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THE
Effects
OF THE
NEW SYSTEM OF FREE TRADE
UPON OUR
SHIPPING, COLONIES & COMMERCE,
EXPOSED,
IN A
LETTER
TO THE
RIGHT HON. W. HUSKISSON,
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE.
BY
S. ATKINSON, Esq.
OF LINCOLN'S INN.

London:

PUBLISHED BY JAMES RIDGWAY, PICCADILLY.

1827.

PRICE, 2s. 6d.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. W. HUSKISSON.

SIR,

THE progress of knowledge in the recent commercial revolution of this country, like the progress of liberty in France during her political revolution, has been an apology for the adoption of the wildest theories. In one instance, all the excesses of the populace, and all the atrocities of factious leaders, were hailed as the elements of a state of political perfection; in the other, every change has been characterized as the march of liberality, and the triumph of intellect over the prejudices of a barbarous age.

From whatever source these commercial theories originally sprang,—whoever may claim the credit of having discovered them,—their adoption into the commercial code of this country, is, no doubt, mainly to be ascribed to your own exertions. I have observed with much anxiety, the progress

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of your new system; and have felt, from its commencement, that it was a most hazardous innovation on the policy of our ancestors; I have watched with the most painful interest the course of calamity, which has been evolved from its operation, and have been long convinced that the new principles you have introduced into our navigation and colonial laws, must, sooner or later, be repealed by direct or annulled by indirect legislation. But for circumstances which have recently occurred, it was not my intention to have addressed you till I was in possession of all the official returns for the year 1826, by which any illustration could have been thrown on the character and tendency of your measures; for to this year, I have always looked as the period which would practically shew whether the measures you have recommended, did contain within themselves the elements of future wealth and prosperity—or whether, as I have always believed, they were only the harbingers of distress to all, and of ruin to many; of the most important interests of the empire. Whatever merit or demerit may finally be found to belong to these changes, you will unquestionably be entitled to a considerable share of the praise or dispraise which may attach to them. If they should be found to have materially promoted our country's welfare, you will merit, and will doubtless obtain the sincere and lasting gratitude of the country, and your name will pass down to posterity in association with Burleigh, and Chatham, and Pitt. If, on the other hand, they should be found to be a series of rash experiments, undertaken without forecast, and followed up without moderation—if, in the mean time, they should produce nothing but unmingled evil; and, in the end, should lay the foundation of the decadence of the national power and the national prosperity, you must be content to be placed amongst those ministers who, meaning well to their country, had the rashness and perseverance of enthusiasm, without the practical sagacity and penetration, which alone can render it useful.

The Order in Council, prohibiting the direct

trade between the United States and our West Indies, and the general tone of the negotiation which has since followed, indicate, as I am willing to hope, the return of better principles to the councils of the State. It appears to me to be just possible, that at the present moment his Majesty's Ministers may be hesitating as to whether or no they should any farther pursue that policy which they have recently adopted, and which has already produced so much mischief. At all events, it is quite certain that the present Session of Parliament will determine whether the liberal principles, so called, shall triumph over the ancient policy by which this country was governed, and under which it has risen to an unexampled degree of greatness and power.

In this state of hesitation and uncertainty, before you have completed your system by the overthrow of the landowners—while there is a possibility that the carrying trade with the West Indies, which the obstinacy of a party in the United States has opened to our shipowners, may be permanently secured to them—before the ruin of some of the most important branches of our carrying trade be fully accomplished—while there is still an opportunity, if not of retracing your measures, at all events of modifying their operation; and before the Legislature fairly sits down to confirm or abrogate your new commercial system, I have determined, at the hazard of impairing the force of my argument, to endeavour to draw your attention, and that of Parliament, to the operation of the recent changes in our colonial and navigation system, and more particularly to their effect on the carrying trade of Great Britain.

Those changes you have defended in a speech, admirable, I was going to say, for its eloquence; but undoubtedly, for its specious and cunning argument not surpassed in the whole history of parliamentary debating. As the exposition of a statesman, I have no hesitation in stating it to be in the highest degree imperfect and unsatisfactory—but as the harangue of a sophist, I would readily concede to it the most distinguished praise.

Probably no subject of paramount interest, much more one involving the existence of the British navy, ever excited so little attention within the walls of Parliament, as the alterations in our navigation laws. Posterity will scarcely believe the fact, that only eleven Members were in the House of Commons when you stood up to reply to the loud and unanimous remonstrances of the shipowners of Great Britain, to rebut the charges and the facts which they adduced, and to show to the country that our navy was not, as they asserted, falling headlong into ruin, but, that it was in a state of the highest prosperity, and daily progressing in its greatness and its might.

When you denounce a system out of which has grown the grandeur of England—when you propose a new policy which rests on no better foundation than the theories of men who have no knowledge of the world; whose writings teem with error; who condemn the work of all past ages, and dream about some future state of political perfectibility to spring up when all mankind shall adopt their dogmas—when you pass from a system about which the prosperity of our country is entwined, and venture on an ocean of untried speculation—when it is manifest, from the whole course of your career, that your mind leads you to a bold, enterprising spirit of reform, rather than to that deliberate and cautious consideration, so essential to the character of a British legislator—it becomes the duty of Parliament to sift your measures with vigilance, and to receive your changes with distrust. Giving to you, Sir, the most ample credit for sincerity of purpose, I, for one, hesitate not to declare my conviction, that such is the tendency of your mind,—whether that tendency may have sprung from the early events of your life, or whether from any subsequent acquaintance with the writings of the economists,—that the nation ought to regard with the keenest jealousy any amendments which you may propose in the ancient policy of the kingdom. It has unfortunately happened, that many of your most important changes have passed as it were *sub silentio*.

I need not remind you, that the new Navigation Act was hurried through the House at the close of the Session, and almost without a debate; and that the amendments it introduced were taken rather upon your authority, than on any deliberate discussion on the effects they might produce on our carrying trade and naval power, or their collateral effects on other branches of our complicated commercial relations.

That your views have met with much opposition among your colleagues in the Ministry, is, I believe, more than surmised by the public. That there are great differences of opinion amongst his Majesty's Ministers as to the policy of the measures you have recommended, and which claim their origin more immediately from yourself, I can state as a fact; and I speak from the very best authority, when I say that these differences have been matter of deep regret to yourself. I can name the individual—an individual to whom you have been much indebted for information in support of your views of commercial policy—to whom you have more than once declared how keenly you felt, and how sincerely you deplored, the opposition you had experienced in the Cabinet.

In former times, when England was governed by men who had English feelings and English prepossessions, before the cant of philosophy, and the leaven of the French revolution had infected the councils of the State, it was always a leading object with the British Government to keep up, in time of peace, a large body of able seamen. With this view, the inhabitants of the metropolis were compelled to import, coast-wise, from Newcastle, the coals which they could have been supplied with at a much cheaper rate from the inland counties. With the same view, Parliament gave bounties to the ships trading to the fisheries, which you, Sir, and your colleagues, have thought fit to put an end to, in deference to that notion of our Political Economists, that all bounties are bad. With the same object in view, bounties were formerly given on the importation of masts, timber, deals, &c., from the British Colonies in North America; and subse-

quently, in the same spirit, that trade was encouraged by imposing protecting duties on timber imported from the Baltic.

The *Fisheries* and the *Coal and Timber Trade* have always furnished the great nursery for our seamen. These branches of our navigation have been cultivated and protected as a means of national defence, and the mere question of cheapness has merged in considerations of national security. The Ministers of former times held all these great interests sacred: they regarded them as the ark of our safety, and guarded and protected them with unceasing vigilance.

If we estimate the relative value of these three great branches of the carrying-trade by the amount of tonnage they severally employ, the most important is, doubtless, the **TIMBER** trade; and to that, therefore, I shall first call your attention. A series of legislative measures, beginning with the act for the alteration of the timber duties, and terminating with the "Reciprocity of Duties Act," have laid the foundation for the speedy annihilation of the **British** carrying-trade in timber. The first blow which was aimed at the prosperity of the shipping interests, was the Act of Parliament passed for the alteration of the timber duties. This measure was opposed in the House of Commons, in one of the ablest speeches ever delivered in that assembly, by the late Mr. Marryatt, a gentleman whom I never had the pleasure of knowing personally, but whose memory I revere for the bold and manly part he took on one of the most important questions ever agitated by a British Parliament, for his solid view of the real interests of this country, and for the ability with which he supported it. The proposed alterations, notwithstanding his able argument, passed into a law. Let me state in passing that the object of that act was partly to conciliate a hostile feeling that had grown up against us in the North of Europe, because we chose to import our timber from our North American possessions; and partly to encourage our commerce with those countries. It was, in fact, the first free trade experiment,

and was first suggested by the then President of the Board of Trade, on the presenting of the memorable petition of the London merchants by Mr. Baring—a petition which those who framed and those who presented it, have alike lived to regret. The act was meant to encourage our trade with the Baltic; and for this purpose a duty of 10s. the load was imposed on all timber imported from Canada,* upon which there had been previously no duty at all. This was a pretty strong check on the growth of our North American timber trade, which, from that moment, has been attended with heavy loss, and last year with utter ruin. We know to what expedients they have been driven—the great ships the *Columbus* and the *Baron of Renfrew* were built for the mere purpose of being brought to this country and broken up; and this would have answered very well, if Government had permitted their timber to be imported duty-free. The peril, however, of such immense masses traversing the Atlantic, was very great; the *Columbus* was lost on her return, and the *Baron of Renfrew* never reached the Thames. No attempt of this kind is likely again to be tried. Our North American Colonists cannot compete with the Baltic merchants; and as the expedient of importing large ships has failed, they have no alternative but that of submitting to the gradual decay of their trade. This was a part of the **Timber Duties' Act**, and these its effects. Another part consisted in reducing the duties on Baltic timber imported in Foreign and British ships—the duty on timber imported in Baltic ships had been 68s. a load, which was reduced to 57s. 9d., and that imported in British ships, which had been 65s. the load, was reduced to 55s. In other words, there was a reduction of 10s. per load on Baltic timber, whether imported in British or foreign ships.

I am perfectly aware of the ground on which these alterations in the timber duties were justified. Our exports to Prussia, Norway, &c. had fallen off considerably, and it was with a view of restoring their

* Canada, as being the most important of our North American possessions, is generally used in the following pages, as designating the whole of them.

former amount, that this alteration in the timber duties was made. But it seems to have been entirely forgotten, that if we took timber from the Baltic, we should not take it also from Canada; and that if exports to the former increased, those to the latter must decrease.

The cost of timber when it reaches this country arises principally from the duty and charges of conveyance, and therefore had we taken care to secure to ourselves the carrying-trade of the timber from the Baltic, the mischief would have been much less. It has been said, that the timber called Canada timber is to a certain extent supplied from the States. Admitting that some of it comes from their side of the boundary, they receive only the prime cost. We still secure to ourselves the commission at Quebec, the cost of transport on the St. Lawrence, and freight and commission in England; and if the forest owners of the Baltic would allow us all the advantages of labor, commission, and transport, we might not begrudge them the first cost.

From whatever country we obtain our timber, it is of the very last importance that we should ourselves have the conveyance of it. If we import it from Canada, we can assure ourselves of three things—first, the exclusive conveyance of it to British shipping; second, that it will be paid for in British manufactures; and third, that this trade will very greatly add to the prosperity of these Colonies. If we import our timber from the Baltic, we may be quite as sure of the following facts:—that a very great part of it must be paid for in specie; that by far the greatest part of it will be imported in foreign ships; and that Canada will be deprived of all encouragement in its staple produce. So long as your reciprocity treaties are in force, and the present duty on Canada timber is continued, it is quite clear that the greatest part of our timber will be imported from the Baltic in foreign bottoms. Is it wise, is it consistent with the permanence of our naval power, that such a state of things should exist?

