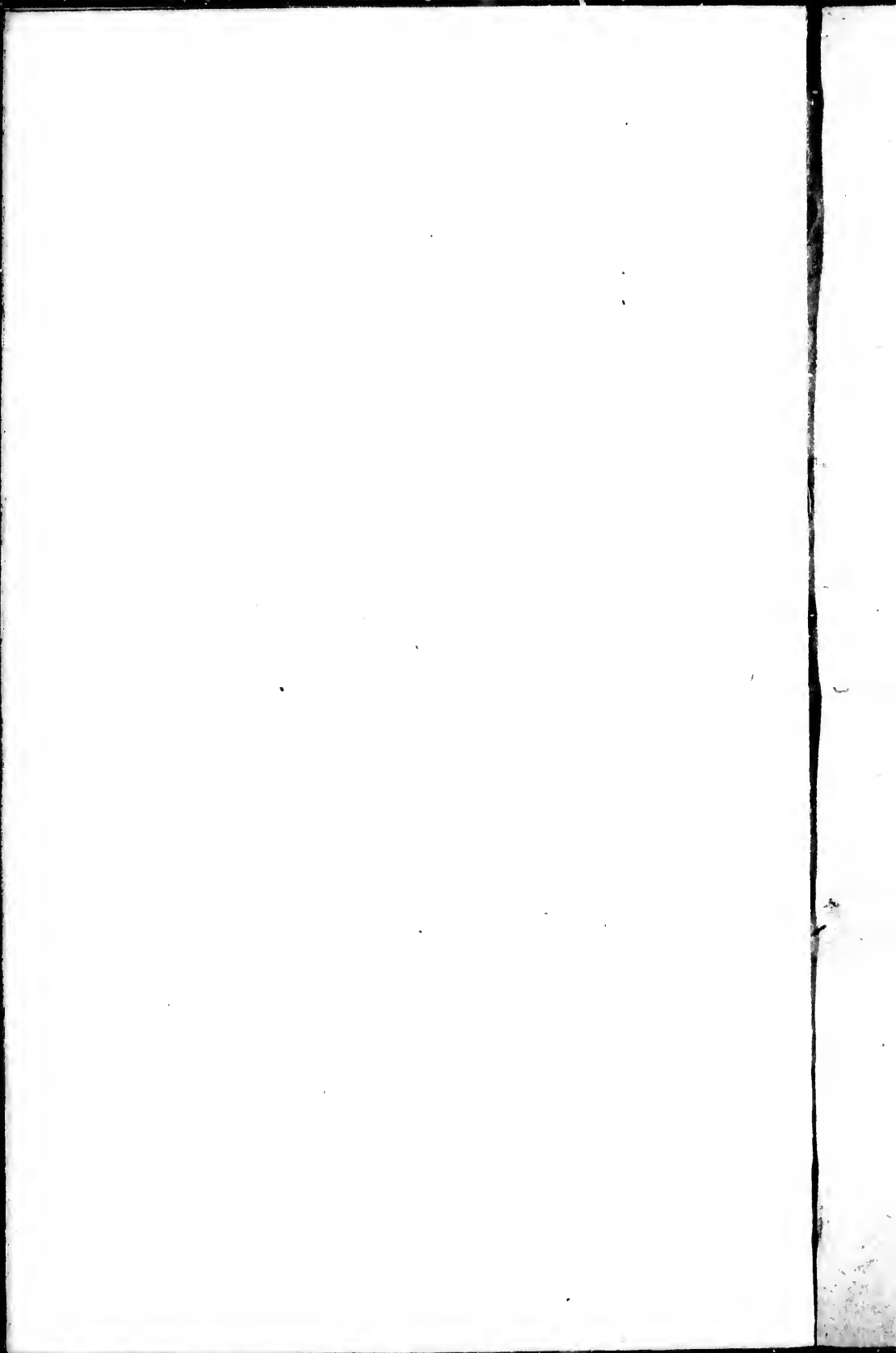
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*Holle*

A

**SECOND LETTER**

TO THE

**RIGHT HON. W. HUSKISSON,**

ON THE

**EFFECTS**

OF

**Free Trade**

ON OUR

**SHIPPING, COLONIES AND COMMERCE,**

---

**By S. ATKINSON, Esq.**

**OF LINCOLN'S INN.**

---

**London.**

PRINTED BY CUNNINGHAM AND SALMON, 119, FLEET STREET.

PUBLISHED BY JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.

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1827.

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TO THE

RIGHT HON. W. HUSKISSON.

SIR,

THE short interval since I had last the honor to address you, has given rise to an unexpected, a sudden, and an entire change in the Administration of this country. All the solid and substantial parts of it—all that was purely English in its fabric has disappeared, and the Government has fallen into the hands of adventurers and theorists. But for this circumstance, I should hardly have thought it necessary again to address you for the present. I had, in fact, nearly exhausted the question between us in my last letter, and I should have somewhat hesitated to venture on a second, lest I should unfortunately have weakened the force of what I had already written. So astonishing, however, are the events of the time—so remarkable the present crisis—so pregnant in important consequences, that I should fail in my duty, were I not to endeavour, at such a moment, to rescue from the fangs of sophistry the principles I have already advocated. A great struggle will undoubtedly take place: all the force of argument, and ingenuity, and power, that a new Ministry can command, will be brought to bear on a discussion which involves the discriminating doctrine of their political creed. You will now, at least, have the cordial support of a Cabinet united in your views of commercial policy: you will no longer be thwarted by cabals at the Council Board, or be chilled by unwilling and dubious co-operation in the House. You have no remnant of the English faction remaining among you. There will no longer be



any English feelings and prejudices to throw in among your dreams of universal good, and damp the generous current of your anticipations.

I am glad,—I rejoice for the sake of my country, that a separation has, at length, taken place among the discordant and ill-assorted elements which have been so long united in the Government of the British Empire. I rejoice, because it will put an end to that uncertainty which has so long hovered around the Councils of the Empire. We shall soon learn whether the vessel of State is hereafter to be directed by those principles which have led us to our present greatness; or whether she is to be drifted about among shoals and quicksands, and unknown currents, on the untried ocean of speculation and theory. It will, I say, relieve us from this suspense—a suspense more distressing than the most painful certainty; because, in the struggle which must ensue, we shall see whether there yet remains in the aristocracy of England, a moral energy which can bear down the advocates of rash innovation, or whether we have reached a crisis—a crisis unparalleled in the history of the world, when the proprietors of the land and the capital of the country, must yield the guidance of their property to men who have no interest or none worth naming—to men, who, in the pursuit of a fleeting popularity, would abandon the best rights of the subject, and the most productive sources of national wealth.

On the motion of General Gascoyne for a committee to enquire into the causes of the distress in the Shipping Interests, which will shortly come before the House of Commons, I feel that a strong, a united, and desperate effort will be made, to mystify and obscure a question so plain, that he who runs may read. The ignorance of many, and the design of a few, will raise up, I know, a phantom of delusion, which can be dispelled only by the persevering efforts of plain, matter-of-fact, common sense. On the one hand, the essential point at issue will be blended with others to which it has no relation: on the other, inferences will be drawn from Parliamentary Returns, to which these Returns,

fairly analyzed, give not the shadow of support. Before, then, this debate comes on, I wish to contribute my mite towards clearing away all excrescences—to bringing forward what additional facts appear to me important—and to pointing out distinctly, and in detail, the specific matters which call for your explanation.

And first, let me congratulate you on the postponement of General Gascoyne's motion to a period when there is every reason to hope that your health may be restored, and yourself be enabled to stand up in the House of Commons to defend your own measures. It is well that you should have the opportunity of defending them yourself. I know that your "liberal" colleagues have declared their readiness to take their share of responsibility for the consequences of these measures, and to leave you all the glory of them: but I must acknowledge, that the more natural course of things appears to me, that you should stand by them alone, supporting them on your own shoulders, and bearing at once the honour and the responsibility; and this, unless I be very much mistaken, is your own feeling. However I may respect the great abilities of some of your colleagues—and no one, more honours the useful qualities of some among them, and the more splendid endowments of others—yet I have a very strong conviction—a conviction shared by the country at large—that there is no one of your colleagues so able as yourself to expound the nature and effects of the free-trade policy which you have introduced. Nay, so thoroughly am I convinced of the utter inability of any other Member of the Cabinet to lay before the country an adequate view of the present state of our commercial policy—that if, by any accident, you had been prevented from doing it yourself, I should have looked upon the circumstance as a great national calamity. There are among them who could have adorned it with all the charms of the most fascinating eloquence, or of the clearest and most perspicuous detail; but there is none whose mind could traverse the whole subject, and bring together so comprehensively and so clearly the general principles of political philosophy, and the

minute and varied details of practical business. This sentiment, indeed, seems to have so strongly pervaded the House, and to have been so plainly expressed, as to have offended some of your colleagues. This, however, is, unfortunately, not an occasion in which much can be yielded up to courtesy or delicacy. The interests of a great nation are at stake—and the man who has dared to uproot the foundations of her greatness, should be prepared to say that he has planted them as firmly on another soil, or submit to the indignation of his wronged and injured countrymen.

The matter, Sir, on which I have to address you, is not one which affects merely the shipowner or the silk-manufacturer, or any other particular class or portion of his Majesty's subjects—it is not merely a question concerning the West Indies or East Indies, or North American Colonies—but it reaches the root of all our wealth and power, it affects every individual in the empire. Upon so grand a scale, so sweeping, so comprehensive have been your alterations, that they have reached the most distant portions of the empire, and have pressed on every department and subdivision of its industry. You have attacked not particular parts, but whole systems; you have overthrown not partial details, but universal principles. Your measures have, no doubt, often gone farther than you had intended. The result has been ruin and desolation, when you had expected the fair fruits of prosperity and peace; their operation has been general and destructive, where you had expected they would be partial and beneficial. You forgot that the principles of your philosophy, like the demonstrated truths of mathematics to the phenomena of nature, applied only to society in the abstract—to society in a simple and uncomplex state—to society free from the operation of human passion and human infirmity; and accordingly, when applied to so complex a system as ours, and so large a theatre as the world, they have produced ruin and suffering almost incredible.

