



A REVIEW
OF THE SHIPPING SYSTEM
OF
THE EAST-INDIA COMPANY;
WITH
SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT,
TO SECURE THE CONTINUANCE OF
THE CARRYING TRADE TO THIS COUNTRY;
AND THE
ADVANTAGES OF THE INDIAN COMMERCE
TO
THE COMPANY.

TO THE
PROPRIETORS OF EAST-INDIA STOCK.

THE Notoriety of the Individual Traffic to and from India, the Extent of it, the Decision on a late Trial in the Court of King's Bench, the Introduction of East-India Produce in neutral Vessels to Europe, even from an Enemy's Port by the Intervention of British Agents, to the manifest Injury of the Company, and the fair Trader; call for some Interference to preserve our exclusive Trade: and as the limited State of our Shipping must give Rise and Countenance to these Measures, and the Court of Directors have not thought themselves authorized to make any Alteration or Addition to the System their Constituents have framed—This Tract is submitted to your Consideration, to shew the Necessity of some Modification, and with a hope of its Adoption, as a Remedy for the Evils therein noticed.

I am,

Your most faithful,

And obedient humble Servant,

JOSEPH COTTON.

LONDON,

26th of December, 1798.

A R E V I E W
OF THE
SHIPPING SYSTEM
OF THE
EAST-INDIA COMPANY,
&c.

THE Shipping System of the East-India Company, independent of the professed Objects of Security to their Cargoes, and the Defence of their Settlements, involves many Interests;—the maritime Strength and Prosperity of this Country, the Extent and Certainty of its Revenue, so far beyond any other Branch of Commerce, that much Surprise has been excited at the little Attention as a national Object it has shared, and the Unconcern manifested by the Public at large, in the Disputes which it has occasioned.

The Contests between the Freight and Freighter were often high, always serious, and attended with most unpleasant Altercations; still the Wisdom of our Predecessors, was not to break the Connexion.

Much has the Point been laboured to impress an Idea that the former Courts acted in their Decisions under the Influence of the old Shipping Interest; and every Director who composed them, must feel the Importance of such a Charge.

A reference to the Contests since 1778, will shew the Court in most instances fixed Terms, and compelled the Owners to accept them; but the daily Improvements in Shipping and Navigation—the comparative smaller Interest for Money invested therein, on account of this Security—the Influx of Wealth, and the number of Officers who were Competitors for a Command, all tended to a Reduction of the Freights.

The Introduction of new Ships on reduced Terms, has been practised in repeated Instances, and thus the high Freights were moderated by every Competition*. But it is obvious, there is a Point where Competition must cease: viz. when the Rate of Freight is reduced below the fair and equitable Standard, and some indirect Measures are to make up the Deficiency. Though this Practice may serve for a Time, it cannot have that Permanency, or equitable Basis, whereon to establish a System; and Discredit attaches on all Parties concerned.

The Competition formerly, was for a Participation of the high Freight, and the Contest between the old and new Owners who

* Sir R. Hotham, Mr. Brough, Mr. Fiott, Mr. Curtis.

should supply the Company, certainly argued the object was worth it, or had some Equivalent attached.

Having professed my Determination both in Writing and otherwise, to adhere to the System of open Competition, I hope I shall have Credit for such Intentions ; nothing can more effectually manifest them, than an Endeavor to meliorate *that* System ; by grafting thereon some of those Advantages which the former one possessed, and it may be capable of. In its present State the Court may be involved in frequent Controversy, and the Company ultimately in Loss or Difficulty.

It will be admitted a Point of some Consequence to have an established systematic Plan. One leading Principle only is determined on, but the want of corresponding Detail or Regulation, leaves the Company open to Impositions, which, was the Whole complete and connected, it would be protected from.

One of the most important Bye-Laws under the Head of Shipping, was, that the Owners should be compelled to let the Ship be eighteen Months on the Stocks before Launching ; * common Attention to the Timber of the Country required Precautions to prevent the quick Decay of it, as well as the Strength and consequent Safety attached to the Ship by so doing ; and if this was needful when the Ships were permitted to go only four Voyages, how much more so when their Allotment is fix, and their Repairs are on the Commencement of the fourth Voyage ?

* The Calcutta and Walpole, that went out in the Spring, 1798 ; were not more than Ten Months on the Stocks.

This Palladium has been termed unnecessary, and the Words of the present Bye-Law are, “as long as reasonably may be.” This leaves the Matter to the determination of Judges who are fluctuating, and the door open for Application and Favor, where there should be none; the same Law may not be administered to all, and every Owner will be desirous of having his Capital six Months earlier employed, if it can be done.

The Construction of the words “a reasonable Time, it is presumed cannot be less for six Voyages than when the Ships went but four. The opinion of the Committee of Shipping will, no doubt, be the Criterion; but I should be sorry to have this essential Point left even to my own Determination.

Some few Instances have been quoted of Ships hastily built having worn well, but all Experience is against this Maxim, and the Practice of His Majesty's Dock Yards, (where they would not intentionally err,) is against this principle.

Inspection, that necessary Guarantee to the Company as their own Insurers, may be supposed to be as little useful, for it appears in the Shipping Papers now in the Hands of the Proprietors, that four Times inspecting a Ship built at Liverpool, is all that is requisite for the Company's Security. Under this persuasion,—the daily Visits to Ships building in the River must be considered as a needless Task. Yet certain Benefit, and Security, as well as Convenience, does accrue from the repeated Examination of those confidential Officers whom we have so long and so justly depended on.—These are,

The Surveyor, his Deputy, and Assistant.

The Master Attendant, his Deputy, and Assistant.

Some of the former, are in the daily Practice of visiting Ships that are building, examining each Timber, and every Plank, and article of Smith's Work, and as nothing of the Material escapes their Notice, so the Workmanship is equally liable to their daily Observation. The rest of the Business falls under the Cognizance of the Master Attendant, and his Assistants; and it is but Justice to state, how well they have fulfilled their respective Duties. The Experience we have had will better speak their Eulogy, than any thing I can offer. Indeed, the Checks on the Builder and Owner are such, as to prevent either inferior Work or Materials; and though they little need it, the Officers are checks on each other.

That this cannot exist at the Out-Ports is very evident, and to delegate this Trust of Surveying to any Individual, however high in Ability or Character, and at a distance from the controlling Power of the Committee of Shipping; would be opening a door to Neglect or Imposition; and would also be an Imputation on our Officers or ourselves for tolerating such an unnecessary expensive Establishment as we have had for Forty Years. If Sets of Surveyors must be appointed for every Out-Port where Ships are contracted to be built, it will open a field for Imposition and Speculation that may grow injurious to the Company, especially when the Surveyor is to be paid by the Builder, as at present.

The Ships now building at Liverpool have not been seen above Four Times, by one of the Company's established Surveyors; and
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the Doctrine that, in contiguous Yards, daily or weekly Examination should be needful, at an increase of Trouble and Expence to all Parties; and yet when built at an Out-Port four or five Visits only are requisite, is inexplicable; because it militates against common Sense, Experience, and a Practice which the Company have been tenacious of for many Years; and the Precedent it has established is another Inroad into the protecting Part of the System, without any apparent Benefit to the Company.

Under such Circumstances of Inspection, every Owner will build at an Out-Port, where Labor and Timber is cheapest; and this brings us naturally to the Consideration of the Policy and Eligibility of building at them in any Instance.

It is manifestly unfavorable to the Company, if Inspection constitutes a necessary Part of the System; and Winds and Weather proving adverse, the Ships might not reach the Port of London, so as to conform to the Periods of Lading and Dispatch, which suited the Company's Arrangement; and a Loss would disappoint them of the Tonnage. The Accommodation to the Company in this and many other Points is certainly worth something in the rate of Freight.

When the Building of 800 Ton Ships was confined to two or three Yards in the River, little Competition could arise to lower the Price; but there are a dozen Yards at present where such Ships may be built, and this is sufficient to secure all the Competition requisite; Mr. Humble, of Liverpool, building in the River,
(which

(which he has done) destroys the Monopoly which has been asserted to exist, equally with his doing so at an Out-Port.