I will venture to predict, however, that this is a state of things which cannot long continue. There is, I verily believe, enough of pa-

triotism in the country, in despite of modern fashions, to cling to our ancient means of defence, and to enforce the measures by which these means shall be preserved in their original vigour. We need no longer look to the Baltic; that source of employment is melting away like snow before a mid-day sun. But, thank God, we have yet a resource unfettered by treaty. Repeal, abrogate the duty on Canada timber; cast off that odious, that impolitic burthen, and the equilibrium will be restored. Employment will be furnished for British shipowners, a nursery will be found for British seamen, encouragement will be given to the industry and prosperity of our North American possessions, and a due check will be thrown in the way of the growth of the shipping of Northern Europe.

The rapid falling off of British shipping, and the rapid increase of foreign in the Baltic trade, is not matter of inference merely—it is matter of plain indisputable fact—of which you were, or ought to have been in possession, when you made your *exposé* to the House—which it was a great dereliction of duty to withhold from the country. The following statements will put this matter of fact beyond all question:—

At the commencement of this year, the rate of freight from the Pomeranian ports to Liverpool was about 40s. per last; they possessed sufficient shipping for the demand, and on such terms, British shipping, as you are aware, could not compete with them. Accordingly, we find that in the month of August,

14 British
57 Foreign

vessels entered Liverpool from these ports! Since the failure of our crops was ascertained, and supplies of foreign corn anticipated, increased importations have taken place; and Prussian ships not being to be had in sufficient numbers, it became necessary to employ British, and freight advanced from 40s. to 60s. 70s. and 80s. per last—such rates being barely

a remuneration to British shipowners, while they leave an immense profit to the foreign, and have given vast impulse to ship-building in the ports of the North of Europe.

This, Sir, is one specimen of what we may expect, when our ports are opened to foreign corn. You have always held out, as one great inducement to a change in the Corn Laws, that we should thus secure the whole of the carrying trade which it would produce. As soon, Sir, as the Prussians can supply the quantity of tonnage necessary for that purpose, and that the capitals which they are rapidly acquiring by their trade to this country will enable them to do, the British shipowners will not have the carrying of a single quarter.

During the five weeks that preceded the 31st of July, there entered inwards at Liverpool,

18 British vessels,
72 Foreign do.

and there cleared outwards, during the same period,

14 British vessels,
69 Foreign do.

So much for the port of Liverpool. I will next take the port of Hull; and I find, that from the 1st of Jan. to the 13th of April, 1825, there entered

217 British 32,892 tons,
263 Foreign 24,487 tons.

But that during the same period for the year 1826, there entered

90 British 10,694 tons,
204 Foreign 17,000 tons.

I will now present for your meditation, from the Reports of the Customs, a comparative view of the tonnage to the port of London, from the Baltic, wood-loaded:—

For the year 1824, 93,116 British.
155,218 Foreign.
For the year 1825, 110,931 British.
159,108 Foreign.
To 29th Oct. 1286, 30,275 British.
63,314 Foreign.

From whence it appears, that in the year 1824 and 1825, the foreign shipping employed in the timber trade was, to the British as about 3 to 2; but that in the year 1826, the foreign had increased so rapidly, as to be double of ours.

The more minute, Sir, and extensive our inquiries are, the more strongly and unequivocally do they lead to the conclusion, that British shipping is falling off with a rapidity that cannot fail to inspire the utmost alarm. It is quite manifest, that unless the most prompt and decided remedies be resorted to, the whole of the Baltic carrying trade, except part of our trade with Russia, will be lost to us. A great and powerful navy will rise up among our rivals, familiar with our own shores, while we ourselves shall become strangers to the navigation of the German and Baltic seas. Has the mania of universal citizenship so seized possession of your mind as to induce a belief, that we shall be at perpetual peace with these warlike nations of the north? Can you be so blind to all past history as to harbour an opinion so inconsistent with it? Do you believe that by benefits, conferred at the expense of national sacrifices we shall ever be able to smother their hostility, or conciliate their permanent friendship? Sir, you may believe it, the disciples of Bentham may believe it; the disciples of M'Culloch may believe it; the Society of Political Economists may believe it; but I never will, nor will any Englishman who entertains a just view of the means which are necessary for the defence of the Empire. I know, Sir, and so does every one who is acquainted with mankind and the world, that England can secure peace from her neighbours only when she can command it. Our green fields, our gardens, our palaces spread over the land, our cities, our harbours, our bays, have been and always will be the prey at which the national cupidity of Europe will aim, when it dares to lift a finger against us.

“We are told,” say you, “by most of the petitioners, and figures are adduced to prove the statement, that Prussian ships are sent to sea and

“ navigated at less than half the expence of British ships.” Why, Sir, have you not adduced figures to disprove this statement? I wish, I most honestly and sincerely wish, that it had been in your power so to do. Either you can, or you cannot, rebut these statements. If you can, it was a duty you owed to yourself and the country, to have given that full and ample reply of which you were in possession—if you cannot, it was your duty to acknowledge to the country, that you had negotiated treaties of reciprocity without having computed the consequences of them.

But let me ask you, has this great influx of foreign shipping into our harbours and basins carried back any considerable portion of our manufactures? On this point the testimony from every port of the United Kingdom is uniform and consistent. Instead of taking back our manufactures in exchange for their cargoes, the greater part of them have been paid for in specie, and returned in ballast. From the port of Hull in particular, there has been an immense diminution of the exports to the Baltic; the same is in a greater or less degree true of every other port.

There is one part of your speech on the Navigation Laws so pregnant with erroneous and defective allegation, that I feel myself called on to step aside from the gradual development of my argument to give a brief analysis of it. The passage is as follows:—

“ The timber trade with Norway has, at all times, been carried on chiefly in the ships of that country. They are built for the purpose, *in the cheapest manner, but so rudely constructed, as to be unfit for the conveyance of almost any other article.* (1) In respect to the Prussian timber ships, they are also of a construction very inferior to the shipping of this country, built for the purpose of general trade. We are told by most of the petitioners, and figures are adduced to prove the statements, that they are sent to sea and navigated at less than one-half of the expense of British ships. If it be so, the restoration of the discriminating duty, to the repeal of which these petitioners attribute all their present diffi-

culties, would be of little avail to protect them. (2)—That protection was 2s. 9d. upon a load of timber, being the difference between 57s. 9d., the duty in a foreign, and 55s., the duty in a British ship, exclusive of some difference on account of lower port charges, and light money paid by the British ship. (3) Against this advantage, therefore, in our ports, was to be set off the alien duty of 3s. 1½d. a ton, imposed on British ships in the Prussian ports, whether with a cargo or in ballast. The balance, therefore, on our side would be next to nothing—totally inadequate, upon the shewing of the petitioners, as protection; but, just enough to excite irritation, and to afford a pretence for vexatious restrictions on British commerce, and the introduction of British manufactures into the Prussian dominions. It has also been stated by some of the petitioners, that ship-building in this country is rendered more expensive by taxes on the materials, from which other countries are exempt. *I am not aware, that, in the petition from the Shipping Interest of the port of London, praying for a continuance of the discriminating duties, the Petitioners urge the direct taxation upon the materials employed in ship-building, as a ground of complaint.* (4)—It has been alleged, that the Americans build their ships upon cheaper terms than we do. This I do not believe. Timber, I admit, is cheaper in the United States, but almost every other article employed in the ship-building is as dear as, and several of them dearer than, in this country. Labour likewise is dearer, and the pay of the crew full as high as, if not higher than, in England. (5)

You will perceive that certain passages are printed in Italics—it is to these that I wish particularly to call your attention, according to the order in which I have numbered them.

(1) You describe Norwegian shipping as being of the very worst possible description, as being in fact just sea-worthy, and nothing more. How do you estimate the quality of a ship? I should estimate the quality of a merchant ship by her capacity for stowage and her durability, and I do not think that you

can find any better test. In endeavouring to ascertain these points it will be necessary for me to travel back a little, and recall to your memory the struggle between the Board of Trade and the ship owners. When it was first determined to alter the timber duties, the ship owners asserted that the Prussians, &c. could build and navigate at half the cost of the British; this was denied by the Board of Trade, and a long and minute investigation took place, the result of which was a complete corroboration of the statement of the ship owners, viz.—that these Powers could navigate much cheaper than we can. Driven from this ground, you were under the necessity of taking up another position; and it was asserted “that the vessels built in the ports of the North of Europe, though cheaper at first cost, are wanting in durability, and therefore ultimately as expensive as British-built ships.” To settle this point, there appeared to be no fairer mode than to open Lloyd’s register book at random, and to abstract in succession, as they stood, the first twenty ships of the following countries, viz:—England, Prussia, Sweden, Russia, and Norway. This was done, and it was found that the average duration of English ships was eleven years, three months; and of Norweigan, twenty years and four months,—the other countries being intermediate; this was a result altogether unexpected, and of the very last importance in this inquiry, inasmuch as it not only refuted the superior durability of English shipping, but proved them to be the least durable of the whole! While the Norweigan, which is the cheapest and had been considered in quality almost worthless, was actually proved to last longer than any other, and to exceed that of British shipping by nearly double the time. This ground failing it was next asserted, that owing to the difference in the mode of measurement, a British ship of 300 tons would contain as much tonnage as a foreign ship of 450 tons, and that therefore their actual cost of building and navigating was thus equalized. A reference was made, to the most experienced ship-brokers, and it was found that whatever force this argument might have, as applied to French and

American shipping, it had no application to the vessels of the North of Europe, which were stated, on competent evidence, to stow larger cargoes in general than British-built vessels, according to their nominal tonnage.

Here, then, you see we have it on evidence that cannot be impeached, and on facts that have never been refuted, that for durability the Norwegian and Prussian much exceed our own, and their capacity for stowage is at least as good. I may add that they are equally good sailers; for it was a point of enquiry in the same investigation to ascertain what difference there might be in the number of *repeated* voyages between our own shipping and that of the North of Europe, and the most careful enquiry could not discover any.

So much for the value of this part of your statement.

(2) The ship-owners have never “attributed all their present difficulties to the repeal of the discriminating duty;” nor have they ever contended that “a restoration of the discriminating duty would be adequate as a protection.” What they have stated was this,—that the repeal of the discriminating duties aggravated a case which was already bad, but they always contended that the great blow which struck at the carrying-trade was the alteration in the timber duties: this was the first blow, and the repeal of the discriminating duties was one of a series, which in various degrees injured their interests. I will give you the history of the whole matter in their own words, which must over and over again have been presented to your consideration. “The alteration in the timber duties struck the first important blow at the principle of protection on which the very existence of British shipping depends; the new Navigation Act proceeded another step towards its subversion; the Warehouse-Act followed in the same track; and the Reciprocity of Duties Act appears to put the seal to the declaration, that to the future policy of this country, naval pre-eminence is to be considered subordinate to the encouragement of foreign commerce.”*

* Statement of the proceedings of the Special Committee of

(3) By the manner in which you here advert to the differences in port charges and light money, one would suppose it was a mere trifle—"some differences," but at all events of such small amount as not to deserve notice. I wish, therefore, to call your attention to the comparative charges on Baltic timber, in the years 1824 and 1826, on a vessel, say of 294 tons:—

CHARGES ON A VESSEL OF 294 TONS.