The question of relief to the shipping interest having become, as it were, a personal question on the part of yourself and your colleagues, the whole force of the

Government will be put in action, to defeat, if possible, their just claims. Bold and delusive statements will be unblushingly made—truth and justice will be shaded and obscured by false reasoning and ingenious sophistry. Every possible attempt, both in and out of Parliament, will be made to resist legislative inquiry; because, on such an inquiry, many of the apparent facts and assumptions on which you have defended your system would turn out to be partial or inapplicable. A Parliamentary inquiry would reach the centre of the evil—would probe the ulcer to the bottom, and would substitute the wisdom of fact for the speculation of philosophy.

In looking at the effect of your measures, I think that a clear apprehension of their nature can be drawn less from a survey of any particular interests or any specific details, than from the mode of their general operation. Was the country, when these measures were commenced, in a state of extreme depression; and is it now, or any considerable part of it, flourishing in the sunshine of prosperity? Have these measures, as a whole, worked well? Has the condition of the community, as a mass, been ameliorated? If these measures have hitherto produced only unmingled evil, is there any present or remote prospect of their producing future good? So various have been your innovations, that you have given us abundant means of answering these questions. You have meddled with almost every branch of our trade, and in every instance the result has been the same—a great, a continued, and an increasing depression.

Do not many of your most strenuous friends begin to waver? Do not many of the most earnest advocates of your policy begin to think inquiry necessary? Is there one among them that can say your system has worked well? It seems to be theoretically right: so, however, do many of the schemes of madmen—so do the schemes of all benevolent men, till applied to the test of human nature, and the conflicts of human passion. Undoubtedly your exposition of these plans within the walls of Parliament was at-

tractive and imposing—your air of sincerity, the gleam of eloquence that sometimes broke through details in their nature dry, the plaudits of surrounding benches—all conspired to produce an illusion, which has unquestionably spread far into the ranks of society, and for the time enlisted among its advocates men of all pursuits and all ranks. But have your schemes operated well beyond the sacred precincts of the Legislature—have they proved as beneficial in practice as they were beautiful in theory? I do not say, look at the desolation that stalks through the country like a plague—nor at the deputations that have, since the commencement of their operation, come from all parts of the country, to present their remonstrances, their sufferings, and complaints at your feet—nor at such wretched assemblages of starving workmen as gathered for several successive nights round Westminster Hall, when you so eloquently and effectually resisted inquiry into the cause of their distress; but I refer you to your own conviction, and to the changed manner and wavering opinions of your best friends and staunchest supporters. These, Sir, will tell you that your system has worked badly, that it is working badly, and that there is no prospective hope that it can ever work better. They will tell you, in a voice of thunder, that your system works like a pestilence, consuming the fair fruits of the land, and leaving us to perish amidst the wreck of beauty.

In such a state of things, can you pretend to say that the period has not come when inquiry—extensive, impartial, rigid Parliamentary inquiry is necessary? Is the country to go on in its present condition, on no better foundation than your assurances that all is well? If you be really convinced that all is well, and that the existing distress has not sprung from your measures, why shrink from inquiry?—if no part of our present calamities originate from them, or if they contain within themselves the principles of renovation, let the country be convinced of this through the medium of a Parliamentary inquiry, and be relieved from the delusion of supposing that its distresses proceed from the acts of a Minister.

I think, that the whole question between us may be reduced to the following points.—Can the British shipowner compete with foreigners, without that protection which the Legislature of this country has granted in all former times? If you cannot maintain this proposition, you will then have to show on what grounds you have withdrawn from our shipping that protection which is yielded to every other branch of our industry. If you cannot show to the plain common sense of mankind satisfactory and conclusive reasons for making the shipping interest an exception to every other,---then, the next ground on which you must make a stand, will be this: that this sacrifice of our mercantile navy has been the means of greatly extending our commerce, so as to compensate for the injury done to it; and here you will have to show, not merely that the aggregate of our imports and exports has increased in such a proportion as to justify the sacrifice of our marine, but also to show, directly and immediately, the "connection of cause and effect" between the injury done to our shipping, and the benefit resulting to our commerce and manufactures.

There was a time when you thought protection necessary to the agriculture of this country, in order that we might be independent of foreign supply. More recently, you thought protection necessary for the silk manufacturer—even our staple manufactures of woollen and iron are protected. I cannot name a single branch of our industry, with the exception of the shipping interest, which is not in some degree protected. Protection, indeed, seems to be a principle so closely interwoven with our commerce and manufactures, as to be inseparable from them. Why, then, I would ask, is shipping to be made the only exception to this system? Is a ship put together by less expensive labor, or made of less expensive raw material than any other article of manufacture? Can she be navigated by men who will be content with a lower rate of wages, or live on food of an inferior quality than the rest of their countrymen? Is a ship less liable to risk and hazard than a factory, or a field of wheat?

If I were to ask you why protection had generally been granted to our productions, I fancy you would answer, because the manufacturer had to import the raw material and work it up with more taxed and expensive labour than foreigners. I have no doubt that you would assign these two circumstances as the reason for protecting our own manufactures, by a duty on foreign manufactures. The same reasons, I think, demand a similar protection for the shipowner. I put, here, out of the question, that a powerful marine is essential to the defence and security of our country, our colonies, and foreign possessions of every kind. I put entirely out of view the fact, that our navy is the very basis of our greatness—the very substratum of the national power, the national wealth, and the national influence. I put out of account the fact, that if we do not maintain our naval preponderance, we cannot retain our Eastern possessions one hour; that the United States of America would instantly seize our West Indies, the grand chain of fortresses by which, at present, we command the access to South America; and expel us from America, by which, at present, we maintain what remains to us of the fisheries, and hold a check over the encroachments of these republicans; and that we should then, at the will and pleasure of any great European Power, be liable to be locked up by the proud array of hostile fleets in our own channel. Such things have been, and that at no very distant period; such things will be again, and at no very distant period, unless a more protecting and paternal care be bestowed on our navy.

Without, then, looking at these considerations at all, simply considering our mercantile navy as a branch of our industry, which it is expedient to retain for the employment of our population, and the partial carrying of our manufactures, I think that the shipping interests are entitled to protection to the same amount, and for the very same reasons, as our silk manufactures, our iron works, or our growth of corn.

If the question of cheapness be one of such importance, that every other consideration must be sacrificed

to it, why is its operation restrained to the shipowners alone? If cheap ships be important, equally important are cheap bread, cheap silks, cheap cambrics, cheap iron, cheap wool. If it be expedient to have one article at the cheapest market, and at any sacrifice, it must be equally expedient to have the others also at the cheapest market. If reasons of state necessity render it impossible to have our silks as cheap as they are manufactured in France, or our linens as cheap as they can be had in Germany, and if for these reasons it be expedient to tax the import of these articles, for the purpose of protecting the productions of our own industry, I cannot see by what process of reasoning, "by what connection of cause and effect," the shipowners who are placed in exactly the same circumstances, should be deprived of the same protection.

You have yourself admitted, (but I put that admission out of the question, because every Englishman must feel,) that if there be one interest which more than another is entitled to fair protection, it is the shipping interest. I speak of them, not as individuals, with that I have nothing to do; but as a body of men who happen to be engaged in a pursuit which is, by common consent, allowed to form the basis of the national security. As such, I would say, that they are entitled to the special care of the Government. I do not contend that they should have any peculiar privileges, any exclusive bounty over foreigners, but I do contend that they have a right to be placed at least on a level with foreigners; but the treaties which you have called "reciprocity," have given a complete monopoly to foreigners—a monopoly which foreigners may not be able to take full possession of for a few years, but which, unless some remedial measures be in the mean time adopted, they will have effectually accomplished long before the expiration of these improvident compacts.

I have already intimated the probability, that much extraneous matter will be thrown into the approaching discussion. It will, among other things of this kind, be said, that there has been a great deal of over-speculation among ship-builders, and that the average number of



ships built during the last three years is much beyond that of the years immediately preceding.— Suppose I admit this to be as you and your friends will contend, has it anything to do with the increase of foreign shipping? Has it anything to do with the question of whether or no the British shipowner can sail at as cheap a rate as the Prussian? The over-speculation in ship-building may be one cause of depression. I do not deny this altogether; but, then, it is a transient and temporary evil which rapidly brings with it its own remedy. It is of a kind and degree altogether distinct from that which it is the main object of these letters to draw your attention to, namely—a gradual decrease of British shipping in certain most important branches of our navigation; important for the large quantity of shipping they have always employed—important for the familiarity which they gave our seamen with seas, which it would be of the very last necessity they should be acquainted with in time of war. Up to the end of the year 1825, I had shown a gradual decrease of British, and a gradual increase of foreign shipping. Well, then comes the year 1826, on the returns for which I understand you mean to place great reliance. And what do they tell us? Why, that there is an enormous falling off both in British and a decrease in foreign—considerable also—but by no means proportionate to that of British shipping.

Admitting that in the last year there was a great decrease in foreign shipping, as well as British—What does this bring us to? Would it prove that the British shipowner can compete fairly against the foreign? You would draw this inference, I have no doubt. But give me leave to ask another question, the answer to which, I apprehend, constitutes a most important element in this inquiry. *Did the British shipowner navigate his ships as profitably as the foreigner?* Or, rather, is it not a fact as notorious as noon day, *that the British shipowner sailed his vessels at an enormous loss, while the foreign shipowner was making a living profit?*

Because a smaller number of ships from Prussia

and the other states in the North of Europe entered our ports last year than did in the year 1825, is it to be inferred that the rest were unemployed—rotting in their dock-yards, like our own? Nothing of the sort. The moment they found freights to England were scarce, a part were off to the ports of France and the Mediterranean; a part of them were employed in carrying provisions to Newfoundland—thus at one blow demolishing a great branch of the shipping and export trade of Liverpool; and the remainder were employed in the West Indies. Several vessels I see have lately arrived direct at Bremen from Jamaica, and in a very short time the whole of that part of our trade to the North of Europe which consisted in the export of Colonial produce will be annihilated.

If I were even to admit the fact, that the present distresses of the shipowners had arisen from over-speculation\*, and over-excess of ship-building, might I not ascribe the origin of this spirit of over-speculation to the coloured and extravagant pictures of national prosperity, which you and your amiable colleague, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, have for some years past been annually promulgating to the nation, and to those financial measures by which the interest of a part of the national debt was reduced, the public creditor *pro tanto* robbed, and, as a necessary consequence of the small rate of interest, a large quantity of capital thrown into the field of speculation. To the language and the measures of yourself and your colleagues I may fairly ascribe the over-speculation of all kinds which existed in 1825. Even admitting, therefore, that there had been over-speculation, it does not become you, at least, to make this reply to the shipowners. For the sake of common decency, leave that argument in the hands of other persons, who escaped that contagious spirit of moral speculation which has spread such ruin over the land.