The Permission to build the Company's 800 Ton Ships at the Out-Ports abstracted from the Reasons hitherto urged, "is a momentous Measure;" because, to use the emphatic Words of an Honorable Baronet, "if the Principle be admitted that the lowest Offers are to be accepted, the Out-Ports can build cheapest, and "it will be a *complete Exclusion* to the Port of London."*

Affuredly this involves Matter of the first Importance to the Company, to the Nation, to the Peace of the Metropolis, and the Welfare of Individuals. Some Characters may treat these Apprehensions as chimerical; and think that nothing is to be dreaded from the Innovation, and that any Risk should be hazarded to gain a Reform in this Line, and Tonnage at a cheaper Rate. But running from one Extreme to its Opposite, is surely neither rational or politic. We have seen a total Subversion of established Usages by such Speculations; and they are little conversant in Politics or Business, who will not consent to the Correction of Abuses by patient Methods; but plunge at once into radical Reform. Let us not be the Dupes of our own Imagination, to fancy the Defects in the new Manufacture will be guarded against,

* There will be no Limit in the Out-Ports between the Land's End and the North of Scotland on the present Plan; and though the late Tenders have, except in one or two Instances, been for building in the River, yet it is understood to be still open to every Port in the Kingdom, when it suits them to offer.

which

which could not be remedied in the old, without tearing the Web to pieces.

Under the System suggested to the Court, and which I shall by and by introduce to Notice, a general Participation in Ship-building for the Company's Employ would be established; and thus *new* Ships of the lesser Description be engaged instead of *old* ones, competent Officers to command them, and every possible Security consistent with low Freight given, not only to the Company but to the Proprietors of privileged Goods, and to the Insurers of them.

Another Trespas on the former Regulations, has been in the Engagement of Shipping for Six Voyages certain, which have never been inspected by any Surveyor, though built in the River; and many have been the Efforts, to introduce others built at the Out-Ports, and Indian-built Shipping, as regular Ships for permanent Employ. This would have decided against all Inspection, except what could be had of the Ship when built; and therefore in the Teeth of those Precautions which have been so long the Criterion with the Company. The Employment of Indian-built Shipping, involving great political Considerations, shall be reserved for farther Observation to the latter Pages.

If what has hitherto been deemed the Safeguard to the Company, in building their Ships, is thus dispensed with; and if we look to the other Parts of the System, which regards the Navigation and good Conduct of them, it must appear to every unprejudiced Mind, that dangerous Innovations, under the fascinating Idea of cheap Freights, are on foot.

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The Experience and Ability of Persons long in the Employ, has been thought of so little consequence as not to merit a Stipulation in their Favor, or to be worth any Addition of Freight however small. Nay, by the Sum reimbursed them for the Command, they are as it were bought off from any such Pretensions. Whoever can get a Ship built for him to command, though he may have passed only three Voyages as an Officer in your Service, to India, and back ; is admitted as eligible, if his Age be no Impediment. Such a Case may now readily exist, and though this held equally under the former System, it should now be corrected ; the Voyages being so short, and Opportunities of gaining a Command recurring so frequently on the present Plan. Of the Ships building and lately built, few old Captains will succeed to the Command. Thus Inexperience will have the Preference ; and without Impeachment of the Character or Talents of those who do succeed, the Principle must be admitted to be wrong. The uncertain Tenure by which the new Captains hold their Situation, their Instability, when arrived at the Summit of their Wishes, which a Casualty they could neither prevent nor avoid renders formidable ; must suggest Expedients for Independence, which were not before thought of, at the Company's Risque and Expence ; and a Succession of Juniors will always be employed, to the Detriment of the Service, and to the Prejudice of the Company's Concerns.

This Point leads to the great and important Question of the Sale of Commands, which it was the professed Object to remedy.

This Measure, so long reprobated, so often contended against, and considered as the very Cause of the high Freight, and all the Evils of the former System, is now thought impracticable to prevent. Nay, whilst it was combated by all the Advocates for free and open Competition, Bargains were made for the new Ships they introduced; and since the complete Establishment of the System, we have Reason to believe, that either in the Transfer of the Shares, or in some other Way, a Consideration is given to the original Contractor for the Privilege of nominating a Commander. The Company are thus receiving, in their Freight, the Value of the Command. The Oaths and Bond do not apply so as to prevent it. And though some farther Regulation has been adopted, the following occurs to me as the most adviseable, and only Remedy.

“ That the Tender of every Ship should express the Captain’s
 “ Name; this will prevent the Job of contracting, and then hawk-
 “ ing the Command about for Sale; and the Owners who tender
 “ the Ship being Parties to the Oath, Bond, and first Charter-
 “ Party, will effectually prevent a Consideration being paid in the
 “ Outset.” What was done by Sir R. H. in the Case of the Royal
 Admiral will otherwise be perpetuated; and if the full Import of
 the Bye-Law be attended to, I do not see how a Ship can be
 allotted to any one tendering, who does not mean to continue an
 Owner; for the Bye-Law was intended to prevent Jobs by an
 Agent, and to have the real and bona-fide Owners Contracting
 Parties

Parties with the Company, and which in no Case ought ever to be dispensed with.

By the present Bye-Law, where two Ships are tendered at the same Price, the Lot is to determine who shall build: if one should be tendered with an experienced Commander, and the other with a Person who has never before filled the Station, does not Reason dictate, and would not every Individual in his own Case decide, that the Preference should be given to the former?

In the Appendix (A.) will be seen the difference in Price at what a Ship may be tendered, and how much the Value of the Command will lower the Rate of Freight from 21*l.* 10*s.* if the Captain submits to furnish 5000*l.* toward the Ship, without Interest or Dividends:

If such Arrangements and Bye-Laws are not thought necessary in the present Day, still some systematic Plan, some full and precise Outline and Detail should be drawn; which would embrace every Point of Consequence, and put a Period to Controversy. Whilst the Regulations are undefined, the Whole is subject to Variation, from the different Sentiments of the Committee at different Periods; and the Influence of powerful Applications. It is painful to be liable to them; and the Line once drawn, Relief will be extended to every Member of the Court and Committee, and not less to those who apply.

A Regulation should also be made respecting Ships being taken up, as they arrive at St. Helena, or in the Downs: It may so happen,

that Two Ships built at the same Time, and let on the same Terms, fail together on their first Voyage, by the Exigencies of the public Service, one may remain a Season longer in India than the other, and perhaps arriving late in the Season she does come Home, is not taken up till the following Year; at which Time, her Consort will arrive from her second Voyage, and may be going on her third when the other is only on her second; and, on their Return, one will have earned Three, the other only Two Freights: Again, a Ship abroad, that may be loaded homeward before another arrives, is detained till they are ready to sail, the latter Ship, or Ships, by failing better, just on their Arrival, by an Effort first drop Anchor, and thus have the Priority of being engaged. The Ship which the Company's Affairs had detained a Season, and the One detained after Lading, ought to have the Priority of those Ships she sails with in being again engaged, and as it is a Rule they may all benefit by, so it serves as a Protection to all alike, under such hard Events.

Should fair and open Competition really mean the Extension of Building to every Port in the Kingdom (which has been contended for by many) and the lowest Rate of Freight is to be decisive; there is neither Option or Responsibility on the Part of the Directors. All Discussion thereon is precluded, and Evils of uncommon Magnitude must arise from such a general Outline; the Principle of Competition without limit, is the wildest of all possible Theories, and too like the Doctrines of the present day on other Subjects. I am not an
Enemy

Enemy to the Principle, but wish to be hostile to all the Follies, Impositions, and Exactions of every System, and would as readily have opposed them in the old as in the new.

If the present outline of System admits of no Modification, it is peculiarly oppressive, or may be made so by its Application. Let me quote the recent Instance of Captain Patton, of the Ocean, one of those Commanders who, with Captain Farquharson, by superior Skill, Conduct, and Management, saved a Fleet of great Importance to the Company: This Gentleman, from the Exigencies of the Service, went a circuitous Passage to China, and his Ship was lost on an Island little known to English Navigators, and the Labours of his Life swallowed up. He has now no Prospect of Employ, but by Permission to rebuild his Ship, which is not thought admissible, "even at the Price others are hired under the present System," and which Permission, would neither infringe on, or overthrow any Part of the Principle on which it is founded—thus, the Intention of the Proprietors—so strongly expressed in Favor of the Commanders, is of no avail*.

The Principle of free and open Competition having been acted upon and established, it really behoves the Executive Body to recommend every possible Improvement of the present System, for the Adoption of the Proprietors; and particularly to guard against such Innovations as are hostile to the Interests of the Country—

* See the Resolutions on the Merit of the Commanders, and that the Change of System should be as little injurious as possible.

however

however the Company may be protected:—the Door is not shut
fully against Improvement.

The Extent and Importance of our Risques on the Ships, the Length of their Voyages, and the large Establishment of their Crews, make a Code of Maritime Law very necessary, beyond what is adopted for other Merchant Ships; and the repeated Instances of Infubordination, for want of Regulations authorized by the Company, and having the Sanction of Government, threaten the most serious Consequences, and is also a Point I most earnestly recommend.