	1824.			1826.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Port duty, 4d. per ton	4	18	0	4	18	0
Trinity Dues, 2d.	2	9	0	0	0	0
Lights	16	3	0	8	8	9
Pilotage Inwards and outwards	26	19	0	19	7	3
Ballast	7	18	4	6	5	0
	<hr/>			<hr/>		
	£	58	7 4	38	19	0

Being a difference of £19 8 4
or 1s. per load in a cargo of timber, and consequently the discriminating duty was actually 3s. 9d. instead of 2s. 9d.*

(4) I have only farther to observe, that your memory fails you when you state your belief, that the Shipping Interest in the Port of London had not urged the direct taxation upon the materials employed in ship-building, as a ground of complaint. Here, Sir, is the proof: "Your petitioners trust also, that such will be the conviction of your Honourable House, when you take into your consideration that the British ship-owner is subject to heavy duties on some of the most important articles used in the construction and equipment of his ships,

Shipowners appointed to oppose the adoption of the principle of admitting foreign vessels to trade with this kingdom on the same terms as British ships.

* Is it a fact that you still continue to indemnify the owners of private light-houses and pilots, for the reduced rates now charged to foreign ships? I know that several thousand pounds have been paid out of the British Treasury for this purpose. Upon what grounds of justice or expediency can such expenditure of the public money be vindicated?

"&c. &c."* I do not mention this point as being of any importance, since the shipowners have long declared, and you must be aware of the truth of the fact, that no repeal of direct taxation on the materials of ship-building would be sufficient to enable them to compete with the navigators of the North of Europe.

(5) The concluding allegations of the passage I have cited, and which deny that the Americans can build cheaper than ourselves, does not appear to me to have the smallest reference to this part of your argument. The question in this place is not, whether the Americans build cheaper than ourselves, but whether the Baltic shipowners do? Your observations, I would say, therefore, were entirely irrelevant to the matter in hand. In respect, however, to the proposition that you have advanced, namely, that "the Americans do not build cheaper than we do," I would ask you how it has happened that in the trade between Great Britain and the United States, six parts out of seven are carried on in American bottoms; that they employ one hundred & eighty thousand tons of shipping, while we have only about thirty thousand. There must be some cause for this effect. You are old enough to remember when the balance inclined the other way. What is it then, I would ask you, that has kicked the beam? Without going into any details, I have no hesitation in stating, that it is precisely the same cause which in a few years will shew a similar balance against us in the shipping of France and the Northern states of Europe.

These misrepresentations may not have been intentional. I do not mean to charge them as such; but they are not a whit the less misrepresentations. You may have erred for want of attention, or for want of enquiry; but then I ask, are the great interests of the country to be meddled with—are principles to be abandoned and laws to be abrogated, from which in all times past, by every class of the community, and in our own by all the practical classes of the community, our prosperity and greatness are supposed to have originated?

* Petition of the Shipowners of the Port of London to the House of Commons.

I say, are these changes to be made by a Minister, who in the most common and familiar details concerning them, shows himself to be entirely ignorant or misinformed? and who has proved himself to be incapable of bearing in his mind the multiplied details and reciprocal relations involved in any change of these laws, or any modification of these principles?

The next branch of our trade to which I wish to direct your attention is the state of our Foreign FISHERIES. You dismiss this important subject by merely stating, "that in the laws for the encouragement and protection of our Fisheries no change whatever has been made."—When I hear such a statement made by a British Minister, I feel at a loss in what manner to reply to it. I fear to trust myself to that strong language which an allegation so specious, yet so deceptive, would induce me to employ. I am astonished that a public servant could have been found to stand up in his place and make a statement, which in its literal import, I admit to be true; but which is, in substance and in spirit, entirely false. If, Sir, the fisheries have, within the last three years, rapidly fallen towards a state of ruin and decay, it matters not whether it has been effected by direct or indirect legislation. If you withdraw the protection which was formerly given to these fisheries, and if you admit foreign oils into competition with that produced by these fisheries, you do as effectually interfere with the operation of our navigation acts, as if you had introduced a clause admitting the fishing vessels of the Northern states of Europe.

You assert, that no changes have been made in our Navigation Laws, as they respected our fisheries. I say that practically a great and most important change has been made, and I state it thus:—

"1st. By taking away the bounties which were formerly given to the Greenland, Davies' Straits, and Southern fisheries." This bounty amounted to about one-fifth of the expenses of the voyage, and saved the owner from total loss, if his ship came home clean, and enabled him to sell her oil cheaper if she came home full.

This trade, you must be aware, is of that distant and perilous character, and liable to so many accidents, that without the encouragement of bounties, no prudent man would hazard his capital in it.—Perhaps you may tell me, that it has flourished among the enterprising citizens of the United States, without these bounties. I readily admit that it has; but I must remind you of the difference of situation: the British shipowner has to traverse nearly 4,000 miles of difficult navigation before he reaches the scene of action, whereas it lies at the very doors of the American. This makes a distinction which I think is entitled to your consideration, and shews at once the reason and the necessity for special protection.

Since the bounty was withdrawn, the shipping employed in the Greenland and Davies' Straits fishery has diminished annually, by about one-fourth; last year, not more than 95 vessels were employed in them, though in the preceding year there were nearly 130 vessels in that trade; and it is quite clear, unless prompt and decisive measures be taken for redeeming this trade from ruin, that it will scarcely have an existence in the course of a few years.

2d. By imposing a duty on oil imported from Newfoundland, which was formerly admitted free—and by a variety of minor regulations for facilitating the introduction of foreign oils.

"3d. By reducing the duty on rape-seed from one which was prohibitory, to one which is merely nominal," you have brought rape oil into the market, to the almost total exclusion of sperm oil; and consequently to the total ruin of that part of our fishing-vessels which were employed in procuring this species of oil.

And this might teach you the danger of meddling with the ancient laws of the realm. Without shutting the doors to amelioration, it might warn you how necessary it was cautiously to avoid any sweeping regulations. I have no doubt, when you made the reduction of duty on rape-seed, you were not in the least aware, that by a side-wind, you were inflicting an injury on our fisheries. You found rape-

seed, among a great number of articles of foreign production, subject to a heavy duty, and without very minutely enquiring into the reason of that high duty, you reduced it at once from 10l. to 10s. the last.

With a singular infelicity, the time you took for thus interfering with our fisheries, was at the close of a long war, during which they had enjoyed a monopoly, and they were beginning to feel the foreign rivalry that had sprung up at the return of peace. It was just at that time, when by a singular combination of chemical science, capital, and enterprise, all the principal towns of the empire were beginning to be lighted with gas, and when, consequently, a vast reduction had taken place in the demand for whale oil. Had these changes taken place at a time when the demand was so great that our own fisheries were incompetent to the supply; and if it had so happened, also, that our fisheries were in so flourishing a condition that they wanted to be checked rather than to be impelled in their career of prosperity—then, perhaps, there would have been less ground for complaint and remonstrance against your measures. But the very time you took for these measures, was one of great depression—it was a period when a British statesman, anxious to protect and encourage the nurseries of our seamen, would have redoubled all the protecting cares of the government.

The Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries were at no distant period our own peculiar right, privilege, and possession. It is a fact as notorious as noon-day, that they are now almost entirely engrossed by the Americans. I ask you, Sir, how this has happened? As effects do not come without causes—as so vast and important an interest could not have changed hands without some agreement, some treaty, convention, or order in council, there must have been a change—a fundamental change in the laws which relate to our fisheries,—or in the means by which this trade was formerly regulated and protected—or, finally, there must be something unsound and retrogressive in our whole system of commerce and industry—and the statement which you made

to the House of Commons must be either erroneous or defective.

We all of us know the character of brother Jonathan. Where once he gets a footing, he soon expels every competitor. He has not yet quite driven us from our fisheries, but he sends annually upwards of 4000 vessels to Newfoundland and Labrador, and employs 50,000 seamen in this trade; and although we are the resident fishermen, we are outnumbered, and bearded on our own shores by the Americans.

In meditating, Sir, on this astounding fact, which I state on the most unquestionable authority, I was for some time at a loss to explain it. How could such a vast rival trade have grown up among our own Fisheries? How did it happen that the number of men we employed, and the trade we carried on among these very fisheries, was comparatively so very trifling? Had it taken its rise from any extension of privilege to the Americans? I turned to the last convention,* by which their rights to fish in our waters are regulated, and I could not discover, on the whole, that they had gained much by it.

The cause, then, of this great ascendancy of the American Fisheries, was to be sought in some other quarter, and a very little reflection and research convinced me that the cause was neither remote nor obscure. Men do not grow corn which they cannot consume nor sell—so neither will they frequent the freezing cold, and dense fog of the banks of Newfoundland to catch fish, unless they have a market where they can dispose of it. Here, Sir, lies the whole secret.

The United States, as I shall shew more in detail in the sequel, has always had the principal supply of the markets of the West Indies with corn, timber, fish, &c. In this market she has had recently a sort of competition from our North American possessions. But the United States, from their older connection with the West Indies, and from their more extensive establishments, and a variety of facilities arising from their locality, have always had the main

* Convention between Great Britain and the United States, signed at London, Oct. 20, 1818.

supply of the articles wanted by the latter, and, of course, among others, that of fish. Another great market for this article is Brazil; and of this also the United States have the almost entire possession, and for this very plain reason, that not being fettered by Colonial regulations, she can take in return for her cargoes sugar, and a variety of other articles, which the British are obliged to receive from the West Indies. You have, however, yourself placed the nature of this trade in so clear a light, that I cannot better make myself understood than by using your own words. After stating that as far as relates to the procuring the fish, and preparing them for a foreign market, the British fishermen and those of the United States are, perhaps, upon an equality, you proceed:—"But now let us follow them to that market, we will say the Brazils, one of the best and most extensive. Each party, it is true, has there an equal facility for selling her cargo; but the cargo once disposed of, the inequality commences—the citizen of the United States can take in return any of the productions of the Brazils, and proceed with them either to his own country or any other part of the world; and in the latter case, bartering them away again for the productions of some other country, finally return to his own.—Not so the Nova Scotian. Many of the staple productions of Brazil (sugar for instance) are not admissible in the British provinces of North America. He may take these productions, it is true, to the ports of foreign Europe with as much facility as his neighbour; but then, again, if he procure a loading from these ports, he cannot return home with his cargo, because it is not admissible in his own country, except directly from Great Britain."*

The United States, then, have the supply of South America and Europe, from the greater part of which we are in effect excluded. They have, also, the principal supply of our West Indies, a market of which we should have had the exclusive command, if we had possessed a Government as anxi-

* Speech on our Colonial policy, delivered in the House of Commons on the 21st March, 1825.

ous to protect our own commerce and industry, as it has shewn itself to be in extending those of our rivals. If you release the West Indies from taking the products of Canada, and of its adjoining seas, release us as well as Canada from taking the rum and sugar of the West Indies. If you relax one part of the system, relax also the rest. Be consistent—do not tie up our arms, and loosen those of our rivals. Do not give to foreigners the power to despoil us of our treasures; while you deprive us even of the ordinary encouragement to commercial enterprize. If we receive the sugar and rum of the West Indies, to the exclusion of those of Louisiana, or Brazil, by every principle of reciprocity, or fair trading, they ought to take from us their supply of fish, or whatever else we can furnish.

It is no marvel that in such a state of things our fisheries are in a state of decay and ruin. Instead of promoting the free circulation of the products and industry of Great Britain and her dependencies, among each other, the whole tendency of your measures has been to open out avenues from whence our wealth might flow, to enrich foreign countries, and leave the several parts of our empire, and the several branches of our own industry, in a state of exhaustion and stagnation.

I think I have now pretty well accounted for the extraordinary growth of the fisheries of the United States; and from the explanation I have given, it appears to me that we have the remedy in our own hands, if we have a Government energetic enough to put it in force.

I wish you, I wish the Parliament, I wish the country to bear in mind, that fifty thousand American seamen are nursed on the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador; familiar with every rock and quicksand in that difficult navigation—impenetrable to cold—unweariable by labour—their muscular arms strong as iron, and their weather-beaten skins as hard as leather. These 50,000 seamen scattered through the American navy, will present a fearful phalanx in the event of another war—an event, neither improbable, nor in all likelihood, very distant.