But I cannot admit that the distresses of the shipowners are to be ascribed to over-speculation.

\* Mr. Warburton, in the House of Commons, gravely asserted that the present distresses were wholly to be ascribed to thirty ships built last year in Canada, and thrown on the English market.

I deny it altogether. The amount of British shipping is by no means greater than the means of employment afforded by the trade of the country, if that trade were properly secured to our own shipping. From the year 1816 to the year 1826, the aggregate of our exports and imports was increased by about one-eighth. If, therefore, the amount of our trade had been at the present day as it was in all former times, a fair measure of the amount of demand for our shipping, there ought to have been in the year 1826 a demand and employment for one-eighth more shipping than there was in the year 1816. Now has our shipping increased in more than this proportion? If so, then you have the means of showing that ship-building has increased faster than our trade, and you have at once a reply to the shipowners. Unfortunately for this argument, there has been no such increase of our shipping—it has remained stationary, or, rather, it is somewhat less than it was in the year 1816. The following facts, disclosed in the late Returns laid before Parliament, settle this matter:—

We had in the year

	Ships.	Tons.	Men.
1816.....	25,864.....	2,784,940.....	178,820
1826.....	24,625.....	2,635,644.....	167,636

Here, you observe, there is a decrease of about 1200 vessels, and of eleven or twelve thousand men. Thus, then, you perceive, that notwithstanding the great increase of our foreign trade, the amount of British shipping employed in carrying on that trade has actually diminished.

This fact, Sir, will appear the more extraordinary, when I draw your attention to the great increase which has taken place in the importation of the bulky articles of commerce—those, in fact, by which shipping is mainly employed. In the year 1814, the quantity of cotton imported was 60 millions of pounds, and on an average of the three last years, the importation was about 150 millions, or nearly three times as much as in

the year 1814. Silk, it may be said, is not a very bulky article, but during the same period its importation had increased from a million and a half of pounds to upwards of three millions. But the most remarkable increase is in the importation of timber, which, from 1814 to 1826, had increased from somewhat less than 160,000 loads to upwards of 600,000 loads.

What is the inference I draw from these facts? Why, that as the means of employment for shipping have increased so much, the amount of British shipping not having increased at all, but being notoriously in a state of the utmost depression, it is clear as noon day, in the first place, that there can have been no over-speculation; and in the next, that British shipping is no longer duly protected—has no longer that protection which is necessary to the maintenance of fair competition.

Two periodical publications\* of great popularity, and the organs of what your eloquent colleague, the late Foreign Secretary, calls "the severe economists," have, in their last numbers, put forth two articles, the one directly and the other indirectly attacking the ship-owners.

The Edinburgh Reviewer has obviously not read my first letter to you, or he would not renew and reiterate the absurd assertion, that we can build as cheap as foreigners. I thought I had set this question at rest, but I will return to it for one moment. Most fortunately for the shipowners, one of your own agents has furnished us with evidence—evidence, too, to be remembered, subsequent to that of Mr. John Hall, the great oracle of the Reviewer, which puts the relative cost of building beyond the possibility of a question. Mr. Jacob in his report says—"the cost of ship-building in Prussia is from 240 to 260 florins per last, the Prussian last, which is

\* The Edinburgh Review, No. 90; and the Westminster Review, No. 13.

equal to 1 and 2-5ths tons of British register, including rigging." This, of course, is an authority to which you cannot object. Mr. Jacob, one might almost say, is your own agent—on the goodness of his evidence, therefore, I need not say another word. This statement requires a little explanation, which I proceed, therefore, to give. Reducing Mr. Jacob's estimate to the British register ton, I find that a Prussian ship unrigged costs about 4*l.* 15*s.* the British register ton—if completely rigged, from 8 to 9 guineas. Now, the *out-port* British built ships without rigging cost from 9*l.* to 12*l.* per ton, and with rigging from 14*l.* to 16*l.* per ton, while *river-built* ships cost from 23*l.* to 28*l.* per ton, the former being about the cost for West Indiamen, the latter for East Indiamen.

Thus much for the original cost. The expenses of navigation are in about a similar proportion, as appears from the following statement, on the correctness of which I have no hesitation in pledging my credit for accuracy:—

*Expenses of a Prussian 3-masted Ship of 414 Lasts (580 Tons), on a Voyage to England for Three Months, are as follows:—*

WAGES FOR THREE MONTHS OF A PRUSSIAN SHIP.

Captain.... at £4 10 0 per month..	£13 10 0
Mate.....	2 14 0 ..... 8 2 0
Carpenter ....	2 0 6 ..... 6 1 6
Boatswain ....	1 13 0 ..... 4 19 0
6 Seamen ....	1 7 0 ..... 24 6 0
4 ditto .....	1 0 3 ..... 12 3 0
5 half ditto ....	0 13 6 ..... 10 2 6
Cabin Boy ....	0 13 6 ..... 2 0 6

£81 4 6

Provisions for 20 men and boys for 3 } months, at Mr. Jacob's specification, } 39 19 11 equal to 5½ <i>d.</i> per day .....
---

Dantzic, 18th Aug. 1825.

£121 4 5

(Signed)

F. HOENE.

\* Report on the trade in corn, and on the agriculture of the North of Europe, p. 18.

*Expenses of a British ship of same tonnage.*

## WAGES FOR THREE MONTHS OF AN ENGLISH SHIP.

Master, including } Cabin expenses }	£10 10 0 per month	£31 10 0
Mate.....	5 0 0 .....	15 0 0
Carpenter .....	4 10 0 .....	13 10 0
12 Seamen .....	2 10 0 .....	90 0 0
5 Boys, averaging	1 0 0 .....	15 0 0
		<hr/>
		£165 0 0
Provisions for the above for three } months, at 1s. 3d. per diem each. }		115 0 0
say 92 days .....		
		<hr/>
		£280 0 0

It appears, therefore, that the necessary expenses for provisions and wages of a Prussian ship amounts only to 121*l.*, while those of a British ship amount to 280*l.*, without taking account of the difference of capital (which is more than double), and the increase of interest, insurance, and other charges necessarily arising out of this difference of capital.

The Reviewer has only ventured on one or two new assertions, and in each instance states what is false—ignorance, undoubtedly; I would impute no other motive to any writer in so respectable a journal. He states first, “that in the year 1815, petition after petition was presented to the House of Commons and the Board of Trade, complaining of the depression of the shipping interest; and, in the year 1820, *in compliance with these petitions*, committees were appointed by the Houses of Lords and Commons to inquire into the state of our Foreign trade.” It is true that the shipowners did present petitions complaining of depression—it is *not true* that the committees were ordered in compliance with these petitions. The committees on Foreign trade were granted in compliance with the petition of the London merchants, presented

by Mr. Baring, on that celebrated occasion when he himself, sanguine as he then was on the views of the petitioners, admitted "that the prayer of the petition might be considered too sweeping for old establishments, and better calculated for new ones." So much for the accuracy of the Reviewer as to this fact, on which he has placed so much reliance in repelling the remonstrances of the shipowners.

The Reviewer also states, that "so satisfied were the gentlemen previously referred to of the propriety and beneficial tendency of these alterations, that on Mr. Wallace's retiring from the Board of Trade, a Deputation waited on him, and presented him an address, subscribed by all the *principal shipowners* and merchants of London, thanking him for the many and great services he had rendered to commerce and navigation, and particularly for the changes he had effected in the Navigation Laws!" Here, again, the Reviewer is in error: if he will have the goodness to refer to the address, he will find among the signatures, not a single individual exclusively engaged in the shipping trade. The principal shipowners of London did not sign that address: and those who did sign it were either such as were at once shipowners and foreign merchants, and had a greater interest as foreign merchants than shipowners,—or they were persons engaged in trade to the North of Europe. The shipowners, as a body, declined putting their names to this address.\*

\* The reviewer places much reliance on the testimony given by Mr. John Hall, before the committee, and on the statements made by him in his pamphlet. Of this gentleman I wish not to speak disparagingly, but I believe I state the fact when I say, that if he be a shipowner, he is, at least, not a British shipowner. He is, I believe, practically, a *foreign ship-broker*. In estimating the value of a man's testimony, it is always necessary to see where his interest lies; and the interest of this gentleman clearly lies in the prosperity of foreign shipping. As the reviewer speaks of him as a person intimately connected with the shipowners, it may be necessary for me to go a little farther, to separate him entirely from the respectable names of Mr. Lyall, and Mr. Buckle, &c. with whom the reviewer has associated him. In the course of the year 1823, when the "Reciprocity Duties' Bill" was in progress, a meeting of shipowners was held for the purpose of taking measures to prevent, if possible, its passing into a law. At this meeting, the most perfect unanimity of opinion prevailed, with the exception of Mr. John Hall, who rose to address the meeting in opposition to the purpose for which they had assembled. He was asked, "whether he was a ship-

The Westminster reviewer has obviously been much misled by some knave who has pretended to give him information on this subject. I will in compassion to him help him to a right understanding on one or two facts.

He asserts "that Canada timber is no longer used in the (royal) dock-yards." This is false, large contracts are annually taken with the government for Canada timber and deals, and for masts. At the very moment I am writing, there is an advertisement for a government contract in all the usual daily papers. If the reviewer knew any thing about the matter he must have been aware, that for masts especially, the timber of British America is superior to every other. The French government receives several cargoes of masts annually from Canada, and there is at the present time, a ship on her way to Canada chartered for Quebec, to carry out masts to the Brazils.

It is a part of the reviewer's purpose to depreciate the value of our trade with British America, and accordingly he in the furtherance of his object, and relying on the ignorance of his readers, or which is just possible, being ignorant himself, declares "that the

owner?" After displaying considerable embarrassment, he replied, "*I am not a shipowner.*" He was immediately called to order, and would have been prevented from farther addressing the meeting, when a gentleman, equally distinguished for his intelligence, and his consistent support of the shipping interests, addressed the chairman (Mr. T. Wilson, Member for the City), and urged the propriety of hearing Mr. Hall speak, in order to prevent any misunderstanding as to their motives with the public. This remonstrance was attended to, and Mr. Hall heard. It is well known to all persons acquainted with the habits of London merchants, that it is impossible to retain them at any public meeting after a certain hour in the day. Mr. Hall ungenerously availed himself of this circumstance, addressed the meeting for an hour and a half, till the principal part of the meeting being obliged to depart, there was no opportunity of replying to him; and the next day the public papers were filled with Mr. John Hall's speech, unanswered and unreplyed to, not because it was unanswerable, but because he had spoken every body out of the room. Mr. Hall went from the meeting to the House of Commons, and boasted in the lobby, that he had kept the meeting for two hours. Mr. John Hall has the credit of having drawn the drafts of the new "Navigation Law," and of the "Reciprocity of Duties' Bill," both of which were opposed by the whole body of shipowners, to the utmost of their power; a circumstance, I apprehend, which sufficiently separates him from Mr. Lyall, Mr. Buckle, &c., who joined most zealously in this opposition.