This is ~~no~~ Party Question, nor is the Foundation on such shallow Opinions or Biasses. It is true, that interested Individuals have always Pleas and Arguments in favour of that System which most favors their Views; we should have one entire Code of Regulation which will leave no Door open to Jobs or Favouritism, of any kind: at present it is otherwise. Where the Change may be frequent of those who are to decide, permanent Measures cannot be expected, unless the Laws are precise. And should incompetent Persons take the Lead, Error is perpetuated. That professional Men differ is no wonder, in every Line they do the same; but that a Plan which all condemned should be acted upon, manifests the little Credit their Judgment is held in, or how unable it is to resist other Impressions. I refer now to the Plan for building 656 Ton Ships, on the full Establishment. They were ridiculed by all Seamen out of the House; only one Tender received at the expected Price, and the Owner has made as many
Applications

Applications for some alteration as a Person who feels the pressure of a bad Concern can do. Thus far the professional Opinion within was justified, and proved the Whole to be a Fallacy, an undigested Plan; and the Fact of their supposed light Draught of Water contradicted by the Records in the House, as on a Reference will appear, (Vide Appendix B.) but this Idea is not yet abandoned.

Innovations in an established System are at all times dangerous. The India Ships have always been spoken of with Respect and Commendation excepting the high Freight; such Security must be paid for, it is the Premium of Insurance added to the Cost of Transit. This System of Things has had the Experience of Years to bring it to its present Maturity. Like the Constitution of our Country, it had been improved by the Hand of Time, and Abuses corrected as they arose. The Size of the Ships, their Equipment and Construction, the almost daily Inspection when building or repairing, the Time they were on the Stocks, to season the Timber, and ensure their Strength to the last, as far as human Precaution could do, are all Points of uncommon Importance to a Company who are their own Insurers. Add to this, the Experience and Ability which the Commanders and Officers are known to possess, beyond most Persons in this Profession, from the System adopted to make them so.

Thus the Company have been protected in their maritime Concerns, by the most efficacious Measures; and the Safety of their
Property

Property has ascertained the Wisdom of the Proceedure hitherto.

A Question naturally arises from the Contemplation of this great Shipping System :—Was it, or is it now necessary ?

The Records of the Company bear testimony to its great Utility in so many Instances, that it seems Folly to dispute it; the Efficiency of the Fleet all Parties agreed was needful, and ought to be maintained. The Value and Importance of it should be estimated by the real Cost, divested of all the incidental Expences and Charges of Demurrage for Delays and Detention in War, and on political Service.

The Injury sustained by their Arrival out of Time, late Dispatch, circuitous Voyages, and consequent Damage on their Cargoes, are all Contingencies not chargeable to the Establishment; for, in fact, the Ships have been dedicated to other Purposes beside commercial Ones, and the Defence of the Company's Settlements in India, affording Accommodation for Troops beyond Vessels of any other Description they have been detained for that Purpose at a great Expence and Risque. Yet with these, and many other Instances of Superiority, still from the Language and Conduct that has been held, it should seem as if their Force and Efficacy was but a problematical Good; that other Ships and other Commanders are sufficiently competent, that these Regulations are partial and unnecessary. It appears as if the Way was pointed out, and partly trod to paralyse the
Whole,

Whole, by the Employment of other Ships, even for the finer Cargoes; and the Intentions manifested to introduce Indian Bottoms.

It now ceases to be the Monopoly it was said to be; yet if every Monopoly, because it is profitable, is to be laid open to all the Subjects of the Realm, whose Pretensions are equal, and who would hazard the Undertaking, the Bank itself would be insecure in its Tenure. In this of Shipping there was a Capital of Two Millions engaged. The Ships are passing into the Hands of other Individuals, and it will be very long before we find centered in the Owners, that great Accommodation and Convenience, which Years and the liberal Freights had contributed to establish. Its Efficiency can never be what it was; and I lament, with real Concern, the Prospect of a reduced Fleet, when so much Security to our Cargoes and Possessions has been derived from its Superiority: It appears to me, like the removal of some of the main Pillars of a Fabric, to substitute a less substantial Support.

May these Apprehensions not be realized! Biass I disclaim, except that which arises in Favour of my Country and the Company; it is this alone that has led me uniformly to oppose the Introduction of any but British-built Ships for constant Employment. No Benefits to an Individual, (and the Company is but one compared to the Nation at large) ought to supersede those intended for the whole Community; and what the Act of Navigation se-

cures to them ought not to be intrenched on by any Charter or Monopoly.

The Acts relative to Colonial Shipping can never, but by a forced Constrution, or by some subsequent Act, be extended to the Company's Territories in India; for they were not in Contemplation when the Acts were framed. The Intention of the Legislature at the Time must be their Explanation; though nothing can be a stronger Exposition, than the Act introduced by the Earl of Liverpool, confining the Importation of the Produce of the East, in Indian-built Ships, *to the Term of the War, and 18 Months after it*: for if this was their's by Right, the Act was needless. As a farther Illustration, it is to be considered that the Acts in Favor of Colonial Shipping, were intended to create an Industry among our Brethren resident on the other Side of the Atlantic; to enable them to bear the Burthen of their own Governments, by making them a commercial People, and aiding and assisting us in War, by the Increase of Seamen. Does this apply to India? The Language of the Day among certain Characters, "that India is a British Colony," may be to claim for it all the Benefits granted to those in America and the West-Indies; it has been also said the Act of Navigation, the Foundation of all this Country's Wealth and Greatness, is framed upon obsolete Principles, and a mistaken Idea of Benefit to the Country, narrow Conceptions and Prejudices; and Day by Day Inroads are making into this Bulwark of our Strength, unresisted, nay, often unobserved.

The Navigation of those Seas, and the extensive Trade of the Inhabitants, is carried on in Ships du Pays, without the Interference of the Ships of Individuals from hence. The Surrender of the carrying Trade between this Country and that, is so contrary to all the Policy hitherto observed, that to admit it would be facing a Danger without Necessity, especially in these perilous Times ; and to encourage it, is little short of Treason toward the Mother Country. British Artificers and Tradesmen, British Seamen and Manufacturers, and the several Branches of Trade and Navigation, which furnishes and constitutes the Equipment of the Company's Ships, whether large or small, of the old or new Owners, are decidedly entitled to Preference. The supplies to India of Cordage, Canvas, and all Marine Stores, will be through foreign Channels, to the manifest Injury of this Nation ; and when it is considered that the Equipment of a single Ship in this Country gives Employment to British Subjects, British Shipping, and British Capitals in many other Lines, the Injury of a Participation must be more severely felt.

Having considered the Subject as affecting the Company in the Protection afforded to their immense Concerns, and the Individual Benefit resulting to the Mariner, Shipwright, Artizan, and the Shipping Interests of the Country, and ultimately the immediate Interest of the Country itself, I will advert to Circumstances of a more extensive Range, in which possibly its future Prosperity, Pre-eminence and Welfare, and that of all Ranks and De-

scriptions, is most intimately connected. My Conceptions^{*} thereon may be fallible ; but persuaded of the Operation and Effect of the System alluded to, I should ill merit the Situation I hold, not to express the Consequence of those apprehended Measures, which involve so many interesting and important Points.

Let us recur to the Transactions of the three last Years, since the permanent Peace Freight was fixed on a Principle of constant Employment and short Voyages, under the absurd Idea of performing six in twelve Years. The Ships taken up in December, 1795, were, in June, 1798, not above One-Half returned, from Detention and Deviations on political Errands, dangerous and circuitous Tracts : and Loss or Distress the Consequence^{*}. In Season 1795-6, Eleven Thousand Tons taken up by the Secret Committee, besides Part of those engaged for Rice and Wheat ; and 7186 Tons of Extra Ships, independent of the regular Ships, were sent to India. In Addition to the regular Ships of the following Season, 7200 Tons were engaged, besides 3500 rejected through Insufficiency ; for it was resolved in the Committee of Shipping[†], they should be all surveyed in a dry Dock ; and the Result was, that only One-Half of those tendered were found competent.

The Provision of so much Tonnage, great Part of which has been floating about India on Demurrage, there being no Cargoes

^{*} The Detentions very much owing to the different extra Ships in the several Fleets, the Loss of the Ocean, and Distress of the China Fleets.