The *Coal Trade*—the boasted coal trade of England, the great nursery of our seamen, has suffered a portion of that withering influence which the free-trade measures have inflicted on all the great interests of the empire.—This trade, like all those which our ancestors held to be essential to the protection of our staple manufactures, or the maintenance of our navy, was preserved to ourselves by duties which operated as a prohibition.—This trade, which formerly constituted one of the great features of our policy, does not employ more than 10,000 seamen—and even this remnant of what it was, you no longer hold to be worthy of protection. To all those countries with which you have concluded “reciprocity treaties,” *the over-sea duty on coals is the same in foreign as in British ships.* I do confess, it appears to me perfectly marvellous, that a British Ministry, sanctioned by a British Parliament, could have so bartered away the support of national industry—could have so undermined the very pillars of the national safety. Was there no one in the House of Commons to raise his indignant remonstrance against the folly of a ministry, which was selling the “inheritance of the country for a mess of pottage?”

When the Northern States of Europe concluded these treaties, they knew that they were securing to themselves the exclusive carrying of timber, and of the carrying of corn also, if ever a period arrived when the landowners of England should be cajoled into a free trade in corn. You might at least have stipulated for the exclusive carrying of coal in British ships, at the time you were granting them so great a boon. But possibly you may tell me, that in treaties professing to be of perfect reciprocity, any exception of that kind would have been inconsistent with their spirit—would have had too much the resemblance of national selfishness. Let me state however, that these treaties furnish an example of the exception I am speaking of. Sweden imports a considerable quantity of salt from us, and that is the only heavy article she does import from us; and in these treaties, of per-

fect reciprocity, her minister stipulated as to the only article in which we might have become their rivals, that they should have the exclusive carrying of it.

Let me pass from discussion to matter of fact—Let me request you to bestow your most serious consideration on the following short statement—and if you be yet capable of abstracting your attention from the brilliant theories of the economists, let me beg of you to ponder over and over again, the gradual decrease of British, and the gradual increase of foreign ships, that have cleared out of the port of Newcastle, laden with cargoes, for the ports of Europe, north of France—that is to say, for those ports where our reciprocity treaties are in force,—for the [three years during which those treaties have been in partial or complete operation:—there were

	British.	Foreign.
For the year 1823,	290	166
1824,	245	332
1825,	255	449

This, is a statement which requires no illustration of mine. It is a tolerable home thrust at the new system. It stands in place of all the argument that ever was or ever will be pronounced within the walls of St. Stephen's chapel, or elsewhere, in favour of liberality or reciprocity.

If, Sir, we have a government capable of perceiving the fatal consequences which must follow on this state of things,—that government, if it yet retains one particle of British feeling, will instantly, without any delay, put an end to a system so ruinous to British interests, so perilous to the security of the British empire. But if, Sir, the Government be blind to these consequences—if, either they will not or cannot see the wreck and ruin they have made—if they have not the courage to avow their errors, and the integrity to repair them—and if, withal, they can still maintain their places in the national council, why then I see no other alternative but contemplating in peace the destruction of our national industry and resources, and the annihilation of our external means of defence.

If you be able to contemplate the effects, which I have been tracing, with satisfaction or indifference, I honestly confess that I cannot. I candidly own that my sympathies are more warmly excited for my own country, and my fellow citizens, than for any other country, or any other part of mankind. I do not wish to see the crust of bread taken from the mouth of the English labourer, or the English seaman, and put into the hands of a foreigner. I do not wish to see the flag of the foreigner floating proudly in our harbours, while our own ships are rotting, and our own seamen strolling idly among the wreck of our own mercantile navy. I am too much of an Englishman, and too little of a general citizen, to look either with satisfaction or apathy on this decay of the ancient and peculiar resources of the country. I have no objection to other nations becoming wealthy and industrious, like ourselves, but I cannot calmly see them come into our fields, and gather the harvest that we have sown at so much cost and toil.

Had there been any paramount irresistible necessity for this change of situation—had it been forced upon us by events which we could neither control nor oppose—had we by some vast revolution been hurled from our lofty rank among living empires, why then it would have been our duty to submit patiently to a change which we could not prevent.

Unless some means be devised whereby employment may be found for British shipping, it is clear as daylight that British ship-owners will become Prussian and American ship-owners. If they cannot employ their capital in navigating British ships, manned by British seamen, they will employ it in navigating foreign ships, manned by foreign seamen. No greater evil, I think you yourself will admit, could befall the interests of our navigation. To see our rivers and basins covered by foreign ships, put in motion by British capital, is a spectacle which could be gratifying to no one, except, perhaps, the political economists and the advocates of universal brotherhood.

Hitherto it has been the pride and the boast of Englishmen, that the mercantile navies which re-

posed within our harbours, or floated in our rivers, were owned by Englishmen, navigated by Englishmen, and employed in carrying the produce of English industry. Woe betide us, when this picture shall be reversed, when England shall be converted into a workshop, and her manufactures shall be carried by the foreigner!

For my own part, I am free to state that I think England is already too much of a workshop. I think we have already enough of those vast prisons, called factories, with the half-starved, and half-naked population that they feed. I should be glad to see the extension of our manufactures somewhat less an object of the exclusive care of Government. Hitherto they have helped no doubt, on the one hand, to swell the revenue largely, and to accumulate a small number of immense private fortunes; but on the other they have been the means of placing the country, several times within a few years, on the very verge of rebellion and civil war. The misery that they create, even in times of their prosperity, is immense; but during their depression it is incalculable. I could wish to see a part of these people turned to other pursuits. Our fisheries, both foreign and domestic, under due management and protection, would afford an immense field of employment—emigration to our Colonies, and the healthy pursuits of agriculture, would afford another still more exhaustless. In a word, I could wish to see our population more employed in tilling the earth, and bringing forth the riches of the ocean, and less in whisking about a shuttle, and converting cotton gossamer into cloth; I could wish to see the bulk of the population more employed in getting at the means which support and less in the arts which merely decorate the body. In short, Sir, I do not wish to see every interest in the empire made subservient to the promotion of our foreign commerce.

In contemplating the effects which are likely to result from the turn which the Baltic timber trade has taken, I shall draw your attention for one moment to its effects in checking emigration.—I do not err, I believe, when I state it to be the

most anxious wish of the Government, to give every facility to emigration,—that all his Majesty's Ministers are fully convinced of the benefit and relief that would result from extensive emigration to our North American possessions,—and that the only difference of opinion among them is how far they would be justified in employing the proceeds of the revenue for that purpose. This, then, being the clear conviction of his Majesty's Government, it does appear to me that they could not have seen their way very distinctly when they negotiated treaties with the Northern powers of Europe, the immediate effect of which was to diminish the means of employment in our American colonies.—At a time when emigration was thought so advantageous, it surely would have been a wise policy to encourage their industry by every means consistent with the general welfare of the state. It is a hard matter for our population to starve at home for want of employment, but it would be harder still to send them out to starve among the wilds of Canada, from the same cause. To encourage emigration to Canada, at the same time that you reduce the demand for its industry, is a deed of double injustice—it is an act alike injurious to those you may send, as to those who are already settled there.

The Canada shipbuilders are in a state of absolute ruin. Ships that cost 15l. a ton, are now selling at from 6l. to 9l. a ton. Many that were commenced building last year, are still on the stocks, and others have been abandoned, after an expense of 600l. or 700l. had been incurred—the St. George, a new ship, built by the Canada Shipbuilding Company, and which cost 19l. a ton, was sold in the Thames the other day at 9 guineas. But it were needless to specify instances, of which I could name hundreds—the result of the whole is, that new ships of the finest build are selling at half their prime cost.

Having passed with a minuteness of detail which may be wearisome, (but which I thought due to the importance of the subject I have been discussing.) over three of the principal branches of our foreign shipping trade,—I shall now take a rapid view of that trade in its aggregate. And here, Sir, I shall not

trouble you much with argument or remark: but merely lay before you official returns of so legible a character, as to spare me the necessity for comment or explanation.

You are ingenious, and sometimes eloquent, but neither sophistry nor rhetoric can do away the evidence of facts. To leave you no room for complaint, I shall confine myself to the last three years, being the period during which your system has been in partial or complete operation. I find, then, that the total amount of shipping employed in our trade with the United States was,

	British.	Foreign.
In the year 1823 . . .	61,074 . . .	153,453
1824 . . .	43,892 . . .	132,618
1825 . . .	37,852 . . .	181,033

So that here, within three years, the British tonnage, which at the beginning of that period, was one-third of the American, at the close of it is only one-sixth—and within that period, British tonnage has diminished by 30,000 tons, or one half of the whole, while the American has increased by the same quantity.

Let us now turn our attention to the Northern States of Europe: and, first, to our trade with Sweden. I find that there was in this trade,

	British.	Foreign.
For the year 1823 . . .	20,823 . . .	21,080
1824 . . .	16,895 . . .	38,612
1825 . . .	15,511 . . .	52,166

Thus, within this period, the foreign shipping from Sweden (the greatest part undoubtedly Swedish) has been nearly tripled, while the British has fallen off one-fourth. At the beginning of that period, the British and Foreign were about equal to each other; at the end of it, the foreign had accumulated so rapidly, as nearly to quadruple ours!

The other states of Europe, with the exception of Prussia, an exception to which I shall presently call your attention, present similar effects, varying more or less in degree; but the result for the whole of Europe is a considerable proportionate diminution of

British tonnage. Thus the tonnage employed in our trade to all the ports of Europe and the Levant was:—

	British.	Foreign.
For the year 1823 . . .	705,823 . . .	373,164
1824 . . .	726,690 . . .	560,373
1825 . . .	1,024,100 . . .	707,801

On the whole, then, and including the year 1825, (a year extremely favourable to yourself) it appears that though British shipping has increased—foreign has increased much more rapidly. That at the beginning of this period, the foreign shipping employed in our trade with Europe was one-half our own; but that at the end of this period, it was two-thirds of ours!—There is also the remarkable and important fact arising out of this comparative view of the increase of British and Foreign tonnage, that while the increase of the Foreign has been gradual, viz.—about 200,000 annually, or such an increase as might seem to be compatible with their rising means; the increase of British tonnage was, from 1823 to 1824, a mere trifle, and the sudden increase in the following year of 300,000, has evidently been occasioned by the excessive speculation of that year, and the inability of the European powers to supply the tonnage which the wants of that speculation required.

In selecting the particular instance of Prussia to illustrate the effects of your changes, I feel at a loss to say whether it was accidental, or whether it was by design. It is at all events, the single solitary case which supports your own views—the only instance which puts in a favourable light the operation of your changes, and yet is so small and inconsiderable as to be totally swallowed up in the adverse aggregate of the whole of the European trade. If its selection were purely accidental, I can only sympathise with the infelicity of the accident; if it was not accidental, can I acquit you of attempting to pass a delusive representation on the House of Commons? I have placed you between the horns of a dilemma, and you must extricate yourself as you best may. You

may fling the imputation on your integrity, or your sagacity, as you prefer.

I have no hesitation, Sir, in stating your speech on the Navigation Laws to be a complete evasion of the actual question at issue. The shipowners in their petition laid before you a plain matter of fact; they stated that foreigners could build and navigate at half the cost of British ship-owners,—that British shipping was, therefore, unable to contend with foreign shipping—and that in consequence the foreign trade was rapidly falling into the hands of foreigners. This, Sir, was the case they laid before you. Does your speech at all answer it? Have you made any attempt either to deny the truth of their allegations, or to answer them?

