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THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF SEAMEN.

By Captain HENRY TOYNBEE, F.R.A.S. and F.R.G.S.

It is with much pleasure that I take this opportunity of reading a paper before you on the Social Condition of Seamen; for although my experience has been confined to the merchant service, I cannot call to mind one voyage on which we have not had several able seamen who had served in the Royal Navy; and, also, having frequently had the honour of conveying detachments of H.M. troops, I feel that both services are much interested in the *merchant seaman*. There is another way in which I feel connected with the Royal United Service Institution.

tion, and that is by my near relationship to one who took such deep and active interest in its formation—I allude to my much-lamented relative Admiral W. H. Smyth.

We have lately experienced a strike amongst merchant seamen for an increase of pay, so that a peep into their social condition, and some suggestions as to their wants, seem suitable.

For the last seven or eight years I have spent my spare time, when on shore, in striving to bring to the notice of those concerned, a few of the principal improvements needed; and have been much struck by the fact that those who have formed societies to watch the *shipping interest* have too often, in their care for the ship, not found time to consider her most important part, the *seaman*.

It seems useless to repeat the trite saying that England depends upon her wooden walls for the defence of her happy homes, even though we may now ring a change by calling them *iron* walls, which walls must be manned by her seamen; or again, that England's commercial greatness depends upon her mercantile navy; the whole world knows this. It is well known, too, that when an Englishman becomes a sailor, his life is so peculiar, his situation such a trying one, that the ordinary temptations to recklessness, vice, and improvidence, to which human nature is heir, come down upon him with tenfold force; and what have our Government and countrymen done to help him out of his difficulties?

Sailors' Homes for single men, chiefly got up by the private exertions of philanthropic officers in the navy who have had seamen's wants forced upon their notice, one founded by the late Mr. Green, the Sailors' Institute at Shadwell, and shipping offices with savings banks, well managed by Government officers, are the chief improvements during the last thirty years. There are also two training ships for young officers, and Liverpool has just started one for young seamen. No wonder then that this slow progress has brought on a scarcity of good men; even those who wish for something better are so scattered by their varied voyages that they cannot combine (though they are now striving to bring their wants into notice), while the ruinous principle of sailing ships *cheap*, induces many owners not to care by whom they are manned; Englishmen or foreigners, it is all the same to them, so long as they can get the necessary number at the stipulated wages. We believe that foreign sailors are more and more common; for instance, how many there were on board the "London."

Now, the difficulties of the subject are so great that many are inclined to leave it to take care of itself, but this paper is addressed to those who believe that no good thing (which ought to be) is impossible, that if the right means be used, the most degraded of human beings can be elevated; but, above all, that by a proper system of prevention, thousands who are now held down by the bondage of vice might have been leading good and useful lives, and looking forward to a happy eternity. England is a professedly Christian country, and shall we, as Christian men, practically deny the belief, that in our holy religion there exists a force which can remove every mountain, even this gigantic mountain of the social difficulties of our seamen, and cast it into

the sea of oblivion and the past; no, let us follow the Bible precepts to *pray without ceasing* and to be *fervent in business*.

It is of no use to ignore the fact that man is not an easy creature to manage, compounded as he is of intellect, soul, and body, each with powers and tendencies needing discipline, and deserving cultivation. But, unfortunately, our seamen are most tempted by the low, sensual excitements which meet them open-armed in every port after the privations of a voyage; and not only our seamen but our soldiers also; are we not often obliged to draw a dark veil over the fact that they—the very sinews of our prosperity and the defenders of our rights—are living in an almost compulsory state of fornication, keeping a very large number of the other sex in the same sad chains? To counteract this, we must endeavour to supply them with a taste for the higher sources of happiness. These are, religion, a fair prospect of a happy home, and, at least, sufficient education to enable them to know that the mind has its pleasures; but as these have not hitherto been, or they have not considered them to be, within their reach, I purpose now to detail the social wants of seamen, classing them under four headings:—

- 1st. Those which would be the best carried out by Government.
- 2nd. Those which shipowners might attend to.
- 3rd. Those that are needed in foreign ports; and
- 4th. What may be done by commanders and officers to improve our seamen.