[†] This should have been noticed in the last Debate.

for the Ships; has involved the Company and all concerned in a Train of Difficulties. They have been sent from Port to Port; and, after a Detention in India, which they were little calculated to sustain, many have been lost or taken, others rendered unserviceable, and some have returned with those Cargoes, heretofore allotted to Ships of superior Strength, Force, and Equipment. It is almost needless to state the Risk, the Losses, the Expence which must arise to the Company from this Procedure, and the Cruelty to those who had let their Ships at a cheap Freight, on the Expectation of different Conduct. Demands are now instituting against the Company, for not lading them Home agreeable to Contract, but employing them on other Services; to what Extent this may go, is yet unknown; and to shew the Sentiments of the Residents in India, on supplying such Tonnage for their Goods, I need only refer to the Letter from the Board of Trade, 22d of November, 1797.

The Proceedings of the Secret Committee has been approved of by the general Court: and it is proper to submit my individual Sentiments to theirs; but no Imputation was intended beyond that of Over-confidence in a Contractor, till the Justification of the Transaction challenged acquiescence, or the contrary. My Feelings and Duty produced the Observations; and I confess my Mind has been so tinctured with this, and other Circumstances, that Suspicion arises on every Innovation; and that every subsequent Information confirms my Opinion thereon, it is but Justice to myself to state.

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The Introduction of such a Number, and such a Set of Ships, as well as the Engagement in India of a great Quantity of Tonnage to bring home Goods, who were paid in some Instances Three-Fourths, and in others One-Half their Freight beforehand ; manned with Lafcars, and incompetently officered, (when compared to the regular Service) seem to carry the Appearance of a System, which, if admissible in Times of Peace, was surely most unadvisable in War, perhaps it was to manifest to the Country the Practicability of carrying the Trade to and fro in defenceless Vessels, save the high Freights, and conduct the whole Traffic of India as other mercantile Lines are ; an Idea once suggested of having Line of Battle Ships for Convoy during War, as the cheaper Expedient, justifies some such Inference. (Vide Appendix C.)

The Papers relative to Shipping which are now in every Proprietor's Hand, will shew a resolution almost annexed to the new System, or immediately following it ; that to provide for the Tonnage which would drop by the End of 1796, it was necessary to build eight Ships of 1400 Tons, four Ships of 800 Tons, and eight Ships of 600 Tons, constituting 19,200 Tons ; they will manifest also an Attempt to introduce East-India Shipping, for the Purposes which British Ships should alone be employed on, the Transit of Goods from that Country to this. They will exhibit that, in Feb. 1797, there was stated a Deficiency in the regular Tonnage of 8300 Tons, and in Consequence, Advertisements were issued for building ; but amongst the Tenders were several of Indian Ships
ready

ready built: that they were proposed to be introduced as Part of the 8300 Tons, and the Measure as strongly resisted. When this failed, instead of supplying the deficient Tonnage, only 3200, or 4000 Tons, was contracted for. This 3200 Tons was agreed for with one Person, under Circumstances so singular, that they merited more Observation than has been given to the Transaction. I will not enter into the Detail of this Business at present. It is but a small Concern compared with the momentous Measures that appear to be afloat on this Subject. Some Indian Bottoms not then introduced, are now on a temporary Voyage, to be laden Home on the Company's Account from China, at the express Request of the President of the Board of Controul; on their Return to this Country, a further Trial for being engaged for a Term in the Company's Employ, is to be expected. The present Situation of the Company's Shipping suggests this Conjecture, which now calls for the Court's Attention.

From two Papers lately submitted to the Court and Committee, which will appear in the Shipping Proceedings, a great Deficiency in the established Tonnage was asserted to exist:—In a subsequent Paper laid before the Court, and brought forward to prevent the building those Ships the Court had resolved on, it is asserted, there were already more than was necessary: When it is recollected that in the Beginning of the Year 1796, 50,000 Tons Annually was stated to be necessary for the Company's Commerce, and the Calculations laid before the General Court, was computed thereon,

on, it must excite astonishment, that so soon after it should (when the Tonnage has been reduced 20 Ships, as per Appendix D.) be asserted that there are too many; and the building of those the Court had agreed on be opposed; but unless the Deficiency which exists be provided for by farther Contracts, in following Years, the Wants of the Company for Tonnage must be supplied by that inferior Description termed Extra Ships; or by those Indian Bottoms which are expected Home, or by others which are now building in every Part of India, under this Expectation, and perhaps Assurance of being Partakers in the carrying Trade. The Terms may be so reduced, that Encouragement to offer British Ships will cease, and none but Teak Ships, navigated by Lascars, can undertake the Transit of our Cargoes.

Combining all that has taken Place, to pull down rather than amend an old and established System, with the Resistance to build for the Completion of that Tonnage, which in the Spring of 1796, was proposed to be done as the Ships dropped; with the Substances of Advices from India on this Subject, and the System of employing Extra Ships for single Voyages, for the inferior Cargoes and privileged Goods; instead of small, new, and competent Vessels for a Term of Years, which would tend to lower the Freight, and afford much more Security to the Proprietor and Insurer; and contrast this with the Suggestions to build not only the Company's Ships, but even Ships of the Line in India; who can say, the Apprehension is ill founded, that the Transfer of a Part of the carrying Trade is determined on?

Contending

Contending as a Principle, that the Welfare of this Country ought to have the Pre-eminence, I see with infinite Concern the Prevalence of a System, involving the dearest Interests of the parent State. Indian Politics must be subservient to this great and most interesting Object. Nor are the Court of Directors bound to consider India but as a secondary Object. Their Constituents are British Subjects, and the Welfare of Britain should be the ultimate Object of their Attention. Difference of Opinion may prevail, but there can be little Doubt, if we are to lose what India gains, that the Balance in the End is against us.

Impressed with this Idea, we should never consent but under a Resolve of our Constituents, that there should be any Participation of the carrying Trade, the Birthright of our Countrymen. That the Black Subjects of the Indian Domain are to have Employment, to the Exclusion of British Ship-Builders, Artificers, Tradesmen and Seamen.

It cannot be amiss or irrelevant to the Subject, to advert to the uncommon Channels by which the Indian Produce is introduced into this Country. Danish and American Bottoms are become the Means of Transfit for both Exports and Imports*. This I

* The Decision of the Court of King's Bench on the Construction of the American Treaty, must excite an Alarm to all East-India Stock-Holders, and many mercantile Characters, if it permits an American to have a direct Interchange from hence to India: Where will be the Company's exclusive Charter? And on what Ground should an American possess more than a British Subject?

conceive to be annihilating the Trade and Consequence of the Company, by encouraging a Competition which could not exist, but by this Accommodation. The Company are said to be benefited by the Duties, which are clear Gain; but the Spirit of Enterprize in Individuals will, when permitted to interfere, always ruin a Company; and every House in India and England commence its Rival. The Facts now stare us in the Face. Vide Appendix (E.) The Acts of Parliament under which these Cargoes have been admitted, were intended (on Holland being taken Possession of by the French, and the Ships in Search of a Port to discharge their Cargoes) to protect the Dutch Property which was then afloat, or coming homeward.—A wise and salutary Measure. The Extension of this Act, to all neutral Bottoms during the War, though with certain Limitations, has sanctioned or permitted a Trade under American or other Colours; and Ships have even sailed from hence with assorted Cargoes, for the Enemies' Settlements in India; and Ships have returned from thence, with the Proceeds of such Cargoes, or the Produce of our Enemies' Settlements; which have been realized here to their great Accommodation and Benefit. Thus, whilst the fair Trader is debarred a Participation in the Commerce to and from India, but through the Medium of the East-India Company, and to an Extent of 3000 Tons only for the whole Country, the contraband Trader, under these Colours, and the Protecting Act referred to, is in the Enjoyment of it to any Extent.

Ships

Ships built at Bengal and other Ports, have sailed under neutral Colours to Batavia, Manilla, or Mauritius—drained India in Part of Specie, to purchase Cargoes for Hamburgh, or Denmark, intending to stop at a Port in the British Channel, to claim the Benefit of the Act; if granted, they unlade in the Thames, and the East-India Company sell the Goods*. I insert the Extract of a Letter from an intelligent Man at Bengal†, on this Subject, as a confirmation. Vide Appendix (F).

An Opinion is very prevalent, that if the Company's Trade to India was wholly abandoned to Individuals, the Revenue which constitutes our Advantages, would be remitted home to us at a more favorable Exchange than at present; and we are also told of the Necessity, as well as Propriety of encouraging the Exports from this Country, through every possible Channel; in fact, that to give

* Since penning the Above, the Court has a comfortable Assurance in Mr. Secretary Dundas's Letter to his Majesty's Advocate General, that a proper Cognizance shall be taken of these illegal Transactions.