*whole trade of the North American Colonies* amounts annually to eight hundred freights." The trade of Canada employs 800 ships cleared out from Quebec alone; that of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick employs at least as many more. The reviewer has therefore made the trifling error of at least 800 freights in estimating the amount of the carrying trade of British America! I state this on good authority, but I think I can, however, shew, independently of this testimony, that the number of freights employed in this trade cannot be less than 1,600 annually. I under-rate the amount of tonnage entered inwards from the British North American Colonies, when I state it last year to have been at least 400,000 tons. Now I find from the returns laid before parliament, that the Prussian tonnage that entered last year was 112,765, and the number of ships 588. As this trade is very similar to that of Canada, I might fairly assume, that the ships of the two countries average about the same tonnage: and upon this hypothesis the number of ships corresponding to 400,000 tons is about 2,000. As the ships employed in our colonial trade are of a larger class than those of Prussia, I will give the Reviewer advantage of this circumstance, and, making the amplest allowance on this score the freights to this country from British America cannot be estimated at less than 1700 annually; and, supposing each vessel employed in this trade to make a voyage and a half a year, which is about the average, we shall then have from a *thousand* to *eleven hundred* vessels employed in this trade. So much for the accuracy and intelligence of the Westminster Reviewer.

There is a matter on which I feel reluctant to make any observation, because it may have been accidental, but whether accidental or not, the fault may not rest with you. The matter of which I complain is a defect in the Shipping Returns laid before Parliament. These Returns—give the total of British and Foreign Shipping which entered the ports of the United Kingdom in the year 1826—they also give the number of ships and tonnage entering inwards, which belonged to the several foreign countries from which they came—

but they do not give (and this is what I complain of) the number of *British ships* which entered inwards from these respective foreign countries. We have for instance, the quantity of Prussian tonnage which entered inwards from Prussia; but we have not the quantity of English tonnage from Prussia. In the returns laid before parliament shortly after Christmas, and which were made up only to the 10th of October, the British and Foreign were both given---thus, from Prussia there were---64,283 British and 83,765 Foreign.

In the more complete returns of which I am speaking, and which were made up to the 5th of January, we find the Prussian tonnage to be 112,000 tons; but we have no information as to what the British was. Now this might have arisen from two causes; it might be an oversight, or it might be a design for the purpose of keeping out of view the comparative decrease of British. There is another omission, which is, I think, much to be complained of. We have no means of knowing the total tonnage for British America. On this part of the subject the returns are in the highest degree unsatisfactory. There ought to have been, first, the total tonnage, number of ships and men cleared out from all the ports of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, for *all parts* of the world; next, the total tonnage (distinguishing the ports) from which they cleared out, to Great Britain and Ireland. I have no hesitation in stating, that in the course of this enquiry I have felt considerable embarrassment from these omissions; and I fancy as honourable members cannot speak from inspiration any more than I can write from it, they (those I mean who really think on the matter) will be involved in similar difficulty when they come to disentangle the web of argument which you and your adherents and supporters will address to the House of Commons.

The Westminster Reviewer goes on thus---“ If timber were cheaper, ships could be built at a smaller expense, freights would be lower, and the shipowner might then successfully compete for the carrying-trade of the world with the shipowners of other countries.” Is the reviewer aware of the very small quan-

tity of foreign timber employed in building an English ship? I presume not: but I can tell him that so small a quantity is used, that the *total* remission of the direct tax on all the articles employed in the building and equipment of a ship, would not make a difference of more than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on her cost.

I think I need not say any thing more about the Westminster Reviewer—I have laid him on the shelf for the present. But before I leave him, I would say a word or two concerning Mr. Ellice, a gentleman, on the faith of whose evidence the reviewer has set up a deep lamentation on the demoralizing habits of a “Canadian wood-cutter and raftsman.” According to Mr. Ellice, “the class of persons employed in cutting timber is the worst part of the population of Canada.” Is Mr. Ellice not connected with the fur trade of North America? Is not this a trade infinitely more demoralizing than the timber trade? Has it not been a source of infinitely more misery and moral degradation than the timber trade? Has it not excited all the worst passions of the Indians? Have not whole nations of them been swept away in the protection of their hunting-grounds? Has not the introduction of intoxicating spirits among them produced effects still more disastrous even than the weapons of European warfare? Is Mr. Ellice cognizant of all this? Does he, nevertheless, still continue to participate in this trade? Would he think the moral and physical degradation thus produced among all the parties concerned, a sufficient reason for putting an end to the fur trade?

The measures against which I have been arguing never had the cordial support of the shipowners; but if it had so happened, which I have already denied, that under the influence of the speculative notions then promulgated by the Government, as to the good that was to result from them, they had given to these measures their cordial concurrence and approbation, I cannot see that this circumstance ought now to preclude them from that relief which their depression imperatively urges, and that protection from foreign rivalry with which those measures have made it impossible for them to

contend. Other men have lived to change their opinions—men at that time most sanguine as to the benefits that were to result from these measures—practical men too—men of large experience in the world, and Legislators of the British empire—merchants of great eminence, and possessing the largest capital and the most gigantic means of any men in Europe. Such men, I repeat, have changed their opinions; and have not hesitated to avow that change before the proudest assembly in the world. I mention but one name—a name pre-eminently great among British merchants and capitalists: you know it well, and you dread the force of mind and vast information that individual can array against you—I mean Mr. Alexander Baring.

If the speculative mania, which carried in its train such a mind as this eminent individual possesses, had taken possession of the shipowners, I cannot see that it would have been a good and solid reason for debarring them from relief, that they had concurred in measures which in theory promised universal prosperity, but which in practice have produced universal ruin.

I have no doubt that, in resisting the remonstrance of the shipowners, you will refer to the Returns for 1826, and say, "Look here—see what an amount of shipping has been built—quite beyond the average of former years; is this any symptom of distress; or, if there be distress, is not this one of the aggravating causes—one of the main causes of it?" In the first place, I would observe, that a very large part of this shipping, built both here and in the Colonies, was commenced building in the year 1825—and that of the shipping built or commenced in that year, a large portion was by speculators, in consequence of that state of excitement which you and your colleagues had mainly caused, and was carried on by persons who, having money which they knew not how to dispose of advantageously, built houses, or ships, or factories, or any thing else which ingenuity could devise. At all events, the shipowners had very little share in it; and it is no reply to their sufferings to tell them that too many

ships have been built by speculators, put in motion by yourself and others whose counsels you shared.

There is another fact, to which I would call your attention, because I think it important. It is well known that there are certain parts of the carrying-trade in which ships of the first class only can be used. There is a constant demand for these ships, which must be built, whatever be the general condition of the shipping interest. It is also well known, that previous to the year 1823, there had been for several years very little ship-building—a want of these first class ships was beginning to be felt—and a new impulse was given to ship-building, which was urged on and accelerated by the speculative mania of 1825.

I contend, therefore, that as the amount of ship-building in 1826 is no proof of the prosperity of the ship-owners—so neither is it any proof of their indiscretion—because, in the first place, they have had little to do with it; next, because it sprung, in a great measure, from the ships commenced in 1825—because a great part of it is Colonial shipping, 50,000 tons of which is registered as British in the year 1826; and, finally, because the amount of it is actually less than it appears to be, you having in the Returns included steam vessels in the total amount.

According to the old navigation laws the “ enumerated articles” could only be imported in British ships, or ships of the country where the article was produced. By the new law, these goods can be imported not only by ships of the country where they are produced, but by ships of the country where “ they lie.” One of the consequences of this law,—a consequence not foreseen I am quite certain, is this, that the carrying of these articles is opened to the ships of all Europe. A Dutchman for instance wants to bring the corn of Prussia to England. He goes to Dantzic or Memel and loads, sails to a port in Holland, enters, and without having discharged his cargo, clears out again for England. This practice, which is a clear evasion of the spirit of our laws,

has been carried on to a great extent; and by means of the circuitous voyage throws the carrying-trade of Europe to this country completely open. It is thus, Sir, that our liberality is turned against us; it is thus that we are cajoled and insulted by foreigners. Do we gain any thing by all this? Is there any compensation whatever? Do they show in any one circumstance a disposition of liberality? Is it not in the most trifling matters the very reverse of this? Do they take more of our manufactures? Is it not notorious that the manufactures they take are those which require the least skill and labor? When their ships come among us, even part of their ballast is scattered about over their ceiling, that they may avoid the expense of so much of our river ballast. They refuse even to employ our ballastmen to throw into them the little additional ballast they require, while they oblige our ships at Memel, Dantzic, &c. to employ their own laborers. These are not very important matters, except as they shew the disposition of the people with whom you have made such very liberal treaties. In point of fact, it is absurd to talk of the reciprocity treaties encouraging the export of our manufactures to these states—this is a gradually decreasing trade. Houses that were formerly in the habit of exporting to the amount of 100,000*l.* a-year do not now export to the value of 15,000*l.* The Prussians manufacture in fact for themselves.

A good deal of the distress of the ship-owners was ascribed by a member of the House of Commons to the number of ships built in Canada; that hon. member is represented to have said that Canada ships were built at the rate of 6*l.* or 7*l.* a-ton. Now this is undoubtedly a great mistake. Canada ships, it is true, are selling at the rate of 6*l.* or 7*l.* a-ton, but then it is as notorious as noon-day, that they are selling at half their cost. Although timber is cheap in Canada, their vessels when fitted out for sea, cost nearly as much as those of the North of England. Shipwrights' labor was higher, and the iron, copper, sails, cordage, anchors, and in short all their materials except the timber are brought from this country. The assertion of Mr. Warburton was worth nothing, unless he meant that good Canada ships can

be fitted out for 7*l.* 10*s.* a ton, without loss, and that consequen'y the Canadians are building as fast as possible to sell at this price.