The practical part of your speech goes to prove a fact which they had not denied. You show, that in the years during which your system has been in operation, there had been an increase of the amount of British tonnage in the whole of our trade, and that during these years a greater number of British ships had been built than in the preceding. You farther shew, as you state in more immediate reply to the allegations of the shipowners, that the number of British ships that passed the Sound in the year 1825, was greater, considerably, than it had been in any former year; and from these facts you draw the inference, that your system has operated favourably,—that the shipowner has no ground of complaint—and that our carrying-trade is in the most flourishing condition.

Both these parts of your speech are fallacious. Their facts are true, as far as they go, but the inferences you have drawn from them are false. There was, doubtless, a great increase of trade to the Baltic in 1825, and the increase of British tonnage was even greater in proportion than that of Prussian,—circumstances, I regret to say, which admit of an explanation inconsistent with the permanent prosperity of the British carrying trade in this quarter. The increase of tonnage employed in the Baltic trade arose from the excitement of the year, and more particularly from the extensive public works which

were carrying on through all parts of the kingdom, and in which Baltic timber was exclusively employed. The Prussians, and the other states we have let into this trade, had not tonnage to meet the demand—they had neither capital nor time sufficient to supply the deficiency; and the consequence was, that British shipping came in for a considerable part of the carrying of this timber—but if Prussia had had tonnage enough to meet the demand, not a British ship would have been employed.

So much for the increase of British shipping that passed the Sound. As to the other part of your demonstration, by which you shew that there was an increase of British shipping generally, you ought to have added—that though, on the whole, there had been an augmentation, that augmentation had sprung, not from that part of our navigation affected by your treaties, namely, the foreign trade—but from the increase of our coasting and colonial trade; and that in point of fact, the increase of the latter had been so great, as actually to cover the deficiency in the former. This, Sir, would have been the fair, candid, and honourable course; but then it would not have suited your purpose. You ought to have stated, that out of the 3,119,191 tons of shipping, our coasters and colliers employ 2,268,799, or about two thirds of the whole; that of the remainder, upwards of 90,000 tons, are employed in our trade with Ireland, and 400,000 in our trade with Canada; and that on these parts of our shipping your treaties had no operation; and, consequently, their increase must be put out of view in estimating the effects of these treaties. You should have added, that it was principally on our navigation in the German and Baltic seas that they had operated; and that here they had produced a great reduction of British shipping, and much injury to the British shipowner. In short, Sir, you ought to have defined, exactly, the branches of trade which were affected by your measures, and confining your calculations to them, you would thus have laid before the House a candid, if not a very flattering, exposition of the effect of our new navigation laws; and

if that exposition had not been very satisfactory to this country, nor very creditable to the wisdom and sagacity of those who had suggested them, however we might have deplored your rash experimentalizing tendency, we should, at least, have applauded your integrity; and however we might have regretted your errors, we should have found a palliation, and an apology for them, in the common frailty of human nature. You did not pursue this firm and upright course, but concealed the deficiency and falling-off in one part of our shipping trade, by mingling up and averaging the details of it with the overplus and augmentation of another part, in which your measures were no way implicated.

Since writing these two last paragraphs, I have become possessed of the returns of the number of ships of all nations that passed the Sound in the year 1826. These returns put an end at once to the argument on which you mainly rested in your *exposé* on the state of our shipping, and which undoubtedly prevailed much both with the House and the country. Adverting to the year 1825, you there state, “that British shipping engrossed considerably more than one-third of the whole navigation of the Baltic, and had increased very nearly two-fifths, as compared with the average of the four preceding years.” The year 1826 has deplorably reversed this picture. In this year nearly 1500 fewer English vessels passed the Sound than in the year 1825, while the falling off in the vessels of all other nations is only about 600; and British vessels, instead of engrossing considerably more than one-third of the whole navigation, engrossed little more than one-fifth. The two following lines embody what I have here said:—

	British ships.	Ships of all other nations.
In the year 1825..	5,186	7,974
1826..	3,730	7,335

I cannot stop to make any observation on this fact; I think it requires none.

Thus much for the state of our fisheries, coal, timber, and European trade generally. Permit me,

now, to call your attention to our new COLONIAL policy, and to the effects it has already produced, and to those which it must, from its very nature, continue to produce.

After having described the recent changes in our colonial policy, and the causes which, in your mind, warranted them, you conclude by stating, that "all trade between this country and the Colonies, and all international trade between the different foreign possessions of the British empire, are still strictly confined to British shipping only." I do not impute to you any intention of misrepresentation, but still I must be permitted to observe, that in this very important statement, you have advanced a proposition, which is not absolutely false, to be sure, but which is, as certainly, not absolutely true. I believe I shall explain myself with sufficient plainness, and yet without any offence, when I describe this as a mixed statement of truth and error. The fact shall speak for itself.

East India piece goods are, and have been for a long time, permitted to come to England under bond, for re-exportation. All such as were colored or manufactured of silk were prohibited from being used in England, even when imported direct by the East India Company. By the Silk Act, however, all descriptions of silk goods were permitted to be entered for home consumption after the 5th July last, on the payment of a duty of 30 per cent. When that Act passed, this provision was supposed to refer only to goods imported *direct from the possessions of the East India Company, to England.* When the period arrived, a large quantity of *East India piece goods, imported from the United States of America in British vessels, were allowed to be entered for home consumption,* although the voyage from Bengal or China to the United States, or three fourths of the whole voyage, had been performed in American bottoms.

I ask, whether, under these circumstances, you can take upon yourself to say, that the direct carrying-trade between Britain and her foreign possessions has been preserved entire and unimpaired; when

in this case three-fourths of the voyage is performed in American vessels, and only the remaining fourth in our own? How this strange anomaly has arisen, it is not for me to say. That it exists, is as notorious as noon-day. I merely state the fact, and leave you to explain it, or to reconcile it with your own allegations.

That this is a state of things exceedingly unjust and prejudicial to the British shipowner, no one will deny. That it has been, and continues to be, equally prejudicial to the British merchant, will, I think, be sufficiently clear from the following details.

You are aware, of course, that East India goods imported from the East Indies by British subjects, are obliged to wait a public quarterly sale, to ascertain the value for duty. Now this is, in itself a hardship; and the least that, under such circumstances, the British subject would be entitled to demand, would be the imposition of a similar condition on goods imported from the East Indies by Americans or others. Was such a condition imposed on the Americans? No. On the admission of foreign silks in July last, the Americans having brought over a large quantity of China and Bengal piece goods from the United States, where there is at all times a large supply of such goods, were, by the operation of the Silk Act, *allowed to declare a value on those goods, on which an ad valorem duty was to be levied, and send these goods immediately into the English market, at the highest prices;* whilst similar goods, imported direct by the East India Company, or private merchants, were under the necessity of *remaining three months in the warehouses till there was a quarterly sale, that their value might be ascertained for duty.* The British importer thus not only lost the interest of his capital, and was exposed to the expenses of warehousing, &c., from all which foreigners were exempt, but was actually kept out of the market till public curiosity had nearly exhausted itself, and its first and best demands had been supplied by them.

It is somewhat foreign to my present purpose to pursue these details, but the whole course of this business has been so surprising, that I cannot refrain

from proceeding one step farther. If the American proprietor thinks fit to carry any of these goods into the quarterly sale, he runs the home buyer up to a certain price, on which as the sale price the purchaser has to pay a duty of 30 per cent. While on such goods as he chuses to retain on his own account, he is permitted either to declare his own valuation, or to buy in at a nominal price, on which, as the sale price, he pays the duty accordingly.

The result of all this is, that to foreigners has been granted, as it were by a special Act of Parliament, the privilege of being the carriers of goods from our East India possessions for the greater part of the voyage; and then, not only a preference is extended to them, but such a preference as ensures them the almost exclusive supply of our home market.

Here, then, you see the effect of a number of enactments, simultaneously affecting our commercial and maritime interests. A Navigation Act, prohibiting in terms all direct intercourse with our Colonies, except in British bottoms; and a "Silk Act," running directly in the teeth of this Navigation Act and absolutely annulling one of its most important provisions. It is not, however, to this, nor to the growing manufactures of the United States, nor to the advantages which they are permitted to enjoy, both here and in the Canadas, that I wish in this place, particularly to call your attention; but what I wish to enforce on your mind is the fact, that in the very teeth of your own legislation—in direct opposition to your own statements, *the United States have actually engrossed a most important branch of our carrying-trade with the East Indies*,—important, I would say, not so much for its magnitude, as for the illustration which it gives of the spirit of modern legislation.

Having thus shown that the United States have, if not in terms, at least in substance, become carriers between this country and the East Indies, I wish now to ask you a question—a question most important to the interests of our navigation—most important as showing the disposition of a part, at least, of his Majesty's Government to encourage foreign shipping

at the hazard of our own—most important as showing the necessity of a vigilant and jealous censorship over the progress of a policy, utterly regardless of the maintenance of our naval power. I wish, Sir, to know, whether the Board of Trade has not made a proposition to the London shipowners, to ascertain whether they would concur in a measure for permitting East India goods to be imported from the United States in American ships? I would not, Sir, on any light conjecture have put this question—the utmost stretch of my imagination would never have suggested, that a proposal so impolitic and unjust could have emanated from the Board of Trade; but I have it on the most unquestionable authority, that this proposition has actually been made.

I have adverted, incidentally, to the growing manufactures of the United States. Permit me, for one moment, more distinctly to call your attention to them. It is a fact—a fact of which the country is not aware, and which the government either does not or professes not to believe—a fact which ought to be impressed on the country, and forced on the attention of ministers,—that the manufactures of the United States are making the most rapid strides,—that they are most vigilantly protected and encouraged, both as well by the legislatures of the several northern states, as by the general government,—that in the course of a few years they will entirely supersede ours among themselves,—that even now, they interfere with ours in Upper Canada and South America, materially, and that they have already reached the Mediterranean, to one port of which, within the last few months 1,500 bales of American cotton goods have been sent from Boston.

Nothing can be more idle and ignorant than to talk of young countries not manufacturing for themselves. I know very well what is the philosophical cant of the day on the subject, and I feel also that it could never have been promulgated by any man who had looked into the actual business, habits and feelings of nations.

I dont know whether you be aware of the fact, but I can tell you that in all the northern and mid-

land states of the American Union, shows are periodically held for exhibiting the best specimens of national manufactures, and these specimens of national ingenuity and skill are rewarded not always by a prize, but by selling these productions to some patriotic citizen at a price which abundantly gratifies both the pride and the cupidity of the manufacturer. I have been present on these occasions and have been utterly astonished at the skill and variety which have been displayed. Finer or more substantial fabrics of woolen or cotton goods, I have never seen even in England; and nothing can be more ingenious than their various specimens of cutlery and glass-work. Then again, there were models and plans, and specimens of all kinds of farming implements and household utensils, many of them admirable for facilitating the operations for which they were designed. Then again, we all know that many of the most curious inventions connected with our staple manufactures have originated in the United States. I need not go into any details on this subject; you are of course perfectly familiar with them.

I think then that the time for considering the United States as a non-manufacturing country has passed away. It behoves us to watch the progress of this branch of their industry with at least the same degree of jealousy with which they regard ours, and to meet the imposts of their tariff by corresponding regulations.