What has been imparted to me seems to call for the most rigid Scrutiny, as Offences against the Traitorous Correspondence Act.

† "When Peace takes Place, there will be an immense Trade under Foreign Colours, from hence to Ostend, Hamburgh, and Copenhagen; to this latter Place, it is very great, even now. The Bill for granting Registers to India-built Ships, having been thrown out, all which, would otherwise have gone to London, will now go to other Places, under nominal Foreign Colours, mostly Danes, as Sarampore, a Danish Settlement, is only a few Miles from Calcutta; where Colours, Clearance, and every Requisite for disguising the Ship and Property, may be had at all Times."

Calcutta, 6th of January, 1798.

up the Monopoly, (the very Basis of our Charter) will not be injurious, retaining the Sovereignty. How long *that* may remain with us is problematical at best. When deprived of our Territory, and our Commerce surrendered to Individuals, it may truly be said the Company is a Nonentity.

There is one stubborn Fact against these Experiments existing in the Example of other Nations; with the Annihilation of the Exclusive Trade and Territory of their several Companies, has their Consequence and Commerce declined, till little or none remains.

And as a commercial Maxim it may be asserted, that you cannot increase the Consumption of Indian Articles here, or European Commodities there at Pleasure, or beyond a certain Limit. Therefore the less the Company are rivalled by Individuals, the Market will be more at their Command; and their Profits from the Regularity of their Supplies more certain, and of greater Consequence to them. The System of opening the Market here to all Adventurers to and from India, lest they should go to the other Ports on the Continent, is facilitating their Plans, establishing their Capitals, sacrificing the Company's exclusive Trade for a temporary Advantage, and, on the Return of Peace, we shall find our Object defeated. The Trade will again return to those Ports with additional Vigour, from the Countenance they have experienced. If British Capitals are engaged therein, for the Remittance of Fortunes acquired in the East, let us furnish the Ships
for

for this Purpose, by the Establishment of a Class competent to the Service; which, if built and engaged for the Term they are in Repair, may be navigated at 12*l.* per Ton Peace Freight, to any Extent they may be wanted*. We shall thus secure the Returns to this Country, and give Employment to the Natives and Subjects of these Kingdoms. This Measure, first introduced to the Notice of the Court by a senior Member of the Committee of Shipping, has never been considered; nor is there one rational Objection assigned for not adopting it.

If the Company's Exports were extended, and by this Class of Ships they might be Freight free, it would prevent the Interference of Foreigners† and contraband Traders, who presume on finding a Market from the scanty Supply of the Company's Exports; which, if increased, would exclude them and save in Part the Necessity of Loans, at an enormous Interest, for the Provision of Cargoes. The constant Intercourse between this Country and India, would be much strengthened and improved by these Ships sailing at all Periods of the Year.

* This Tonnage, if not wanted for the Company's Exports, at a small Expence for Demurrage, would convey Stores to the Cape, Botany Bay, or India, on Account of Government.

† “ The whole of the Madeira Trade to India, amounting to 1500 or 2000 Tons annually, is in the hands of Foreigners: the mercantile Houses there, are British, and in Order to prevent their Business being at a stand, are reduced to the Necessity of Shipping on the Foreigners, having no other means of Export to India.

They might be furnished by means of the 500 Ton Ships, at the usual Freight charged outwards with Tonnage, and which they would gladly pay---this Participation of Freight, would relieve the Company, and Individual on the homeward Voyage; and is another Argument in favor of that Description of Vessels.”

I have

I have no Hesitation in believing, that the Privilege and Gruff Goods, would give Employment to 40 Sail of 500 Ton Ships, in Addition to the Company's established Fleet. The consequent Employ of numberless Persons in the different Dock Yards, in their building, repairing, and refitting. - And its natural Result, the Extension of that Commerce which is to furnish the Articles of Equipment, are Objects of Importance infinitely surpassing the Repairs and Equipment of the India-built Ships; the Expenditure for which, great Stress has been laid on, as a national Benefit.

The Policy of permitting Ships of Force to be built in India, which might hereafter be at the Disposal of the Residents there, is a Subject that will be thought more for a Minister's Consideration than an Individual's; but as it constitutes an essential Point in preserving to us what I have been so strongly contending for, so I shall not hesitate to say a few Words thereon. Ships of Force should be admitted only in the Company's Employ, and the Pre-eminence in Naval Strength ought to be European. If Vessels of Force are built in any Number, or navigated by the Natives, the Tendency cannot but be alarming. Imperceptible are the Steps from Weakness to Power, from Restraint to Independence. The Trade, the Capital, the Resources of that Country are rapidly encreasing; what Concessions have been made but a few Years back to private Traders; what Stipulations are constantly making, and as readily complied with. The furnishing your own Tonnage is spoken of as a Disappointment, because

because they are building for this exprefs Purpose ; and we may soon be told, that the Cargoes they fend to Europe, fhall be on Terms of their own inditing.

The Profperity of the Country, its progrefs in the feveral Arts and Manufactures, the great Capitals employed, the numberlefs Europeans who are refident there with and without the Company's License, all tend to that Emancipation from Controul that will dictate, fooner or later, the Terms of Traffic with the parent State ; and when they have that Defcription of Ships, which can protect their Property, they may fupply every Nation in Europe and America with Indian Produce ; knowing that this Country cannot do without the Trade, or fuffer its Suspension for even a Year.

No Way inimical to the Welfare of India, or thofe refiding there, nor defirous to keep them back in the Scale of Improvement ; it is my chief Aim to inculcate the Subferviency and Subordination to this Country ; and the Perfuaſion I entertain that the Meafures in Contemplation lead to the moſt ſerious Injury to us, as a maritime and commercial Nation ; to the Eſtabliſhment of an improper Independence, and making this Country ſubſervient to Indian Politics, has been my Motive for this ſolemn Appeal to good Senſe and Patriotiſm. If my Apprehenſions are chimerical, no Harm is done, and your Trouble in the Peruſal is all I have to regret ; but if theſe Hints lead to a further Conſideration of ſuch important Points, I ſhall
reſt

rest satisfied with the Performance of a Duty incumbent on me ; trusting you will perceive the Policy, Propriety, nay, Necessity, by some restrictive Resolutions to confine the carrying Trade between this Country and India, as far as depends on you, to British Ships only. It is a Matter of little Moment, as a National Concern, who are the Owners ; but a Provision of good and substantial Vessels of both Descriptions, engaged for a Permanency, is the only Expedient to prevent Abuses, Losses, and Injury, which must result from employing small incompetent Vessels, and making extra Ships an annual Arrangement.

When you contemplate the Loss which has been sustained by the Company already, and what will inevitably attach to the Employment of these inferior Ships on making up the Account ; the Interference in our Commerce, both out and home, from the Enterprize of and Indulgence granted to Individuals under a British Flag, and British Capitals under a Foreign Flag ; the Accommodation to our Enemies and Rivals whom it would be Policy to suppress ; the Establishment of Capitals in every Nation in an Indian Commerce, for the temporary Benefits which accrue to us, and supporting a Rivalship to the Company at the very Threshold of the India-House ; or calculate, if possible, the Losses to the Company from the Interruption of their regular Commerce, from political Deviations and Detentions, circuitous Voyages and Dispatches out of Season, entailing Damage and Demurrage on the Company to a most enormous Amount ; or reflect
on

on the still more enormous Out-goings and Sacrifices of the Payment of the Nabob's Debts, the Army Arrangement, the unnecessary Remuneration to the Captains, with the unfortunate Speculation in Spices, and a new Government established at the Islands to furnish what we cannot want for Years; many other Circumstances, and several lesser Expenditures not considered, it must be obvious that any Events which tend to interfere with the Profits of our Trade, or give that to the Foreigner or Individual, which will benefit the Company, will be fatal; we want the Whole, and Nothing short of it, with the strictest Economy and Management, such as last Year and this has manifested, will extricate us *. The Establishment of a System of Indian Shipping will complete our Ruin. Its Advantage over this Nation is manifest by the Cheapness of Labour, the Exemption from those Taxes we are here subject to, and which have been incurred for the Defence, not only of the Commerce of the whole Empire, but our Existence as a Nation; and to which they are not contributors (either here or there) by any Impost or System of Taxation. Should, therefore, the Benefits of the carrying Trade to Europe be also thrown into their Scale, or they become formidable at Sea, by the building and Equipment of Ships of Force, our Authority over those distant Possessions will be the sooner questionable; and it is our bounden Duty, however partial we may feel towards them, and extend Encouragement to the utmost prudential Limit, still to consider the Claim, the irreverfible Right of the parent State to a Preference.