It may be asked, perhaps, why with all this cry of distress, the British ship-owner still keeps moving? the answer is plain: a ship is a certain expense whether she be sailed or laid up. There is a number of apprentices, who must be paid, fed, and clothed. There is a captain and not unfrequently a mate, with whom the owners may be unwilling to part. Many have to pay insurance to their insurance clubs, whether they sail the vessel or not, and in either case there is a certain depreciation of the vessel and stores.

You have stated in your reply to the memorial of the shipowners to the Board of Trade, that "freights were scarce and extravagantly dear in 1825." This is, to say the least of it, a very partial statement. It was only toward the latter end of the year, and in the timber trade alone, that freights became, as you call it, "extravagantly dear," and but an inconsiderable number of British ships were chartered at the high rates—rates in which the foreign shipping shared in quite as large a proportion as ourselves. There was no rise in the freights to the East or West Indies, or in the transport service. Thus much for the very strong language, and the very coloured statement, the Board of Trade has thought proper to put forth on this part of the subject.

I have in my former letter gone so largely into the state of our foreign fisheries, that it is not necessary to state much on the subject now. I had already stated the decay of those fisheries, and the cause of that decay. The Americans and French have not only possessed themselves of the greater part of the *trade in cured fish*, but have actually possessed themselves of the *establishments* of our fishermen on these coasts, the legal proprietors of whom they have driven from them. Formerly a British man-of-war was accustomed to visit these fisheries, for the protection of our interests, the captain of which acted as an umpire in cases of dis-

pute; but, for some time, this custom has been discontinued; and instead thereof, an American sloop-of-war has been seen exercising similar authority.

There was one view of the subject to which I did not then advert, but to which I would now beg to call your most serious attention—connected as it is not merely with the fisheries, but with the administration of all our colonial possessions—and arising as it does immediately out of our new colonial policy. One of the consequences of admitting the states of the North of Europe to a direct trade with our colonies is this—that the provisions which were formerly supplied to Newfoundland and Labrador from this country are now supplied mainly from Bremen and the other ports of Northern Europe. The port of Liverpool has in particular suffered materially from having lost this branch of export trade. How rapidly and to what extent this is operating, will appear from the following official statement of exports for the three last years to Newfoundland and the coast of Labrador:---

Year	£.
1824 .....	442,077
1825 .....	319,928
1826 .....	274,144

The decrease is, you see, as rapid as the most "severe economist" could reasonably desire.

The process which is now going on with respect to Newfoundland, will, in a few years, be developed on a far grander scale, and with infinitely more mischievous effects with respect to the West Indies. The effect of the reciprocity treaties on our commercial marine, was of a kind to be felt instantly; their effect on our colonial intercourse will be felt more remotely, will come upon us more insidiously, but in the end must produce consequences that will produce ruin and dismay through all the mercantile interests in the Empire. The advantages you have given to the states of the North of Europe are such as cannot be seized in one day. The large mortgages which are at present held on West Indian property by English capitalists, must be transferred to the capitalists of Antwerp, Amsterdam, Bremen, Dantzic, &c.



&c., before any fatal encroachment on our colonial trade can be effected. For the present, proprietors of West India property are compelled to ship their goods to this country to meet the demands of the mortgagees, and, consequently, British shipping must be employed in the conveyance. Your treaties, however, have relieved them from the legislative necessity of so doing, and the growing capital of European merchants will soon relieve them from the pecuniary necessity which for a time will partially bind them. The merchants of Germany and the North of Europe are not insensible to the benefits you have opened to them;\* they will not be slow to avail themselves of them: and, then,

\* I quote the following from a recent number of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*.

"In 1815 England concluded also with the United States of North America a treaty founded on the equality of rights. Properly speaking, we may date from this time the introduction of England's new system, which is called the system of reciprocity, and the object of which is to unshackle commerce and industry, because this freedom is suitable to the interests of England. But it is also highly advantageous to other States,\* if the conditions offered and regarded by England are attended to by the Governments of the Continent with judgment and prudence, and due regard to the state and progress of industry in their own countries. This has been done by Prussia in its late commercial treaty with England, by which its navigation and foreign commerce will, in all probability, be greatly extended. The most decisive step by which the whole colonial system, which has been entirely changed, or rather destroyed, has been taken by England in the highly important measure of giving to its West India Colonies, freedom of trade with foreign nations. This permission cannot fail to have a great and beneficial influence on the maritime commerce of Germany. England at variance with the North Americans, in various points, relative to navigation and commerce, has withdrawn from its rivals the enjoyment of that permission, and closed against them the ports of its West India Islands.—Hitherto the Americans supplied the West Indies with various articles, partly manufactured, *e. g.* flour, brandy, tallow, salt, meat, soup, flax, several kinds of timber, &c., the value of which has amounted, of late years to 12,000,000 of dollars per annum. This lucrative branch of trade they will soon lose, as the North American Tariff of customs is continually becoming more rigorous, and English manufactures are almost wholly excluded. The English Government must be inclined equally to exclude the Americans from its Colonies, and to give the advantages of it to the Europeans, especially the States of Northern Germany, whose markets are open to the English, and to which they have easy access, by the lowness of the import duties. Germany, too, produces all the articles that the West Indies want, equal in quality, and many of them superior, to those of North America; the prices, too, at least with respect to corn, are not to the disadvantage of Germany. A favourable opportunity seems, therefore, to have arrived for us, to acquire a great portion of this West India trade. May the German merchants not neglect this important conjuncture in the commerce of the world."

when this event shall be accomplished, let me ask you, what will become of our large exports to Prussia, for instance? Our exports there are now about 450,000*l.*, of which two-thirds are colonial produce; this two-thirds will, of course, very soon drop from our hands; and that mighty trade which you were so anxious to preserve, for which you have conceded so much in substance, and so dangerously in principle will soon cease almost to exist.

A great deal has been said about this "liberal" system having been forced on us by the change which had taken place in the public mind of Europe; and that, in fact, it was no longer optional with us, whether or no we would relax the restrictive policy on which we had acted for ages. That the whole of this assumption was a fallacy, is, I think, proved by the fact, that not one of the great commercial powers of Europe or America\* has accepted it. Europe generally, or America could not have been very anxious to enforce on England a system of trade in which they have abstained from participating. This is one view of the matter. There is another, altogether independent, which brings me to exactly the same conclusion, and which I found on a passage which has accidentally dropped from yourself. In illustrating the inconveniences which have sprung from breaking up the free-trading ports of Europe, you proceed thus:—"If, instead of passing under the dominion of an absolute monarchy, Dantzic had continued free, like Hamburgh, and *had the Government of Prussia then said, 'you shall not trade with us except on such and such conditions,'*—our answer might have been—'THE COMMODITIES WE WANT WE CAN PROCURE AT DANTZIC, where no such conditions are imposed on British ships.'" You have here reduced the whole question of concession to the narrowest compass possible. You here avow the justness of the principle for which I have been all along contending: you here admit, that if we could have procured these commodities elsewhere, then concession to Prus-

\* In speaking of America here, I refer, of course, to the part that the United States have acted with respect to the trade of the West Indies.

sia would have been out of the question. Now we could have procured them elsewhere undoubtedly—we could, if need required, have had every thing we wanted through the medium of Russia, and we could have had them much more advantageously through our own Colonies. Would it not have been just as effectual a reply to the clamours of the Prussian, to have said, “The commodities we want we can procure at Riga\*, where no such conditions are imposed on British ships” —“or, we can procure them in our own Colonies.” This, Sir, I take to be plain common sense; it would have been the natural reply of a man possessing a small knowledge of European geography, and not entirely ignorant of the practical details of the timber trade of the Baltic.

Can you mean to contend gravely, that because Dantzic has ceased to be a free port, Great Britain is no longer able to regulate the principles on which she will trade with foreign countries? Can you mean to contend that because Dantzic has ceased to be a free port, Great Britain must yield to the dictation of foreign powers? Is it a British minister that dares to avow such doctrines in a British House of Commons? Are changes and innovations which strike at once at the foundation of our naval and colonial power, to be defended by such reasoning as this?—Is it possible that the trade and commerce of this country are in the hands of a man who can address such unmitigated drivelling to the House of Commons and the country? Little, indeed, may we be surprised at the wreck of our manufactures, at the ruin of our mercantile navy, and the general distress that pervades all classes of the community. Yet you, Sir, who seem to deride with a sort of triumphant indifference, the sufferings of your countrymen, can sympathize with the ruin of the Prussian shipowners, and find in that alleged ruin a palliation for an act which in the better days of old England, would have been on the part of Prussia tantamount to a declaration of war.

\* It is a remarkable fact, that a considerable quantity of Russian timber is shipped at Dantzic. Much of the timber which is shipped at Memel and Dantzic, would come just as conveniently *via* Riga.

One assumption which was at the bottom of all the recent changes of our commercial policy was, that we were the manufacturers of the world; that the manufactures of other countries were in so low a state as to be unable to compete with us; and, that by a little management, we might not only continue to supply them for ages, but increase the amount of our exportations beyond the reach of calculation. I have already declared my belief—a belief founded on much personal observation, and on much intercourse with men intimately acquainted with the state of foreign manufactures, that the whole of this assumption was fallacious. Every day discloses some new fact, confirming this opinion. The following detail of the importation of cotton into France and Switzerland for the last ten years, will show how rapidly the manufacture of cotton is progressing among them. There were for the year—

	Bags imported.	Bags sold.
1817 .....	59,986 .....	62,000
1818 .....	95,831 .....	91,000
1819 .....	92,997 .....	95,000
1820 .....	98,884 .....	96,000
1821 .....	120,879 .....	123,000
1822 .....	120,093 .....	129,000
1823 .....	116,337 .....	111,000
1824 .....	143,819 .....	148,000
1825 .....	120,463 .....	120,000
1826 .....	214,799 .....	186,000

To Prussia, it is well known that, the principal article of our export is cotton twist; namely, cotton, after it has passed through one operation of the manufacture, all the finer and more difficult parts of the process remaining still to be accomplished. In Philadelphia, which is the workshop of the United States, and therefore a fair criterion of the state and progress of their domestic manufactures, the value of native cotton manufactures, sold in years 1804, 1805, 1806, was 17,650 dollars: in the years 1825, 1826, this value was 4,000,000 dollars.