The competition which we experience from them in foreign markets, is a matter which we may regret, but of which undoubtedly we have no right to complain. I would ask you, however, whether it be reciprocity or fair dealing, whether it be just to our own manufacturers and merchants, to admit, as we do, the manufactures of the United States into our own colonies on payment of a duty of 15 per cent. the value of the goods being taken from their own declaration, while British manufactures are admitted into the United States only on payment of a duty of 30 per cent. Is it just or reasonable, that the manufactures of the United States shall be admitted into Canada on payment of a duty of 15 per cent. whilst

British manufactures cannot be laid down in the higher ports of these provinces under 40 per cent. on the cost for charges, commission, freight, exchange and duty. I state it to you on the very best authority, that the manufactures of the United States, not only interfere, but seriously interfere with British manufactures in Upper Canada,

This is one part of the mischief arising from the admission of American goods into Canada. Another and extremely prejudicial to the general body of the inhabitants, but more especially to the Canada merchants is this—that their goods so introduced at this low duty to the exclusion of our own, are nearly all paid for in specie, which these republicans then send to China and the East Indies, to purchase silks, &c. which are brought back partly for their own consumption, for Canada, and as I have already shewn even for our own market, to the great injury of the circulating medium of Canada, and the rate of exchange with England.

This last is no new subject of complaint, it is as old as their connexion with the West Indies. It has always been a systematic part of their policy to drain our colonies of specie, with which in former times they hastened off to other markets to purchase sugar, molasses, coffee, &c. upon cheaper terms than they could be procured in the British Islands, and with which they have more recently gone to China and the East Indies, and employed the means we have put into their possession to compete with and to injure the British merchant. At a former period a metallic currency could not be kept among our West India Islands, in our own day it is equally evanescent and transitory among our North American possessions.

The whole history of our commercial relations with the United States, has been on their part a series of successful encroachments; on ours, of humiliating concession. They have gained every point for which they ever seriously contended. There was, at one time, undoubtedly, in the councils of this country, a notion, that our commerce with them was one of the main pillars of our manufacturing prosperity; and

I think also, some latent apprehension that they could do quite as well without us, as we without them! I think that this was at all times a very unfounded apprehension; for it was always as important to them to send us their cotton and tobacco, as for us to send them our cottons and hardware. I am sure of this, that they did not come among us out of mere gratitude; if they could have gone elsewhere with equal advantage, they would never have visited the shores of Britain. But admitting, even, that we were formerly somewhat dependent on them for certain articles, that dependence no longer exists. From South America and Egypt, we can obtain every thing which we get from them, at quite as cheap a cost, with this advantage, that we ourselves should, in that case, have the carrying of the raw material. I do not say that it may be expedient to make any sudden change; but I do say this, that in any future negotiation with the United States, these circumstances will place us in a very different position. Concession, I apprehend, can never be talked of again; the spirit of American negotiation is, by this time I trust, pretty well understood. It will be the future policy of our Government to regain what we have lost; to insist upon our own commerce and our own shipping being placed upon a more equitable footing; to talk no more of our superior capitals, our skill and enterprise; but to hold with a strong arm the advantages which we have fairly earned, and to which we are fairly entitled.

Among the concessions which have been made at various times to the United States, none has ever appeared to me so perfectly gratuitous and unnecessary as that of permitting them to trade direct to the East Indies. Claim they could have none—nor a shadow or pretext of right, to ask for that which was refused to our own private merchants. Even if they had been disposed to treat fairly with Great Britain, they had nothing which they could give us in return for this privilege. It was a concession which neither directly nor collaterally could benefit either this country or the East India possessions; it was a concession which could not but be exceedingly

offensive to private British merchants; and which could not be very agreeable to the English resident in that part of our empire. It was to them unquestionably a highly beneficial traffic; it afforded an additional inducement to them to drain our Colonies of specie, and enabled them to come into our own markets, both domestic and colonial, with those Eastern productions which ought to have been exclusively supplied by the British merchant and shipowner. This trade however, I hope may soon be closed—closed, never more to be opened while England wields the sceptre of the East.

The main ground on which you justified the admission of the Northern States of Europe to a direct intercourse with our Colonies, was the previous concession of that intercourse to the United States. You contended, that as we had conceded this trade to the United States, there was neither justice nor policy in withholding it from other foreign powers.—The justice of the matter may, I think, at once be fairly put out of the question: whether or no we permitted other countries to trade with these Colonies, was entirely for our own consideration. If we did grant this privilege to any country, it was a boon, a gift which they had no right to demand—nor any pretext for claiming at our hands. If we chose to grant it to one power, that was no reason why we should be under the necessity of granting it to another. The policy of these concessions has also fallen to the ground. The United States having refused to accept the conditions imposed on this concession, they have very justly been excluded altogether from this trade.—I congratulate the country on this bold and decisive measure, and I trust that it will be permanent. But, Sir, this prohibition sweeps away at once, the whole of your argument for a relaxation of our colonial commerce. You made this relaxation in favour of the Northern Powers of Europe, because it had been previously made in favour of the United States.—But you have withdrawn it from the United States; and to be consistent, you ought to withdraw it also from Europe. Here, however, a commercial treaty interposes.

Here then, you must perceive the vicious nature of that reasoning, by which you satisfied your own mind and the House of Commons, that a time was come for a relaxation of our colonial policy. When it became a question whether the North of Europe should trade direct to our colonies, you should have enquired whether such a measure was necessary for their well-being.—This was the enquiry which should have been made; this was the ground on which that trade should have been opened, if opened at all. It did not matter that the United States were permitted to trade with our colonies—this had nothing to do with the question in respect to Prussia or any other foreign power. Was the *cui bono* ever discussed at all? Has it ever been attempted to be shown in what way these new principles of colonial commerce were to operate to the benefit either of ourselves or of our colonies? Did you, or any of your colleagues, or any member of Parliament, foresee either the origin, or the course, of that tide of prosperity which the new system was to roll upon our colonies? I need not pursue this train of interrogatory; for I cannot have a more bitter and satirical comment on the whole of these measures, than you yourself have already pronounced. Adverting to the principles of the new colonial system you observe:—

“These, it may be objected, are but vague and speculative improvements, which may never be realized. It may be so, and if I am called upon to point out specifically the precise mode and course of operation, by which the benefits of this new system are to make their way in the West Indies, I have no hesitation in avowing that I can do no such thing.”* What more humiliating acknowledgment could your most zealous opponents desire? What better proof of the rashness and improvidence of the course you have been pursuing? Here by your own confession have you been recommending a series of changes deeply affecting the most important interests of the empire, upon no better foundation than some vague undefined notions of prospective advantage; and at the very time you are recommending their adoption, actually declar-

* Speech on the Colonial Policy of the Country, p. 21, 22. Hatchard and Son, 1825.

ing yourself to be utterly ignorant of the mode in which they can act to the benefit of the country!!

You are, I fancy, by this time pretty well convinced of the peril of rash and adventurous meddling with the ancient institutions of a great country. The line of distinction between rash and adventurous meddling, and that cautious change which, from time to time, becomes expedient, appears to me so clear, that I wonder how you could ever have mistaken it; but at all events, the changes, whose effects could not be traced, such as those which you recommended in our colonial policy, could not have been necessary, just, or expedient. I cannot follow you through the chain of argumentation, by which you have defended them. It will be enough for me to state, that the wary and persevering republicans of North America, having compelled the British Government to admit them to a direct trade with our West India Colonies—so much being, as it were, squeezed out of us—we then, in one of those fits of generosity to which we are periodically subject, voluntarily, without any necessity, real or apparent, in anticipation even of the inordinate desires of these republicans, extended to them the same privileges as to our possessions in Asia and the Pacific Ocean. Having done so much to enlarge the commerce and the marine of the United States, having broken down our colonial system as to one power, you were so beset with petitions, memorials and menaces from the commercial states of Europe, that you found yourself under the necessity of placing them on the same footing.

I will not do you the injustice to suppose that you had ever contemplated the effects of these measures. Had you bestowed any reflection on the disastrous consequences which would be produced on our domestic manufactures and commerce, and on the rising greatness of our Colonies in North America, I am still willing to believe, that you are Englishman enough to shrink from such a scene of ruin and distress.

Over the regulation of the commerce of our West India Islands, as part of the possessions of the British Crown, we have always had the entire control. Previous to the American revolution, they had been

principally supplied with timber, staves, corn, fish, &c. from that part of our North American colonies, which then established their independance. After this event this intercourse was interdicted, and a supply of these articles was attempted to be obtained from Ireland, and that part of our American possessions which still remained faithful. It was found, however, that they were inadequate to the supply, and distress was produced in the West Indies, which was aggravated as much as possible, by a strong American party. Well, what was done by the government at home? One would naturally suppose, that they would exert every effort to infuse a fresh energy into our Canadian Colonies; that every protection would have been afforded them, that they might be enabled to meet the demands from the West India market. No such thing.

Their efforts were viewed with the utmost indifference. No attempt was made to enlarge their establishments, to extend their agriculture, to increase their fisheries. This would have been to shew too much kindness; it would have been to treat them too much like our own children. What was done? Why, the prohibition of intercourse between the United States and the West Indies, was from time to time suspended by letters of licence, whenever the clamors of an interested party could make out a case. These letters of licence, to use the allusion of a writer of that day, became more common than the indulgences of the Pope. The effect of all this on our North American Colonies, was mischievous in the highest degree; they were unable to compete with their neighbours—they were neglected by the government at home—and they struggled on in a state the most injurious to their progress, and the developement of their natural resources.

Had the government of that day taken the decisive and vigorous part which the necessity of the case demanded, you, Sir, would never have been called on to break down our colonial policy. Our colonies in North America would have been in a condition to supply all that was wanted in the West Indian market. We should have been entirely independent of the United States for its supply, and they must have traded

with these colonies on our own terms. In that case, the ulterior question of admitting the States of Europe to that trade, would not have risen at all.

How long our North American possessions might have been permitted to slumber in this condition of neglect, it would be difficult to say, had not one of those events occurred, which show at once the distinction between colonial and foreign trade, and which point out the incalculable superiority of the former.

These Northern States of Europe, whose interests and whose trade you seem so anxiously to encourage, by an act of unprecedented perfidy and ill faith, gave the first great impulse to the industry and the enterprise of our American colonies. When Bonaparte issued his Milan and Berlin decrees, our intercourse with these States was nominally put an end to. The trade was, however, carried on for some time longer by means of licences, till the year 1811, when at the command of their great master, by a sudden and simultaneous movement, they confiscated every vessel in their ports that came from this country, together with their cargoes, to the value of not less than seven millions sterling. Believing us to be dependent on them for wood and naval stores, they thought that by cutting off all communication with this country, they at once destroyed the main pillar of our strength, and that we should be compelled to make peace on any terms they should propose. The ports of the Baltic closed against us, their supplies of timber, hemp, flax, &c. suddenly suspended, what could England have done, had she not possessed colonies, from whence she could obtain the supplies which had thus been withdrawn? England must have succumbed to her enemy.

We turned to our possessions in North America, and there we found forests exhaustless, and a country boundless in extent, rich in all the facilities for producing what we wanted. These fine countries took a sudden spring in the career of industry, enterprise, and wealth.—Hitherto neglected and abandoned, we resorted to them only in the hour of need and peril; and well have they paid us for an encouragement, bestowed only from self-interest,—from motives of self-preservation.

Why, Sir, look at the rich and fertile soil and healthy climate of New Brunswick and Upper Canada. Look at their rivers, bays, harbors, their long line of sea-coast; here, Sir, I perceive the elements of an empire, which one day will be among the mightiest under the sun. United by the same laws and customs, and by kindred political feelings,—bound together by vast inland seas, rivers, and narrow portions of the ocean,—free, Sir, from the curse of slavery and the taint of a black population. I look forward to the time, when a great people established here under wise laws and beneficent institutions, will remain compact, and indissoluble, wielding the destinies of the new, as England now wields those of the old world; when their gigantic neighbours, with their black population, their slavery and their hatred of England, shall be blown into a thousand factions, and severed into a thousand parcels.