* The Public are interested to preserve the Profit to the Company, on account of the 500,000*l.* participation of their surplus Gains.

No Time or Circumstance should alienate from us this Birthright whilst it can be retained ; and we are reasonably privileged, if not entitled (from bearing the Burthen of our Public Debt) to have the carrying Trade exclusively our own.

Unincumbered from the Preffure of those heavy Charges and Expences, which are enumerated, (and which we shall sur vive by a prudent Economy,) and on the Adoption of a System so beneficial to the Country and Company, what might not the East-Indies accomplish? What is the Opinion of our Enemies on this Subject, and their Apprehension of its Resources?

Having given great Attention to the Shipping Concerns of the Company, dispossessed of every private Concern, that might be thought to bias me in the Discharge of my Duty ; and without a Relative or Dependant who can be affected by your Determination —I submit these Sentiments thereon for your Consideration.

The Subject is interesting, and Brevity on such a Topic not possible. It is for the Court to weigh these momentous Points of Trade and Shipping ; and I trust their Decision will be founded on the true Interests of the Company, which are inseparable from those of Old England. With the annexed Outline for Improvement of the present Shipping System, I conclude these Remarks, trusting that what has been thus unreservedly offered to your Notice, will be candidly received as the Dictates of an honest Mind, zealously attached to the Interests of the Company, and the Duties of that Station he has been honoured with.

PROPOSED

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS.

THE present System of free and open Competition to be meliorated by the Adoption of the following Detail :

1. That all Ships of 800 Tons or upwards be built in the River Thames, or within such Distance as will admit of the Inspection of the established Surveyors, at least once a Month, and not exceeding 100 Miles from the Capital.

2. That they be 18 Months from laying the Keel to Launching.

3. That the same Draft and Model be for every Ship, in Order that they may all have the same Properties.

4. That the Commander be named in the Tender for building, and the contracting Owner or Owners be Parties to the first Charter Party.

5. That any Set of Owners tendering an unexceptionable Captain as a Commander, shall have a Preference to build, if his Terms are on a Par with the Tender of any other Offer which may be accepted.

6. That no Person succeed to the Command of a Ship who had not been a chief Mate one Voyage, and a sworn Officer three Voyages inclusive.

7. That every Ship unavoidably lost or taken without Blame attaching to the Commander: The Owners of such Ship shall have the Option of building another Ship for the said Commander, at the Medium Price, at which any Ships may be then building for the Employ.

8. That those Ships which, from Events on their Voyage, have been, for the Company's Convenience or Interest, delayed, so as to lose a Season, or their Turn in being taken up, have a Priority when they do come home.

9. That a Code of Maritime Regulations be formed for the better Government and Discipline of the Crews of the Ships in the Company's Service.

That for the Importation of Gruff and Privileged Goods, Ships of 500 Tons be engaged under the following Regulations.

1. That they be built at any Port in this Kingdom where Two or more Ships of this Size have been launched, and whose Construction, as it respects Workmanship and Materials, has not been impeached.

2. That they be Twelve Months at least on the Stocks, and have all the same Dimensions and Frame.

3. That they be subject, during their Building and Repair, to such Inspection as the Court of Directors may think fit.

4. That they be commanded by a Person qualified as a Chief Mate in the larger Ships.

5. That they be navigated and equipped as the extra Ships of the Season 1798.

6. That their Employ be constant in Peace (not waiting the Periods of Lading and Dispatch as the larger Ships have been accustomed to) to create a frequent Intercourse and Opportunity of Communication with the Company's Settlements, and to enable them to sail on the lowest Terms.

APPENDIX.

(A.)

THE following is the Result of the different Calculations, which are too voluminous to insert. It may be necessary to state, I have taken the Outfit of the new Ship, as per Appendix 1428, in the Shipping Proceedings, and at the lowest possible Expences and future Outfits, and supposing the Ship to remain at Home for a Season twice in the Course of her Six Voyages.

An 800 Ton Ship let at 21l. and to bring 70 Tons Surplus, debiting the Account with 5l. per Cent Interest only, and Insurance at 8 Guineas out and home will, at the winding up the Concern, be in Debt - - - - - £3409

Remains the Hull and Stores to liquidate it.

If let at 19l. 10s. and all other Circumstances the same, and 4000l. be wrote off the first Cost, she will be in Debt 3420

And the Hull and Stores remain to liquidate.

An

An 800 Ton Ship let at 21l. 10s. per Ton, and all other Circumstances as above, will wind up £.898

In favour of the Ship, besides her Hull and Stores.

And it will require 5000 Guineas to be wrote off the first Cost, to enable a Ship let at 19l. 10s. to be equally favourable.

An 800 Ton Ship let at 21l. 10s. and other Circumstances as above, except debiting the Account, 6l. per Cent. per Annum, will wind up nearly the same with the Account at 21l. debiting the Account 5l. per Cent. per Annum.

These are comparative Statements, to shew the Result between the different Freights; and I have no doubt but the Sequel will prove, I have not brought more against the Account than should be, as no Allowance is made for Casualties of any kind. However Experience is the Touchstone, and not Estimate. If I am Right, the Inference is, that in the Freights, the Company receive the Value of the Command.

Comparative

(B.)

Comparative Statement of the Dimensions of the proposed Ships of 656 Tons, with their supposed Draft of Water, and the Draft of Water and Dimensions of other Ships of the same Tonnage.

			Length. Ft. In.	Breadth. Ft. In.	Depth in Hold. Ft. In.	Draft of Water: Ft. In.	
New Ship, 656 Tons.	}	-	110 0	33 6	13 6	supposed from 17 0 to 18 0	
Lanfdown, 647 Tons.	}	-	106 10	33 9	14 1	21 0	from Bengal.
Wycombe, 643 Tons.	}	-	101 11	34 5½	13 0	19 4	from Madras.
Earl Spencer, 672 Tons.	}	-	-	-	-	20 6	from Madras.
Afia,	}	all of 657 Tons.	}	-	-	19 6	
Bute,				-	-	20 1	
Northumberland,				-	-	20 1	
Salisbury,				-	-	19 6	
Talbot.				-	-	20 6	

F

An

C.

An Account of the Ships taken up in India, under the Orders of the Court, of March, 1795, to make up the Deficiency of Tonnage arising from the large Ships having been taken into His Majesty's Service; and of those taken up under Orders from the Secret Committee of 14th July: with some preliminary Remarks.

In a Letter to the Supreme Council, signed by 23 Commercial Houses, April 18, 1795, they suggest "as there is 30,000 Tons of Shipping belonging to Residents at Bengal, that they may be employed in the Transit of the Goods and Privilege Tonnage; and the Proposals were, to let them to the Company at 12l. per Ton in Peace, and 16l. in War. That they be permitted to return in Ballast from England, or with the Goods of Individuals, (permitted by the Company to be exported,) at the Option of the Owners; or that the Company may load Naval or Military Stores on them to half the Ship's Tonnage."

Very opportunely did our Government engage the large East-India Ships to introduce the Measure to an unexpected Extent. In the Month of March, 1795, the Court (in Consequence of this Tonnage being taken into the Navy,) resolved, that the Bengal
and

and Bombay Governments be authorised to enter into an Agreement with the Owners of Ships, which may be offered, to bring Home Goods *on the Company's Account*; that such Ships shall be permitted to export from this Country to the East-Indies any Goods whatsoever, Ordnance and Military Stores excepted.

In the Board of Trades, Letter 14, July, 1795, to the Governor General, &c. they state, should the Honourable Court *not be able to procure Tonnage upon moderate Terms in England*; they submit the Expediency of *risquing Sugars, Saltpetre, and other Gruff Articles of Investment on Ships weakly armed*, which they suppose may be had at 16l. per Ton, if allowed to export any Goods whatever, except Ordnance and Military Stores.