A more strange, a more marvellous mistake than the

admission of foreign manufactures into our home market, under an impression that we should be thereby enabled to introduce our own more effectually into foreign countries, was never committed. To suppose that we can, by any relaxation of our system, materially enhance the amount of our manufactured exports, is a delusion which a few years will completely show up. The political economists are perpetually crying up that the eyes of foreigners are open to the nature and effects of our restrictive system. This may be true; but there is another thing equally true, which neither you or the political economists seem to have discovered—and that truth is this—that foreigners have also opened their eyes to *the importance of cultivating domestic manufactures*. This is a piece of truth which you seem not yet to have discovered, and I would recommend it to your serious consideration.

These observations you will perceive, are principally directed against the admission of foreign silks. It has been of late said, that this trade is reviving; and on the assertion of this fact, I have no doubt you will place considerable reliance in vindicating your free-trade measures. This partial, and I fear, temporary improvement, will be held out as a consequence of free-trade. It must, in the first place, be borne in mind, that this is the precise season when, if there ever be any activity in the business, that activity would take place, in consequence of the spring fashions, and the demands of the London market. This is a part of the reason, undoubtedly, for the partial revival which has recently taken place in this manufacture. There is, however, another, and far more important aspect, under which I wish to present this question to you. *Whatever permanent improvement has taken place in the silk-trade, is to be ascribed to a return to our ancient system of restriction.* The revival of the silk trade is to be ascribed, not to the operation of the principle of free-trade, but to a deviation from those principles. The improvement, in a word, is mainly to be attributed to the alteration in the Silk Act, which came into operation on the 5th January last. Instead of the 30 per cent. *ad valorem*, the new law substi-

tutes a duty per pound weight on the heavier and more substantial fabrics, and by the length on those which are lighter, finer, and more figured: the new duties, in fact, amounting almost to a prohibition on some of those articles which would interfere most with our own manufactures. Even on East India Bandannas, which now pay by the yard, the duty which on some goods, sold last December, would have been 3s. 9d., is now 6s., and the 30 per cent. is, therefore, in fact, raised to 55 per cent. This, Sir, is the true cause of the revival, such as it is, of the silk manufacture. It springs not from free trade, but from protection: not from the new principles which you have promulgated, but from those principles of restriction and prohibition under which the manufacture had attained its present growth.

This is not the first time that you have found a relief from modern innovation, in returning to the principles of our forefathers: I hope it will not be the last. Not many years have elapsed since I find you writing thus:—"In the first eighteen years of this war, we were forced to pay sixty millions of money (to strangers, every one of whom has, in the course of it, been our enemy) for a scanty and inadequate supply of foreign corn; and when for this purpose we had *parted with all our gold, and even our silver currency, combined Europe shut its ports against us; and America co-operating, first laid an embargo, and then went to war.* This combination was formed with the vain hope to break our spirit, by starving our bodies. Abroad, we have subdued our enemies—at home, we came out of the war with our agriculture so extended and improved, as to make us, at this moment, independent of foreign supply. We are so at this moment; and shall I, who, to the entire conviction of my own judgment, have traced the long sufferings of the people to a contrary state of things, be deterred from using my honest endeavour in Parliament, to prevent the recurrence of such sufferings? For that purpose, WE MUST GO BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR FOREFATHERS, and by reverting, as much as possible, to that system, we shall secure to ourselves and our posterity, ALL THE BENEFITS WHICH

THEY DERIVED FROM IT."\* Could any one believe, that you had written this passage? Could any moderate man credit that little more than ten years have elapsed since you wrote it? What new light has since broken in upon you to justify the entire revolution which has taken place in your opinions? What confidence can the public place in the opinions of a man who passes to such opposite extremes in so short a period? Can you blame me—can you blame any one for entertaining the greatest distrust of the accuracy of your opinions—of the soundness of your philosophy—of the deliberative character of your judgments? You change your creed every six or eight years, and yet are indignant that any one should presume to differ from you.

In my former letter I have alluded to the advantages granted to the Americans, in being permitted to introduce foreign silks for domestic consumption immediately from the ship, and thereby supply the best part of the home market. Will it be believed, that a few days previous to the alteration of the duties on silk, they were allowed to pay the then low duties, keeping their goods in the East India warehouse till the quarterly sale in March, when they were sold as goods *duty paid for home consumption*, while the British importer was entirely excluded from the benefit of that low duty, even in cases where his goods had been imported some time previously, unless they had passed through the Company's sale.

So essential in its nature, and so important in its consequences, do I regard the difference between our trade with British America and the Baltic, that I must beg your attention a little longer to this part of the subject. I do not flatter myself that what I am going to say has the charm of novelty to you at all events; but I am persuaded it has not received that attention to which it is entitled at your hands. The new regulation of the timber duties, which was effected in the year 1821, was mainly grounded on the *supposed decline in the Baltic trade for several preceding years*. This alleged decline, previous to the year 1821, was made to

\* Letter on the Corn Laws.—Ridgway.

appear by comparing years of war, when we were excluded from the rest of Europe, with years of peace, when commerce had returned to its wonted channels.

Now, a fairer, a more adequate, and more just conclusion, I apprehend, would have been deduced, by comparing the year 1802, a year of general peace, with the year 1821, or with the average of the years of peace preceding; and, upon a comparison of these two years, you will find that our exports to the Baltic had increased above a million sterling. Since the year 1821, upon a comparison of that year with the average of the three years succeeding, although our imports have increased 974,000*l.* annually, our whole exports thither have actually declined 600,000*l.* At the former period, the balance of trade was 1,168,000*l.* in our favour, and has, during the latter, been against us by 438,000*l.* By a similar comparison, the increase of foreign tonnage has been to that of British as 3 to 2, making by the amount of freight the real balance of trade still more unfavourable. So much for the decline of the Baltic trade. Such are the effects which have resulted from our care for its prosperity. Could such effects have resulted from our care for the trade of British America?

Our exports to the North of Europe consist almost entirely of colonial produce and coarse manufactures. Our exports to British America consist in a great measure of British manufactures, and comprise every article for the use of life, in its most finished condition, and, consequently, give employment and support to a greater variety of manufactures, and a greater proportion of population, than the same amount of exports to the Baltic.

British America, in proportion to its population, consumes more of our productions than any other country; its consumption increases faster, and may increase almost indefinitely; and, in proportion to its consumption, the tonnage employed is at least quadruple that of any other country. In the year 1825, its population was about 1,100,000 souls; they received from us imports to the amount of 2,250,000*l.*; their total exports were about 3,150,000*l.*; and they employed in



the conveyance of these exports nearly 700,000 tons\* of shipping and 34,000 seamen.

Admitting, for the sake of argument, that the time was come when some change had become necessary in our maritime and colonial policy, it has always appeared to me, that there was nevertheless a radical error in the changes you proposed, and that error I would state to consist in your having offered *the same terms to all nations*. Now, it is very clear, that the same terms might be very acceptable to one nation and not to another. You admit all countries to our colonies on condition of our being permitted to trade to theirs. It is very natural that a country which had no colonies, or none of any value, should accept this offer; it is quite as reasonable to suppose that another country which had colonies, whose trade was important, would not accept those terms, unless by so doing they gained some collateral advantage. These propositions, I think, are perfectly consistent with the common sense of mankind, and with that prudent policy which directs the councils of nations as well as the schemes of the individual adventurer; and, accordingly, we find them corroborated by what has actually taken place. Prussia accepted your offer because she had no colonies—she thereby took something but gave nothing away. France rejected—in substance and in effect rejected this offer—for she had colonies of whose trade she wished to retain exclusive possession.

I think, therefore, it is quite apparent, that your reciprocity treaties went on a principle which is essentially vicious. It seems to me, indeed, perfectly absurd, to apply the same views of policy to all countries. As differences of situation and circumstance prescribe a different course of conduct in private life, so I think that they equally point to a different policy in the intercourse of nations. What might be a very good treaty as respects the United States of America, might be a most improvident compact as to Prussia. It may

\* The Westminster Reviewer says—"the whole trade of the North American colonies amounts, annually, to eight hundred freights," and he proposes to buy up the whole shipping employed in it, and convert it into fire-wood.—What a combination of ignorance and folly!

be very expedient to make concessions to one country, when it would be the very extreme of folly to make the same concession to another differently circumstanced. I am, of course, putting generosity and equality out of the question, for if you introduce these elements they change the whole nature of my argument—and I also assume nations to act toward each other like men of business, each endeavouring to secure to itself as great advantage as can with good faith be fairly preserved—and then I maintain that terms may be conceded to one country which only folly or weakness could concede to another. The means should always be adapted to the end—the sacrifice should always be in proportion to the present or prospective good.

What I have said in respect to colonies, applies with equal force to the nature of the article which constitutes the staple of intercourse between two countries. The carrying-trade to one country may and ought to be regulated on very different principles from that to another country. If we had carried on a trade with a country which consumed a large quantity of our manufactures—so large a quantity that the loss of such a market would have materially injured us—or, if we had been supplied by them with some article of raw produce essential to us, and which we must have obtained at all events, whether directly or indirectly, then concession to a certain extent might have been expedient. Such a branch of trade is not that of Prussia—the main article of import from thence is timber, an article of small original value, employing a large quantity of shipping to convey it, deriving its value almost entirely from the cost of conveyance; and, what is still more material, an article which we could procure elsewhere. Without further pursuing details which cannot fail to suggest themselves to your mind, it is quite obvious that the trade of Prussia is a trade, *sui generis*, standing on particular grounds, and which this country not only has the right but also the power to regulate as may best suit its own advantage.

In considering the timber trade of the Baltic, I would most earnestly enforce on your consideration that the

powers with whom we carry it on have in all past times been our most dangerous foes, and that in the event of another war, they would in all human probability be arrayed against us. Consider the effect of raising up among them a large mercantile marine familiar with our shores, while we are at the same time driven from the navigation of their seas.

On the other hand, it should never be forgotten, that British America is a part of the British Empire—governed by Englishmen, and in a great measure peopled by Englishmen—and that the trade with British America is essentially a domestic trade. As a domestic trade, without reference to any other circumstances, it is entitled to protection; but when viewed in connection with our fisheries and West India possessions, the necessity for protecting it becomes of the very last importance. The industry and property that we plant in British America spreads itself at once over the West Indies, and gives new life, vigor and power to the whole of our transatlantic commerce and navigation. The time must come when the United States will endeavour to wrest British America from our grasp—this once effected, our West Indies are gone instantly and irrecoverably. Whatever substantial power and influence we are to continue to maintain in the new continent, must depend on the prosperity and wealth or decay and distress of British America. This is our “*point d'appui*”—this is the arsenal from which the thunder of Britain must be hurled—this is our fortress, and on its maintenance and effective power depends the preservation of our possessions in the West Indies.