This people, Sir,—these colonies, attached as they are to the Mother Country, tried as their fidelity has been—which furnished us the staple of maritime war, when England was arrayed against an embattled world—this people, so important to us as a check on the encroachments of the United States, hanging, as they do, on the flank and rear of that hostile republic, ought to be protected and encouraged by every commercial enactment which prudence and good will can devise. Our exports to these Colonies already equal the amount of the whole of our exports to the United States, at the time of the revolution. They already supply the place of the splendid gem thus torn from the Crown of England, and which it was then thought could never be redeemed.

For the six years preceding the revolution, our exports to these provinces, on an average of six years previous to the war, amounted only to the scanty sum of £379,411 annually. A like average for the six years succeeding the war, owing to the influx of the Loyalists, shows that these exports were raised to £829,088—an increase which something more than covered the diminution of our exports to the United States during these two periods, which, taking a similar average, had decreased from £2,752,036 to

£2,333,643. In the year 1799 these exports had increased to £1,066,396, in 1809 to £1,733,667, in 1819 to £1,970,257, and for the last year they were £2,244,245. With regard to the imports from them, it is enough to state, that these exports are always finally paid for, and though the balance against them often has been and still is in arrear, yet in no quarter of the world are the debts so secure, and the losses of the British merchants so inconsiderable.

It is not, however, so much for commercial advantages, as for the encouragement and maintenance of a large marine, that Colonies are usually valued; and great as are the commercial advantages which we already derive, as well during war as in a state of peace, and which are augmenting every year, it is more by considering what the possession of these provinces has added to the strength of our mercantile navy and seamen, that we are enabled justly to appreciate their importance. In the year 1772, I find that the tonnage annually employed between them and Great Britain was only 11,219 tons; that in the year 1789 it had increased to 46,106, more than repairing the decrease that had reduced our annual tonnage to the United States during the same period, from 86,745 tons to 52,595. For the seven years, ending with the year 1825, it amounted on an average to 340,776 tons annually, and employed more than 15,000 seamen.—For the year 1825 the vessels that cleared thither amounted to 411,332 tons, being about one-fourth of our whole foreign tonnage, and double the total amount of shipping, British and Foreign, employed in our trade with the United States.

Sir, a progress so rapid has nothing to surpass it in the history of the world. When we look at these details, we may smile with a sentiment of more than contempt on the Scotchman who hazarded the ignorant and impudent assertion, “that it would have been well for this country if Canada, Nova Scotia, &c. had continued in the possession of their aboriginal inhabitants to the present hour.”

When, Sir, you negotiated treaties admitting the several powers of Europe to trade direct to our West and East Indies, did you perceive the way in which this

would operate. If the Northern states of Europe trade at all with these Colonies, they can furnish for their consumption only just such articles as can be furnished in sufficient quantity by ourselves and by our Colonies in North America. This trade, then, can only produce unmingled mischief to us. So far as they furnish wrought manufactures, cottons, silks, &c. to our West India Colonies, they injure *pro tanto* the home manufacturer who would have supplied them; the British merchant who would have sent them out; the British shipowner who would have carried them. So far as they furnish timber, corn, fish, &c. they injure the industry and shipping of our North American possessions, from whence these supplies would have been otherwise derived. Besides this, they injure the wealth and impair the revenue of the whole Empire; because, while we or our Colonies supply each other's wants, the whole benefit of the exchange remains among ourselves, and adds to the common stock which feeds the industry and enterprise of the Empire—whereas when these supplies come from a foreign power, say from Prussia, Hamburgh, Bremen, &c., the whole benefit of the exchange goes to them. It is also extremely probable, nay, quite certain, that the provisions, flour, lumber, &c. furnished by the North of Europe to our Colonies, would not be paid for in the rum and sugar, say of Jamaica; but that they would be paid for in specie, which the Prussians would carry to some other market where they could buy their rum and sugar cheaper.

British merchants henceforth expect a considerable reduction in their exports to the West Indies; and it is quite certain that our North American possessions, whose rising prosperity and greatness are so important to us not only as a commercial market, but as a means of national defence, and as a nursery for seamen, will find in the Northern states of Europe the most dangerous rivals for the export trade to the West Indies.

What call or necessity was there to interfere at all with the Colonial policy of former times? Suppose that the Americans from some peculiarity of circumstances, had wrung from us the concession of

a direct intercourse with our West Indies—did the same peculiarity of situation compel you to open out to them a direct trade with the East Indies, and thus grant to a most dangerous and encroaching rival, a privilege which was not possessed by the British merchants? Was not this a boon to America given without the shadow of a necessity, and without any show of an equivalent? Again, admitting that it was expedient or necessary to grant either or both of these privileges to America, was there the same necessity or expediency for extending them to Prussia and the other powers of Europe? If from any cause whatever you had been compelled or entrapped into a deviation from the strict spirit of our Colonial system, was that any reason, could that induce any necessity, for destroying it altogether? Were we unable to supply such manufactured or raw materials as were necessary to the well-being and prosperity of our Colonies?—Were our shipowners unable to carry these materials whether raw or manufactured? I presume you cannot answer either of these questions in the negative.—Well, then, what were your motives for a course of policy which could only abstract from our wealth and means of employment, and which could not in any way add to them?

You will reply to this, I have no doubt, by stating, that by enriching foreigners we shall finally enrich ourselves; that by letting them participate in the benefit of our trade, they will acquire wealth, the superabundance of which will in the end return upon us, and water and feed the sources of our own industry—that is, the manufactures and the shipping of these powers must first be encouraged at the expense of our own, and then some fifty or a hundred years hence, we shall again be enriched by their overflowing commerce. In plain words, we give away the loaf of bread for a doubtful chance, that we shall be permitted to pick up the crumbs that may fall under the table.

You will say in the next place, that our system created a spirit of discontent and hostility against us on the Continent. And what did their hostility or discontent matter to us, so long as we were able to bid them

defiance? Do you suppose, Sir, that their hostility is the less, because you are suffering them to destroy the very elements of our strength? No; but their contempt is immeasurably increased. In all former times they have hated and feared us—I hope I shall never live to see the time when they will hate and despise us. Sir, they have always looked up to us with a spirit of hostility—in that spirit they always will look up to us, so long as we cover the ocean with our ships, and gird the world with our possessions, colonies, and forts.

As men do not commonly make large concessions without exacting some equivalent, I would fain know what consideration you received for the privileges and immunities which you have wantonly bestowed on the rivals of Great Britain.—When you put into the hands of Prussia, and the other Northern states of Europe, nearly the whole of our carrying-trade with those countries, and threw open to them our West India Colonies and our possessions in the East, what did they give in return? What present compensation, what remote contingency, did you obtain from their crafty and firm diplomatists?

I will not be so disingenuous as to disguise what I believe to have been the *ignis fatuus*, the will-o'-the-wisp, that lured you on to concessions discreditable to the resolute and commanding spirit which once guided the councils of the British empire. You were willing to flatter yourself that these concessions would extend our manufactures and commerce. This was the pretext on which you founded these measures; this was the justification which you offered to your opponents.

Such being the fact, let me ask you, why, among the returns you moved for, you did not move for the number of Baltic ships which, during the last five years, left our ports with cargoes, and for the value of those cargoes? Such a return would have shewn at once how far our trade with the German states had realized your expectations. This, Sir, would have shewn what disposition there was in them to compensate the privileges which we had granted; this, Sir, would have shown whether they came

into our ports to carry back in return our cottons, woollens, and hardware; or whether they sought only for our gold to buy their manufactures in some other market, and convert the very means we gave them to encourage, not the manufactures of Great Britain, but those of Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden.

When you proposed your system of reciprocity, you of course expected, that it was finally to go into operation with all the great Powers of Europe and America; and you expected also, that these Powers should not merely conform to the letter of these treaties, but that they would, in fact, be ready and anxious to reciprocate those benefits which we had spontaneously held out to them; and that a spirit of conciliation and amity would pervade the whole of their intercourse with us. If we are to take the past as any earnest of the future, these expectations have been totally overthrown. France and the United States, notwithstanding all our truckling and all our solicitation, have refused to accept your proffered boon. Sweden accepted it, with a large exception in favour of herself. Prussia accepted it, because thereby we did, in fact, concede to her every thing which the most rapacious policy, on her part, could have desired. But has Prussia manifested in return, any kindly disposition toward this country? Has she shown any spirit of conciliation—anything at all approximating to concession? I think, Sir, on examination, it would be found that she was determined to take advantage of every circumstance from which she can wring a farthing out of us. Why, Sir, even so trifling a matter as the surplus stores of a British merchant vessel cannot be admitted into that country, without being subject to a heavy duty. She cannot even permit us to load our own ships at her ports, with her produce. We are absolutely obliged to submit to have our vessels loaded by Prussian labourers, while our seamen, though fully competent to the work, are standing idly by, and looking on at this insult on our country—this injustice to our merchants and shipowners. This, Sir, is the present condition of things; this is the return which the reci-

procuity system has met with. Yes, Sir, the official authorities in Prussian ports actually send Prussian labourers on board our own ships, and we are compelled to receive their services!!

You defend your reciprocity treaty with Prussia, by stating, that if you had not made it, a contest of discriminating duties, and finally, a mutual prohibition of all intercourse would have ensued. Admit this to have been the actual result, what would then have been the total loss to this country? The official value of our exports to Prussia, for the year ending Jan. 5, 1825, was £468,463, the real value being probably much less. Why, Sir, was this a matter of such vast consequence as to induce a minister of the British Crown to advise and carry into effect a suspension of our Navigation Laws? What! can it be the strong arm of England that is compelled to abandon rights and privileges, essential to her safety, for so paltry, so insignificant a matter as this? Can England, that ventured a war against the world for the sake of a barren rock in the Mediterranean, have fallen so low as to be obliged, for the sake of preserving an export trade of £400,000, to prostrate herself before a petty German power? Out upon the idea: it is not England; it is not the English people that have so humbled, so degraded themselves; it is the act of Ministers so irresolute as to be unable to resist the most barefaced, and shameless demands. Would a Burleigh, a Chatham, or a Pitt have been so indifferent to their country's honor; so careless of its safety and prosperity; so ignorant of its power, as to have yielded to these impudent demands? No, Sir; they were Englishmen; they would not have exposed England to the contempt of every German politician: they would rather have cut off, at once, the whole trade as a diseased limb, and have directed the capital and the enterprise of England to other quarters.*

* "Ignorance must be your excuse; your menaces are of no consequence to England," said Queen Elizabeth to the Hanse Towns, in reply to a similar application to that which the Prussians have successfully made. The Hanse Towns were not then such "insignificant" places as they are now—their trade was not quite so unimportant to us as is that of Prussia; but that shrewd and martial woman was at once a heroine and a sage.

But, Sir, the question of concession to Prussia was of far less importance in itself than in the inevitable consequences which it involves. Similar applications came from other nations, and could not be refused. Our government had, by its violations of the navigation laws, roused up a vast commercial rival on the other side the Atlantic; and you very sagaciously imagined that cutting off another slice from the loaf of our power and prosperity, and flinging it to the shores of the Baltic, you could raise up a power, which would counteract the other. You wisely thought that having raised up one dangerous rival, you had only to raise up another to neutralize them both!

Having yielded so much to impudence and effrontery, you were now determined to make a sacrifice to generosity, and, cutting off another slice, threw it unsought, unasked for, to the Hanse Towns. This, I admit, was the most justifiable act you had yet done. This deed, which was generous at least, is a palliation for others characterized only by weakness.