Advertisements were accordingly issued at Bengal, and, as we must presume, the Government obtained the lowest Terms they could; the Rate at which they were proposed in April, and what they were engaged at, constitutes a remarkable Fact, that the Ship Owners in India, knew how to avail themselves of the Deficiency of British Tonnage: and must prove to the Company, the little Reliance on cheap Tonnage from thence, should it really be wanted: The Governor General's Minute contains this strong Statement, "It is an established Fact, that a large Proportion of the Produce of this Country sent to Europe, goes to Foreign Markets; that, during War, it is exposed in neutral Bottoms, in such a Mode, as to prevent Condemnation or Seizure by any of the Powers at War; and at all Times,

“ under such Coverture as to prevent Detection. That much of
 “ the Produce so exported, is *the Property of British Subjects*, and
 “ is conveyed on Ships *their Property*, so mortgaged and made
 “ over to neutral Nations, as to obviate Seizure or Detection, whilst
 “ the real Property is secured by Agreements, which do not appear.
 “ That this Channel is pursued *in Defiance of Law and its Penalties*,
 “ from the superior Advantages attending it, the Principle of which
 “ is, the comparative low Freight; and by the Continuance of it,
 “ both the Nation and the Company are deprived of profits, which
 “ they would otherwise receive, if the Goods were imported at the
 “ London Markets.”

How forcibly does this plead for the Adoption of a Class of Ships, such as I have described; who, by coming and going constantly, would supply the requisite cheap Tonnage, shut all Foreigners from an Intercourse with India; and extend the Exports from thence to the utmost Limits. The Governor-General's Conclusion is, “ It follows, therefore, that to appropriate to
 “ the British Nation these Advantages, which are to be considered relatively as the Gain of other Nations, and to obviate
 “ all the Evils and Inconveniences of the Practice, a Reduction in
 “ the Freight must take place; *and if this should be impracticable*
 “ *in England*, an Offer, for this Purpose is made here, by those
 “ whose Interests are most materially concerned in it; upon this
 “ Offer, it now rests with the Honourable Court of Directors to
 “ decide.

The

The Court of Directors not having decided, though the Subject of providing such Tonnage has been brought forward several Times, it is pressed again on their Notice in this little Attempt to improve the Carrying Trade. I maintain, that Ships better navigated and equally good, may be had at 12l. per Ton ; and the Outward Tonnage, *all the Company's*, Individuals benefited by lower Insurance, and the Country at large by their Building and Equipment.

Instead of resorting to Advertisements here, for Ships ready built to supply the deficient Tonnage in 1795, a Preference was given to India Tonnage; and above 5000 Tons of British was refused ; this Predilection for Indian Bottoms is what I am noticing.

Many of the India Ships have been registered here as *plantation built*, and are entitled to the Privileges resulting from the Register, though navigated by Lascars ; Numbers of whom lately have been a Pest to the Community, and Burthen on the Company.

The Advance in Bengal of One Moiety or Three-Fourths of the Freight, and the Ships being taken up at the full Price for as much as they could carry ; contrary to the then Usage of freighting Ships in the Company's Service ; was an Advantage of no small Magnitude, when the Interest of Money in that Country is considered, and what was never mentioned in their Offer in April.

In short, it is one of those Specimens which should put us on our guard against India Tonnage : I now furnish the List of Ships, with the Owners, and Terms on which they were engaged.

The

The Star against the Owners' Names, denotes those who subscribed the Letter tendering Tonnage at Bengal.

Chartered Tonnage.	Owners.	
Nonfuch - - 450	* S. Canning	{ Were taken up at 20l. for Piece-Goods; 16l. for all other Goods; three-fourth of the Freight paid at Bengal on their Chartered Tonnage or one fifth more than was laden.
Britannia - - 450	* L. Rofs	
General Meadows 350	W. M'Donald	
Eliza Ann - - 600	J. Lloyd	
Duckingfield Hall 600	Campbell & Radcliffe	
measuring only 365		

—2450 Tons chartered, yet they brought but 2062.

* Harriot - - 550	J. Farrar	{ Were taken up at 20l. for Piece Goods, and 16l. for all other Goods, half the Freight on the Chartered Tonnage paid at Bengal.
measuring only 373		
Chichester - - 450	R. Blake	

—1000 Tons chartered, yet brought but 753.

Lady Shore - - 550	J. Wilcocks	{ Taken up on the same Terms of 20l. and 16l. three fourths of the Freight laden paid at Bengal. Some of these Ships were so overloaded, as to be at great Risque, and to afford but miserable shelter for the Lascars.
measuring only 432		
Abercromby - - 750	* W. Fairlie	
* Anna - - - 800	* Ditto	
Bangalore - - 350	Edwards and Frayer	
* Cecilia - - - 473	* Lambert and Co.	
* Gabriel - - - 1100	* Hamilton & Aberdien	
Verrunna - - - 529	* Lambert and Co.	

Berwick - - - 458	M'Taggart & Rothman	{ Taken up at 20l. for Piece Goods, 18 for Rice; and 16 for other Goods; three fourths of the Freight on Tonnage laden paid at Bengal, at 17l. per Ton for Grain; three fourths of Freight on Tonnage laden paid there.
measuring only 420		
* Royal Charlotte 680	J. Higgins	

Chartered Tonnage.	Owners.	
Brought forward 9140		
Milford - 700	P. Bruce	{ Laden wholly on private Account; by being let to the Company, then re-let to Individuals.
Warren Hastings 450	*W. Fairlie	
Caledonian - 1000	*Ditto	
Ganges - - 650	*W. Fairlie	{ At 18l. per Ton; three fourths paid in Bengal; but no Freight on 80 Tons Sago.
Princess Royal 1100	Roebuck and Abbott	{ At 16l. per Ton; three fourths on Tonnage laden, payable in India, $\frac{1}{4}$ in London, on Arrival; driven back to Bombay, and her Cargo changed. This Ship failed at 22 Feet draft of Water, when our own Ships are restricted to 20 Feet 6 Inches.
Exeter - - 500	{ *W. Dreng and R. Whitford	{ At 20l. for Piece Goods; 16 for other Goods; three fourths of Computed Tonnage paid at Bengal.
Ships Taken.	Owners unknown.	
Amelia - - 1000	1100 laden	{ Freight and Compensation paid to these Ships amounting to - £48,436 for three fourths Freight on Tonnage laden, and something beyond on Account lesser Earnings. The prime Cost of these Cargoes, and that on Board the Hercules and Princess Royal, was - 21,415
Favourite - 800	873 } beside other	
Montrose - - 600	520 } Goods	
Hercules } - 750	750	
American }		
The Amelia is now in the River, as the Amelia of New York.		{ Losses - - - £69,851 except what has been saved of the Princess Royal's damaged Cargo.
Total Tons 16690		

By late Advices from Bengal, it is understood, that the Governor General (Earl of Mornington) has favourably received the Application of the Merchants to send Goods to Europe on their own Ships.

*Surat

* Surat Castle	-	1059	} taken up at Bombay, at 20l. per Ton from thence to China and Home.
* Carron	-	1025	
* Anna	-	820	
* Britannia	-	700	
		<hr/> 3596	

Taken up at 35l. per Ton, for what they could bring from China a Voyage of a few Months, manned with Lascars, consequently almost defenceless, when the regular Ships of the Company, Outward and Homeward, were engaged at 34l. for 800 Ton Ships; and 30l. 15s. exclusive of Manning and extra Wages, for Ships between that and 1100 Tons; and though the Contract was drawn at Bombay, between the Surat Castle, and a Ship of the same Size in the regular Service, in respect of Kentledge, they never considered the Surplus Tonnage at half Freight in the latter description of Ships.

From Custom-House Data, which are too voluminous to insert, I have been able to trace that the Cargoes of these Ships have nearly equalled all the Company's Exports, an Interference surely of too much Consequence to disregard*.

In Fact, the History of these Ships seems an Object for Enquiry with those which have been under Cognizance of the Court. The Board of Trade were conscious, that weakly armed Vessels were unfit for any but Gross Goods. Whence comes it that valuable Goods were put on such Ships, and on others nearly as incompetent?

* By Advices just received from Bombay, it appears that these 4 Ships have supplied the Market for some Years with European Articles.

(D.)

List of Ships that have performed their contracted Voyages, taken or lost ; and of others built to supply the Deficiency.

1794. Earl Chesterfield

1795. Contractor

Valentine

Busbridge

General Elliot

Ponborne

Ganges

Walpole

Dutton

Tons.

10 Middlesex - - - - - 8000

1796 Francis

Northumberland

Earl Cornwallis

Osterly

Warren Hastings

Kent

Deptford

G

General

		Tons.
	No. 10, Brought forward	8000
	General Coote	
	Barwell	
	London	
	Earl of Oxford	
	Rodney	
13	Triton - - - - -	10400
1797.	Effex	
	Europa	
	Ocean	
4	Earl Wycombe - - - - -	3460
1798.	Asia	
	Lord Macartney	
	General Goddard	
	Hillboro	
	King George	
	Houghton	
	Sullivan	
	Raymond	
	Woodcot	
10	Princess Amelia - - - - -	8000
And 1799.	Six Ships more will be	4800
	Deficient since 1795 -	<u>3466</u>

New Ships engaged or built.