Placed then as we are between the North of Europe and Canada—the former by the effect of your treaties rising rapidly into new wealth and power, the latter retrograding as rapidly towards poverty and ruin, it does appear to me that the season has arrived when a bold and effective colonial policy has become necessary. Pressed as we are at home by embarrassments, and tied up as we are abroad by treaties, I do look almost with despair as to the future prosperity of our colonial power. I would look around me for a master-mind,

with sagacity enough to perceive how closely the prosperity of England is connected with that of the colonies, and with patriotism enough to prefer the greatness of old England to that of her enemies, but I fear I should look in vain. Such minds have been, but I fear they exist no longer. Edmund Burke, and few greater or better men ever shared in the councils of the British Empire, said, "I think I can trace all the calamities of this country to the single source of our not having had steadily before our eyes a general, comprehensive, well-connected and well-proportioned view of the whole of our dominions, and a just sense of their true bearings and relations."

If the policy of our Government were to be judged by the effects of its measures, it would appear, that its whole tendency had been to deteriorate and destroy the value and prosperity of our foreign possessions, and as far as possible to make them worthless to ourselves.—It seems to have been the whole end and aim of our Government, by every means moral and physical, to annihilate whatever of power Great Britain had—whatever of wealth and resources she derived from her own possessions. Wherever Great Britain had a monopoly over foreigners, that monopoly has been destroyed—wherever she had any advantage by natural circumstances, it has been neutralized by a wilful and prodigal policy. Every engine, every contrivance, every species and form of folly have been at work, to impair and destroy the fabric which our ancestors had built up and consolidated.

That the distress of the shipping interests is great, unparalleled and increasing, is a fact which as it cannot be questioned, so I think also that you have yourself admitted that it springs in a great degree from your own measures. To mitigate this distress, and in some degree to counteract the monopoly which has unhappily been conceded to the states of the North of Europe, the shipowners have suggested a variety of expedients—the first is the remission of the whole or a part of the tax on Canada timber, and to this you have replied, that England is so poor, her Exchequer so empty,

that she cannot afford to remit part of this paltry tax. Another suggestion was, that "the privilege of warehousing the 'enumerated articles' for home consumption should be confined to British ships, or that the duties of customs or excise imposed on all such articles should be made payable from the moment of their entry, if imported in foreign vessels." To this it is very quietly replied, "that it is enough to know that to adopt this suggestion would be to violate the public faith, and in conveying this knowledge to the memorialists, the Lords of the Committee are satisfied that it is unnecessary to say anything more on the subject."

Now the answer that we are bound by treaty, and that the national faith is pledged, may be very conclusive; but permit me to say, that it comes most ungraciously from the lips of him who signed the treaty and pledged the national faith. To your successor in office this would have been a good and valid reason, a fair and satisfactory reply. He might well say—"Gentlemen, I sympathize with your distresses; I would gladly relieve them; I should be most happy to adopt your suggestions; but I am bound by the acts of my predecessor—look at these treaties—the national faith is pledged."

If labor had been scarce in England—if the artizan, driven out of one branch of employment, could have been immediately engaged in another, if capital could have been as easily transferred as the heroes of a chess-board,—then there might have been philosophy, and what is still better, common sense, in talking about the facility with which capital is transferred to where it can be most profitably employed. But in a state of things like ours, where every branch of industry is so overloaded with competition, where labor is so abundant, and the means of employing it so comparatively scanty, it is not only the greatest nonsense, but it is the most heartless cruelty to break up any great branch of industry, merely because we can buy somewhat cheaper from a foreign country, the articles it produces. If we take the silk trade for example—let us suppose this branch of business altogether ruined, as it is almost by

foreign competition. In the first place, the four or five hundred thousand individuals supported by this trade are thrown on the world; they are unable to learn any other business, and if they could, where are they to find employment?

What I assert of the silk weavers applies to every other class. If the demand for British shipping decrease, in the first place the capital of so many ship-owners is transferred: he may retire from business, but the greater probability is, that he transfers his capital to foreign shipping. So many seamen are thrown out of employment. All those persons who are employed in the building and fitting out of a ship, in supplying and working up the materials that are employed about her—and lastly, all those persons who depend for a maintenance on the loading and delivering of her cargo, and in twenty other ways which it were needless to detail. That this is the fact, no one can doubt who has cast his eye over the petitions which have been printed by order of the House of Commons. I give one sample: it is from a petition of the tradesmen, artificers, laborers, and others, engaged in employments connected with the equipment, loading, and delivery of shipping on the river Thames; and they set forth, that “their emoluments from their several trades and occupations have been lately greatly diminished by a continually decreasing demand for their productions and labor, and they are thereby reduced to a very distressed condition, and their distress has been mainly occasioned, and has been greatly aggravated, by the great influx of foreign shipping into the port of London.” The petitioners farther state, “that foreign ships do not employ laborers to load or deliver their cargoes, that their own seamen ballast their ships; that except in cases of absolute necessity, arising from accidental injury, they are not repaired here; that they do not purchase any article of provision or stores, but being enabled to provide themselves in their own country with every article requisite to their voyage, at a price very far below the cost price, they quit the port without any of that expenditure which British vessels are compelled to make, and which has hitherto constituted the sole employ-

ment and maintenance of the petitioners and their families."\* This is the way in which your system works: it does not merely ruin the shipowner, it does not merely throw out of employment some thousands of seamen, who after suffering every privation at home, might, at length, find employment among our rivals, but it throws out of employment, and deprives of the means of subsistence, tens of thousands who are indirectly connected with them, and whose situation has no alternative but a poor-house.

Adhering, as you still do, with the utmost tenacity, to your peculiar views, permit me to ask you, calmly and dispassionately—whether the results of your policy have in any degree realized your own expectations? Have you obtained that support and concurrence of foreign powers which you had anticipated? You relied originally and mainly on the support and concurrence of the Netherlands, and the United States of America, to give a character, a basis, and a pervading influence to your system. You represented to Parliament, that not only were these powers prepared to yield their cordial support to carry into effect the policy you were then recommending, but that they were with the greatest earnestness pressing on our Government the adoption of this policy. You then urged upon the House the fact, that England, aided by the Netherlands and the United States, the great commercial powers of continental Europe and America, must finally carry along with her all the nations of the world, and enforce the universal adoption of a system, alike beneficial to her as a nation, and to all mankind as a body of confederated nations. How has this fair prospect of the future been realized?

Can you, Sir, in your moments of sober reflection, seriously deny that this free-trade system, which had seized a part of his Majesty's Government, was any thing but a phantom—one of those day-dreams by which nations as well as individuals are sometimes carried away—a spirit of speculation in the Government, exactly resembling, in quality and degree, the

\* Appendix to the Votes of the House of Commons, p. 920.

spirit of speculation which subsequently spread through nearly every class of the community. In all these cases the mind of man seems to have been laid prostrate before some presiding phantom, which rode over it with the pressure of a nocturnal incubus, and lulled its suspicions, like the presence of a protecting angel. Reformers and enthusiasts, in all ages, have expected, in the realization of their schemes, a new frame of society—a state of perfect happiness, unobscured by the clouds of passion, and unruffled by its turbulent operations. Do you pretend to question the truth of what I am here stating? Dare you pretend to say that this is a coloured picture, and that I am ascribing to other men the dreary phantasmagoria that exist only in my own imagination? I refer you to the records of Parliamentary proceedings for the last six years, for a series of vain, imaginary pictures of national prosperity and future good—promulgated in such pomp of language, that posterity will not be able to believe that they proceeded from a grave assemblage of Legislators. The Lords' Committee on Foreign Trade predict from the measures recommended in their Report, "that channels of commerce and sources of wealth would arise, of which the mind of man could not conceive." "It is time," said the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, "to come forward and call upon other nations to cut the cords which have tied down the commerce of the world, and fastened it to the earth, and let it soar in air." On another occasion, the same Right Honourable Gentleman descanted on the "capabilities" of the "soul of commerce," and anticipated from the operations of this invisible and spiritual essence, I know not what "brilliant results." The same amiable person, looking, on a third occasion, at the result of his financial operations, exclaimed in a sort of rapture, "What shall we do when the surplus revenue amounts to other five millions? What shall we do with it?" The Right Honourable Gentleman seemed absolutely lost in extasy at contemplating the magic effects of his measures. "Let but my Right Honourable Friend," say you, in a speech on our foreign commerce, "continue his good practice of coming down to this House, Session after



Session, to accumulate fresh proofs, that the removal of restrictive impositions and excessive duties is not diminution, but frequently increase of revenue. Let foreign countries see him, year after year, largely remitting public burthens, and at the same time exhibiting a prosperous revenue still flowing to the same perennial level. I have no doubt, when they shall have contemplated a few years longer the happy consequences of the system in which we are now proceeding, that their eyes will be opened."

These are a few of the fragments which have fixed my attention, and would have excited only a smile, had it not been that the delusive hopes they held forth to the country have led to such disastrous consequences. Can any man read such passages as these, and not feel—feel beyond the possibility of a doubt—that they are the emanations, not of mature and statesman-like deliberation, but of rash, enthusiastic, strongly excited minds,—and that they bear me irresistibly to the conclusion, that the free-trade measures have sprung from a legislative mania, which preceded, and in a great measure caused, the commercial mania which has spread such ruin and distrust through the country.

In whatever way I look at this policy of yours, I can see nothing but mischief in its effects on the commerce and power of the country. The injury it has already inflicted is great—the ultimate good to flow from it is, at the very best, problematical and doubtful in the highest degree. Our manufacturers, our shipowners, our artizans, our seamen, are going to wreck, or transporting their capital and enterprise to countries where they are more valued and better protected; while foreigners, our rivals in peace, our enemies in war, are growing rich and powerful on the decay and ruin of every interest in the British empire. Is it only the distresses of foreigners that excite your sympathy and elaim your regard? Is your firmness to be shown only in resisting the remonstrances of your distressed or ruined countrymen? Afraid, or too weak to maintain the just rights of Englishmen against the

opportunities of foreign powers, have you no apprehension of the effect of your continued disregard to their remonstrances? Do, if you have not yet become quite callous to the sufferings of your fellow-subjects—do relent a little in this career of misrule and wrong. You cannot be ignorant of the amount of misery you have inflicted—of the ruin and desolation you have spread over the country—of the splendid fortunes you have annihilated—of the multitudes you have deprived of the means of earning their daily bread. Pause, Sir, if not for their sakes, at least for your own.