Our navigation laws you tell us, had ceased to be a secret. We had lost the *exclusive patent* of them.—Other nations were following in our steps, and taking lessons from our example. The United States of America had their navigation laws. Well, if we could not prevent this we could not, and there was an end of the matter. Russia had her navigation laws. Was this any matter of alarm? We commanded the Baltic, and we reigned paramount in the Mediterranean. Not a Russian ship could be seen on the ocean, without our leave. Let them manufacture navigation laws till doomsday, they could not affect us. France had her navigation laws, Prussia was beginning to try her hand at them, and so the thing would have gone the round of all the powers of the old and perhaps of the new world. You took the alarm. Because the United States had, in a few years, become the second maritime power in the world, you dreamed that Russia, Prussia, France, &c. &c. could progress as rapidly. You foresaw, in your dread, that our system continued a few years longer, would raise half a dozen maritime powers, as great as ourselves, and you determined to

anticipate what your fears had suggested. Instead of leaving them to their navigation laws, you annihilated our own, and parcelled out among them the privileges and the powers which 150 years of unparalleled industry, perseverance and enterprize, had accumulated.

Your generosity was not to be limited by a boon to such insignificant places as the Hanse Towns. Your benevolence, like a snow-ball, enlarged and expanded as it rolled along. England had called the South American Republics into existence---she had done this at the peril of an European war. She could have imposed whatever conditions she pleased on the navigation of these new States---she could have secured the whole of it to herself. But this would not do: it had too much resemblance to the spirit of our forefathers; it was not liberal enough, and you concluded a treaty, by which the greatest part of their carrying trade, will fall into the hands of the encroaching Republicans of North America.

I shall only further call your attention to the amount and nature of our trade to these Northern States of Europe. The total import to this country from Prussia, Norway, and Sweden, was in the year 1824, 721,384*l.*, and the year 1825 it had increased to 863,743*l.* The exports in the former year were 968,354*l.*, and in the latter year---that year of excitement and overtrading,---when your treaties were in full operation, and consequently, according to your own expectations, our exports ought, independently of this excitement, to have greatly increased,---in this year, I say, they actually declined to 725,700*l.* So that it is quite clear, that one of the main benefits which you hold out to the country as an inducement to support your views, has entirely failed. So far from there being a greater demand for our manufactures, the demand has actually diminished---diminished, even in spite of the excitement of that year of speculation. But let us look a little farther. Of this 725,700*l.* worth of goods that we exported to them, 241,082*l.* only were for British and Irish produce and manufactures; the residue, or

two-thirds of the whole, consisted of foreign and colonial produce. So then, for the sake of preserving an export trade of somewhat less than 250,000*l.* a-year to these northern states, you have flung away our carrying-trade to the Baltic, and have utterly ruined the timber and shipbuilding trade of our North American Provinces. Let us now contrast this statement with that of our trade to these Provinces. In the first place, our Canada trade is entirely British, on British account, and carried on in British shipping. Our exports to them in the year 1825, I have already stated, amounted to 2,244,245*l.*, of which 413,024*l.* were for foreign and colonial produce, and 1,831,221*l.* was for British manufactured goods. Our exports to these provinces more than double the whole of our exports to Prussia, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway; and the value of British manufactured goods sent to our North American Provinces is seven or eight times that of British manufactured goods to these four Northern States.

Hitherto I have been describing misgovernment only on the one hand, and decay and ruin on the other.---The Order in Council interdicting the direct trade between the United States and our Colonies, and our foreign possessions in the East---an order undoubtedly provoked by the over-reaching spirit of these republicans, I consider to be a most important and beneficial measure, and the first step towards a return to our ancient policy. The Americans have been deprived of this important trade under circumstances of such grasping cupidity, that they can never pretend to raise a ground of complaint on it; they saw that there was a liberal spirit growing up among certain quarters in this country, and conceiving that we could not do without them in the West Indies, they determined to run as hard a bargain as possible; to try how far concession on our part would go; to see how much they could extort from us. Fortunately, most fortunately, too much cupidity, as often happens, has overshoot its aim. Their tariff directed principally against England, and the enormous alien duties imposed on British shipping from the West Indies, at length

awakened the alarm of his Majesty's Government to a full determination to check a system conceived not less in national selfishness than in national animosity. We have not retaliated, however; their own acts have spared us the necessity of so painful a measure; we have merely taken back the boon, which they would only accept on their own conditions—and by this step have, at a single blow, cut off one of their best branches of trade and shipping. By this Order in Council, 200,000 tons of American shipping are thrown out of employment. Had these American republicans been less tenacious, and less selfish, and less obstinate, it might probably have been far from prudent to adopt this measure, however desirable in other respects. But they have given us the pretext, nay, they have almost forced on us the necessity for taking back that which we could only have conceded to them from necessity and weakness.

Thus, then, at the very moment when our carrying-trade is in a state of absolute ruin; when the timber trade and shipbuilding of Canada, and the fisheries of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, &c. are without a market for their labour, and are descending rapidly to decay, a new market has been opened which will supply them all. If our government be firm; if it have the resolution to resist the intrigues and the threats of the United States; if it duly appreciate the importance of this new trade to our shipping interests, and to our North American Colonies, here is an opportunity of giving a grand impulse to many of the most depressed and important interests of the Empire. A vast intercourse will spring up between the St. Lawrence and the West Indies, and the eighteen hundred vessels that entered this noble river in the year 1825, will soon be doubled. These two great stations of our power; these main pillars of our prosperity, instead of being strangers as they have hitherto been, will become united by a line of ships and steam vessels; a great mercantile navy will grow up on the other side of the Atlantic, and a power will be established by which we may check the encroachments of the United States.

I have adverted to this subject at present only briefly

and generally, but let me enforce on you the importance of our Government remaining firm and resolute in continuing the Order in Council. Let it not be cajoled into the abandonment or modification of this order, either by the direct intrigue of the Americans, or the indirect efforts of the American party in the West Indies. Let this determination be maintained unimpaired, and let it be communicated to the merchants and shipowners, that there is no intention on the part of our Government that any concession on the part of the United States would obtain a recall of the Order in Council. You must be aware that there is at present a strong impression among the merchants of Quebec, Montreal, and Halifax, that a very little concession from the United States would lead to the repeal of the Order in Council. Let them be apprised without delay that there is no foundation for this impression, and that they may at once embark their property in this trade without any fear of ruin from its being again suddenly opened to their neighbours.

Entertaining much respect for your talents, your various information, and your sincerity, however I may regret the cause in whose furtherance they have been hitherto employed, I cannot close this communication without calling on you to pause, ere you proceed further,—once more to enquire into the effects of your recent measures,—and if you should really find, as I am convinced you must, that they are endangering the ancient sources of our industry and security, I entreat you manfully, zealously, with that perseverance of purpose which all men ascribe to you, to revise, to modify, and to annul such parts of those measures, as may be necessary for placing our commerce and the means of our defence on a solid foundation.

If unconsciously, unintentionally, in the pursuit of what you believed to be the best interests of the country, you have erred, it is the nature of a great and magnanimous mind to retrace its path, and to repair the mischief it has done. I would call upon you then, by every consideration which can inflame the zeal of patriotism, to meditate on the effects of

your policy; and if you find, that it is a policy which endangers the maintenance of our maritime and manufacturing greatness, let me implore you to apply the most instant and powerful remedies.

Preserve the advantages which still remain to us over foreigners—break down, if you please, the monopolies which exist among ourselves. Place, as far as is possible, the whole of our domestic and colonial trade on the same footing. Great Britain has no interest distinct from those of her colonies and foreign possessions.—Whatever promotes the industry and wealth of our North American provinces—of the West Indies—of the East Indies—of our Islands in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, promotes also the interest of Great Britain.—Place every part of empire, whether ours by conquest or colonization, on the same footing. Remove all the inequalities which exist among ourselves.*

In all commercial regulations, it ought to be borne in mind, that the preservation of our naval supremacy is the most vital point in the whole of our political system. Every question of cheapness or extended commerce and manufactures, must be subservient to this. The Minister who in this matter betrays his trust, is a traitor to his country, and deserves, as he will doubtless obtain, the curses of all posterity.

* I will illustrate what I mean by a case:—The duty on timber imported from North America into Ireland, was two years ago increased from 2s. 4d. to 10s. a load, while deals, the manufactured article, only pay a duty equivalent to about 2s. 6d. It has always been the policy of our Government to favour Ireland, where taxes or duties press heavily on the body of the Irish people. Now this is a duty which does press heavily on the middling and lower orders, by whom the American yellow pine timber is largely consumed. It is not a very important matter, I admit, but it is one of those numberless minor evils which exist, which press heavily in quarters least able to bear the pressure, which produce much irritation—which do not contribute much to the revenue—which though small in the individual case, create in their aggregate an immense amount of misery and discontent; and besides all this, there is an inconsistency in charging a higher duty on the raw, than on the manufactured article, which one cannot very well comprehend.

However, Sir, our naval power may be neglected—however our naval glories may be despised, amid the more recent recollections of military triumph—to our navy we must be finally indebted for the protection of our land from the pollution of a foreign enemy.

To carry into effect your system of free trade, wages and prices must be equalized throughout the world. Our high prices must be reduced to the level of foreign countries, which in our present state of things is impossible,—or those of other countries must be raised to the level of our own, which would be just as possible as to raise the ocean to the level of the New River by a cut from the River-head at Islington to the coast,—or your system of reciprocity and free trade must be abandoned. You cannot stop where you are; you must either revise and modify your measures, or you must pursue them to their full extent. The former of these I am convinced is essential to the welfare of the nation—the latter I am as thoroughly convinced would lead to its ruin.

The question of the Corn Trade comes before Parliament in the course of a few days. On the settlement of that question the fate of your system will in some degree depend. It is not necessary for me on the present occasion to state what are my opinions on that important subject, neither would it be expedient so to do, unless I went into all the details on which it is founded. But if, as I think there is strong reason to apprehend, Parliament should decide for the importation of foreign corn on the payment of a duty, I would at least wish to enforce on you the necessity of our securing the carrying of it to ourselves. This is a boon which has always been held out as an inducement to a free trade in corn; without some specific regulation, however, it is quite clear in the present state of our relations with the north of Europe, that the whole of it will be imported in foreign vessels. Whatever may be done on this subject, there is one view of the question which appears to me to deserve the most serious consideration; and that is,

if we must become a corn-importing country, the expediency of encouraging importation from our North American Provinces.

I have adverted to the possibility of British merchants becoming Prussian shipowners: I now state, on the authority of information on which I can place the utmost reliance, that this is no longer a possibility, but a fact. I can name an eminent British merchant and a member of the British legislature, who possesses a timber-yard within the dominions of Prussia, and who is the owner of more than one Prussian vessel. The considerations that arise on this fact, its immediate effects, and remote consequences, I leave to your own meditation.

In taking up the line of argument which I have endeavoured to explain, I know that I have arrayed myself against many of the most liberal and enlightened spirits of the age; against the whole body of political economists; against a very large portion of the most respectable part of the public press; but I know, also, that I have been maintaining the opinions of a very numerous and weighty body of sound-judging practical men—men whose lives have been spent in business, and who are intimately acquainted with the details and the reciprocal operation of our complex commercial system. I have, however, placed myself on a pedestal of facts, and rested my shoulders against a rock of truth. I have stood forward to maintain the principles and the policy under which England has grown to her present magnitude; or if you will not allow me this mode of language—contemporaneously, and side by side with which, England has progressed in commerce, in wealth, in arts, in arms. I have concealed nothing—I have misrepresented nothing—I have disguised nothing—I have exaggerated nothing. I have come forward in defence of what I conceive to be the best interests of the empire. I have thrown down the gauntlet, in what I verily believe to be the cause of my country. If the policy you have been the main instrument of recommending should be persevered in—if Parliament shall not arrest its progress, annul, or abrogate it—when that ruin comes, which I anticipate with the most perfect assu-

rance, I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing, that I had raised my humble voice to denounce the system from whence it sprung.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

S. ATKINSON.

London, Feb. 8, 1827.

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PRINTED BY CUNNINGHAM & SALMON, 119, FLEET STREET.