1795.

Princess Charlotte	-	610	
Sir Step. Lushington	608		
			—1218

1796.

		<i>Tons.</i>	
Earl Spencer	- - -	645	
Admiral Gardner	-	813	
Ganges	- - - - -	1500	
			—1958
Dutton, or Dover Castle		820	

Leave granted to build for 98—9.

Walpole	- - - - -	820	
Calcutta	- - - - -	820	
Humble (New Ship)		820	
Ditto	ditto	820	
Hamilton	ditto	656	
			—3936

For 99—1800.

1st. Contract	{	Curtis (New Ship)	820
		Charnock	- - - - - 820
		Cleland	- - - - - 820
		Gillet	- - - - - 820
		Princep	- - - - - 820
		Webster	- - - - - 820

2d. Contract	{	Larkins (2) - - -	1640
		Cleland - - - - -	820
		Wigram (2) - - -	1640
		Wilfon - - - - -	820

— 9840

New Ship in lieu of Middlesex - - - 1200

will be replaced in 1800 - 18972 Tons.

Deficiency of the Tonnage since 1795, 19 Ships, 15688 Tons.

Various

(E.)

Various difficulties concur to prevent my furnishing a correct Statement of what follows. It is an outline only of Facts which can be known but to a few—though its Accuracy be not demonstrable, yet it may be sufficient for the Purpose of calling the Subject which involves so much the Interest of the Company and Country to your Consideration and from what the Governor General has said, it surely cannot but be an Undertaking of the first Importance.

It must appear wonderful, that Gentlemen who are so much more competent to discover and expose these Transactions, and Abuses, should glance over them as of no Consequence, when they are of such Magnitude. For, independent of those Ships who claimed a Right to this outward Traffick, there have been Vessels under Danish and American Colours, which have loaded here for India; to elude Cognizance, their Clearance has been for Madeira or Lisbon, or some other Port, and from thence they proceed to India; nothing but the Insurance is regular: their numbers industriously concealed.

The best Account I have been able to collect is as follows :

Count Bernstoff,	Ill Kaunitz,
Bellona,	Crown Prince,
Conningholme,	Minerva,
Droninghard,	P. Frederick,
Harriott,	Sophia Frederica,
Johanna Maria,	Dannemar,
Rudimark,	Omelenburgh.

Juliana,

Juliana,	Elizabeth,
Bergen,	Ocean,
Stavanger,	Merchant of Genoa,
Mary,	Harmony,
Harriott,	Nancy,
Five Brothers,	Rodney,
Atlantic,	Indian Chief,
Hope,	Winyaw,
Ann,	Eliza,
Ganges,	Illustrious Friends,
Orion,	Commerce,
Kennington,	Triumph.

These Ships, many of whom have been a Voyage before, will in course return with Cargoes, beside those which appear on the Homeward Lift, and others that have sailed from the Out-Ports.

The

The following is a List of Ships under Danish or American Colours, the whole or Part of whose Cargoes, have been landed in this Country, and sold, or to be sold at the East-India Company's Sale. Some Articles, the Produce of our Enemies' Settlements, thereby realizing to them Advantages, for the Sake of a paltry Commission, to the Company and Houses of Agency.

Maria Wilhelmina	Eliza
Alexander	Merchant of Genoa
America	Amicable
Martha	Concordia
Fanny	Adventure
True Brothers	John Henderson
Cleopatra	Argo
Camilla	Connecticut
Hope	Superb
George, alias, West Capelle	John

(F.)

A *List of Ships*, under Neutral Colours, that have, in 1797 and 98, come from India; and though most likely not a fifth Part of those engaged in this Traffick, must demonstrate the Ground that the Governor General had to assert so strongly the extent of it.

To imagine that the actual and bona fide Traffick of the Danes or Americans is the Occasion, or that any commercial Houses of those Nations are equal to these Undertakings, is an Absurdity, and it is only to be resolved into that Species of Indirect Commerce so fully set forth by our President in Bengal, and it calls for some speedy and strong Measures, without respect to Persons.

Some of these Ships were engaged on the Manilla Expedition; on their return to Bengal, assumed Danish and other Colours (it is said near 20,000 Tons Shipping were wanted) to proceed to Batavia, and from thence to Europe. The Officers and Men of the Company's Ships decoyed from their Duty by large Pay or Bounty.

Some of the Ships have been captured, and very material Evidence obtained as to the Principals and Agents.

The strong Minute of the Governor-General before quoted, has never produced an adequate Effort here to prevent such Transactions; conciliatory Plans or Encouragements have only been held out,

out, which have had no Effect; but rather countenanced the Practice. Houses high in commercial Credit, are embarked very deeply therein.

Hence, perhaps, the difficulty we have experienced of procuring for the Company such Assortments of Goods as were necessary or indented for. The reluctance I have met with, to communicate Information on this head, by Parties, who, as Individuals, are reaping some Advantage therefrom; argues the Incorrectness of this Procedure, equally with what was stated on the Subject of Insurances; that a high Premium was paid (20 or 25 per Cent.) and if the Ship was stopped and carried into Port, the Insurer is to pay without farther Enquiry or Proof. It is surely incumbent on the Court to scrutinize these important Points. If a Bill of Discovery was filed against those supposed to be Principals or Agents in this Business, the Truth would be divulged; and Remedies might be applied. That the exclusive Trade of the Company requires it, needs no Argument to prove; and though I cannot Confirm what is said on these Topics by Evidence, the Facts are notorious, and demand Investigation.

The Governor-General says, the Individuals in India, *in Defiance of Law and its Penalties*, engage in this Trade: cannot the Company exercise some Authority in their own immediate Dominions, or exclude those who are concerned in it?

The following will corroborate his Assertions; and how British Subjects can engage either in the Furnishing or Navigating these
H Ships,

Ships, and be exonerated from the Penalty of the Law, or elcape the Notice of the Company, I am at a los to conjecture.

Lift of Ships under neutral Colours from India.

Bernstorff	Nancy
Cronberg	Margaretta Eliza
Duntzfield	Catherine Maria
Fredericksburg	Johanna
Juliana Maria	P. Augustenberg
Rosketler	Elizabeth
Little Catharine	Eundra
Elbe de Iongo	Amadaht
J. Parish	Rheinsburg, Capt. M'Call
Christianshard	Odin, Capt. Elmore
Columbus	Nancy, Capt. Wilson
Kromp Frederic	Yarmouth, Capt. Dawes
Commerce Port	Brudors, Capt. Smith
Orion	Iphigenia

If Policy permits this interference of Individuals, surely it is adviseable that the Means of Transfit should be *British Ships and Seamen* : this is the Period to establish it, when Peace returns, it may remain with us, and a direct Import must be more beneficial to the Individual and the Country, than an indirect one—exclusive of the manifest Advantage of employing Two Thousand additional British Seamen.

If India can dispense with the increased Quantity of those Articles the Company have usually sent, the Advantage must be greater than to Individuals who pay Freight, Insurance, and Duties in India. The Adoption of cheaper Vessels for the inferior Articles, when the defensible Ships might take the Warlike and Naval Stores, with the more valuable Exports ; and protect the smaller ones, seems no ineligible System.

The average Exports of the Company for Three Years in the following Articles, will form a Contrast to the Individual Export.

Copper.	Lead.	Iron.	Steel.	Anchors and Grappnails.	Canvas.	Cordage.	Pitch&Tar.
Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Ells.	Tons.	Barrels.
1756	738	928	115	45	56520	172	811

In about Ten of those Ships from India, which had leave to load on private Account outward, exclusive of what has been carried by Ships reputed to be Danes and Americans, the Quantity, from authentic Information, amounts to .

Copper.	Lead.	Iron.	Steel.	Anchors and Grappnails.	Canvas.	Cordage.	Pitch&Tar.
Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Faggots.	A. G.	Ells.	Tons.	Tons.
200	641	2280	2501	30 82	143627	100	103
					and 89 Bales.		

Though many Reasons operate to conceal the Extent of the Export of most Articles, yet the Quantity of Iron and Canvas, on Account of the Drawback on one, and Bounty on the other, is certainly correct ; and in these, the Excess is remarkable.

Several of these Ships are not entered at the Custom-House for Cargoes of any Description ; and I cannot find, in the Ballast-Office at the Trinity-House, any Entries for Ballast but to two Ships. How they could navigate from hence to India, without one or the other, I leave professional Men to judge.