The misery you have inflicted is not the less, and scarcely more justifiable, because it has sprung from erroneous judgment, and not from venal motives. There was a time when motives would have been inferred from actions, and when the negociator who had signed your reciprocity treaties would not have dared to present himself to his sovereign. But this is a temperate and a reflecting age, and we can distinguish between the integrity of the man and the folly or weakness of the Minister. That your motives were pure no one would deny—that the slightest tincture of selfish or venal speculation entered into your plans, I do not mean to insinuate. But then, as far as the country is concerned, does it make any difference whether its great interests be subverted by the weakness of an honest and upright, or by the knavery of a venal and dishonest Minister? It matters not whether the mind of a Minister be over-ridden by the love of money or the love of philosophy—by the desire of evil gains or by an obstinate attachment to principles inconsistent with the prosperity of the country, and unheard of in the administration of its affairs. You can hardly pretend to say that your schemes have been productive of no injury to the country, or that a single benefit has as yet arisen out of them. So far they have produced evil unmitigated—the good may be prospective, but as yet is invisible.

Do you think that England attained her greatness by balancing philosophic theories, by delicately and solicitously consulting the wishes of foreign powers,

by reasoning with them on some common basis of universal benevolence, some fancied rule of universal right? No such thing. The English have always been accounted a just, but a rude, rough, uncompromising race of men; and these were the qualities that raised them to the sovereignty of the seas; and to an elevation of commercial power unheard of in the history of the world. Our ancestors, Sir, did not reason, and solicit, and submit: they knew the strength of their own nature—they knew the force of their own power—they said to other nations, "We will trade with you on such and such terms, and if you do not choose to accept them, you may pursue whatever course you please." Taking you and your colleagues, as the model of modern times, I should almost fear that the John Bull of former days was as different from the John Bull of the present time, as is a broad-shouldered, fearless Highlandman from the dapper cockney who struts the Park by the side of his fellow-milliner.

After all, Sir, you may depend on it you are but the leader of a sect—a small, inconsiderable sect, as it will prove to be, when the people of England shall have fairly discovered the effect and tendency of your policy. The Aristocracy and the landowners are still sound at the core. English feelings still predominate. The bulk and body of the people—the bulk and body of the wealth and influence of the country, are still sound at the heart. Your political notions, aided by a variety of accidental and collateral circumstances, have gained a temporary currency. But with all your adroitness, zeal and perseverance, you can hardly hope to pass on the people of England a permanent delusion.

Hitherto you have prevailed much by arraying one class of the community against another. When you levelled your blow against the shipping interests, you held out to the merchants vast and unbounded extension of commerce to result from this measure, and they were prevailed to look quietly at the sacrifice which was going on. When you were preparing a blow at the agricultural interest, you held out the cry of cheap

bread to all the manufacturing classes, cheap manufactures to the merchant, and the carrying-trade in corn to the shipowners—thus arraying against the agriculturists all the rest of the nation.

Once more, Sir, I would call on you, as you respect the esteem of your countrymen—as you would place the measures you have originated on a solid and enduring basis—as you would remove the clamour and discontent which now prevail against you—as you would satisfy the reasonable expectations of all moderate and prudent men—do not oppose a committee to inquire into the present state of distress among the shipping interests. If the statements that you and your adherents have so often made in the House of Commons, and so often reiterated at the Board of Trade, be in reality founded in truth—be substantially and not nominally founded in truth—what can you have to fear from inquiry? If the complaints of the shipowners be unjust—if their allegations be false or exaggerated—if their remonstrances should prove to have been a mere clamour, originating in prejudice and continued in ignorance, then you will come out of the ordeal purged from all imputation—your character elevated in the general estimation—your sagacity put beyond the reach of reproof—your power enlarged—the sphere of your action expanded—and having a new capacity to spread more widely and diffuse more effectively principles and a policy alike beneficial to all mankind. This, Sir, would be an eminence worthy the pursuit of a great and liberal mind—of a man elevated above the vulgar herd, as much by his moral as his intellectual superiority—of a man laying aside the little prejudices of official intrigue, and clothing himself in the common sympathies of our nature.

Judging from the past, I acknowledge that I have little expectation for the future. I cannot bring myself even to hope, that you who pretend to have broken through the trammels that tied down the commerce of all former times, have yet been able to break through the petty forms of official jealousy. You would regard

the granting of this committee as a defeat, and I fear you have not yet magnanimity enough to throw yourself on the generosity of a great people.

If you refuse the committee, however you may cloak your reasons in specious argument, however you may support yourself by a ministerial majority, remember that you cannot long continue to practise a delusion on the common sense of mankind—you cannot for ever resist the united remonstrance of the capital and property of the country. You cannot continue to work injustice with impunity. The time will come, when instead of that waning popularity you now possess, you will be overwhelmed by vituperation and contempt. Is this a position in which a magnanimous and patriotic mind would place itself? Is this a desirable consummation for a man who owes every thing to the approbation of a deluded and injured people? Consider the effects of continued deception; suppose the eyes of the people to be fairly opened to the delusive policy you have been pursuing; suppose the country fully convinced of the fact, that you had kept it in a state of depression by continued resistance to all inquiry into the cause of their distress. Suppose all this, and consider the situation in which you would stand. What then would be your condition? The execrations of posterity (but these, perhaps, you might disregard); contempt and disgrace and humiliation among your cotemporaries, the living witnesses of your fleeting popularity, of what you might have been, of what you had become. How would you bear this?

Pause, Sir, let me beg you, in your career—do justice to your country, if it be only in regard for yourself. Consider that you have a personal stake, a character pledged—every thing to lose and nothing to gain by resisting the just claims of a body of men whom your measures have brought to the very brink of ruin.

If in reality you have erred, why shrink from the acknowledgment of it? Do you think that you alone of all mankind are exempted from the infirmities of our common nature? If you have erred, acknowledge that

error—throw yourself on the justice of your countrymen—tell them that you have erred through a too ardent zeal for their welfare—tell them that you are still ready, retracing or modifying your former steps, to fight with them and for them for our commercial and naval pre-eminence. Do you think that Englishmen would desert you, because you had the candour and the manliness to make this avowal of your error? Do not fear that they would weigh your errors too scrupulously—be assured that they would merge your defects in your better qualities—they would sink the recollection of your rashness in the remembrance of your zeal—they would forget your false theory in the knowledge of your various and practical information. In the general firmness and candour of such a course, they would have a sufficient guarantee that you would act honestly, and in that conviction they would still place you at the helm to guide the vessel of the national commerce.

This letter has grown to an extent much beyond what I had contemplated, and here for the present I rest. Be assured, however, that I shall be no inattentive observer of your proceedings. With every disposition to watch carefully the progress of your steps, let me tell you that I am not altogether without the means of tracking the course of your political movements.

I have the honor to be,

Your very obedient Servant,

S. ATKINSON.

*London, May 1, 1827.*

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P. S. Since writing the above, some further returns\* have been printed; they confirm my conjectural statement respecting the number of ships cleared out from British America for this country. I have, as I there

\* No. 276.

said, somewhat underrated them ; the following is the number of ships, tonnage, &c. for the last year

Ships.	Tons.
1,770.....	172,588

I perceive from a Hull list of the last month, that from the 9th to the 18th there entered that port, 137 Foreign, and 31 British ships. What do you think of this ?

I have already protested against the imperfection of the Shipping Returns laid before Parliament ; permit me now to enter-my remonstrance against the complex and involved shape in which they are presented to the public. Nothing can be more delusive than the impression which they produce. Nothing but great practical knowledge and much patience and ingenuity can unravel their mystery. I cannot suppose that you wish either to mislead public opinion or to throw needless obstruction in the way of fair investigation—and giving you credit for this, I cannot withhold my surprise at your permitting returns so calculated to mislead, to go forth to the country. The Edinburgh Reviewer quoting the following which you have inserted in the Appendix to your speech,

YEARS.	BRITISH.		FOREIGN.	
	Vessels.	Tons.	Vessels.	Tons.
1814.....	16,065	1,846,670	5,109	566,516
1815.....	16,851	1,993,150	4,919	673,918
1816.....	16,754	1,966,890	2,825	317,577
1817.....	18,707	2,240,675	3,163	401,792
1818.....	20,491	2,457,779	5,898	704,511
1819.....	19,851	2,413,019	3,854	478,220
1820.....	18,586	2,270,400	3,258	408,401
1821.....	18,738	2,263,813	3,091	366,397
1822.....	20,212	2,390,238	3,113	419,694
1823.....	20,303	2,469,053	3,806	534,674
1824.....	19,164	2,364,249	5,280	694,880
1825.....	21,786	2,786,844	6,561	892,601

asks triumphantly " what ground of complaint can the British shipowner have? here within ten years it is true, Foreign shipping has increased 300,000 tons, but within the same period British shipping has been augmented by nearly a million?" I cannot blame the Reviewer; he took the *data* you had given him. Let me state one fact—this return comprises the *Irish shipping that entered the ports of Great Britain during these several years*. Can this be fair? Is it reasonable to call the Irish shipping any thing but a part of our coasting trade? Let us take it out of the estimate, and then we shall have for the number of ships and their tonnage that entered the ports of the United Kingdom for the following years :—

Years.	BRITISH.		FOREIGN.	
	Ships.	Tons.	Ships.	Tons.
1822..	11,087..	1,664,186.....	3,389..	469,151
1823..	11,271..	1,740,859.....	4,069..	582,996
1824..	11,733..	1,797,320.....	5,653..	759,441
1825..	13,517..	2,144,680.....	6,967..	958,050

This form of exhibiting the state of our shipping, presents a very different result from yours, and one, I apprehend from which a much fairer and more correct inference can be drawn. The foreign shipping has more than doubled during this period, while our own has only increased by one-fourth of the whole. At the beginning of this period the British was rather more than three times the foreign, at the end of it not quite double. Let me hope that you will hereafter endeavour to simplify the mass of obscure *data* which have usually been presented in the shape of Shipping Returns. One step is already made towards this, by considering as is done, for 1826, the Irish shipping entering the ports of Great Britain as coasters.