1. It seems absolutely necessary that Government should throw a certain amount of protection around seamen if they are not to become extinct. If we do not sow we cannot reap, and doing away with the apprentice system looks very like not sowing. Again, after we have sown, we hedge in young plants to protect them from the ravages of cattle; now, there is no human being so fearfully exposed to ravages from all kinds of moral wild beasts as the young sailor. Captain Trivett, R.N.R., has suggested that there should be Apprentices' Homes with navigation schools attached, within the dock gates, to preserve them from being *forced* into close contact with the terrible temptations which exist outside all our docks. Now Government might well require that each ship should carry a certain number of apprentices, and our shipowners would gain immensely by establishing protected homes for them.

It is easy for old men to say, "How did we manage in our younger days without all this protection?" but, no doubt, each one of us can remember numerous cases where young men have yielded to temptations which we may have escaped; for my own part, I tremble at the retrospect of the difficulties of a young sailor's life, and feel so deeply thankful for the favourable circumstances with which I was blessed, as to long to do something towards making those of others so.

Again, Government has thought it necessary to establish shipping offices, for the use of which both shipowners and sailors have to pay fees, which, so far as I can understand, much more than cover the expenses of those offices. They, with their savings banks and money orders (by which a seaman can transmit his pay to any part of the

United Kingdom free of charge), are doing good work, but it seems that they might be made available for more.

They might, without additional expense to seamen, manage a pension fund and benefit fund for them. Here I think that some explanation is due from me to the excellent "Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners' Society," which is endeavouring to start something of the kind in connection with the noble Institution of Belvedere; when I am convinced that *Government* will not establish such a fund, I will work might and main for the Shipwrecked Mariners, which I consider to be by far the best private society existing. But to my mind the welfare of our seamen is of too great importance to the nation for that nation to leave it to a private society to manage all their vested property. These private societies are in most cases got up by the best of men, but we know that they may eventually fall into other hands, which is proved by Mr. Gladstone's able speech on benefit societies, &c., reported in the "Times" of March the 7th or 8th, 1861. The old Merchant Seamen's Fund is a case in point, for although sailors were compelled to subscribe to it by Government, local committees had the management of it, and it went to the dogs.

I am aware that there is a popular opinion that sailors are averse to anything that Government has to do with; they have been frightened by the old fund, which they suppose was mismanaged by Government, and they also do not like a *compulsory* subscription; but when addressing them on the subject, I have always had a strong show of hands in favour of a Government fund, *not compulsory*.

It is true that a few weeks ago I attended one of the meetings held by our seamen when they were on strike for an increase of pay, in connection with which they were trying to start a London Seamen's Benefit Society. Although they had used great efforts, and said on their handbills that several gentlemen of high standing were expected, including shipowners and commanders and officers of ships, I found myself alone in the midst of the members of their committee, and was pressed to take the chair. There was a large attendance of seamen, and some of them made practical speeches. My object in going there was to show how impossible it was for them to manage a benefit society, and to propose that they should petition the President of the Board of Trade to start one in connection with the shipping offices. On reading the petition to them, and asking for a show of hands in its favour, it seemed to be almost unanimous, and I supposed that it was carried; but shortly afterwards I received a note from the secretary of their committee to say that "they thoroughly object to the Government *red-tape dilatory* principle." Now the show of hands convinced me that the feeling of the men was for such a fund, but they feared delay, so would rather proceed to action. I told them that the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society was much more to be depended on than anything they could get up for themselves, but *their committee* did not like to give up their pet scheme.

Twice during the last three years I have been before the late President of the Board of Trade, asking him to start a fund in connection with the shipping offices, and he agreed that it would be right to do so. I have also had a letter from Mr. Gladstone, agreeing with the princi-

ples of the proposed fund as set forth in a small pamphlet on "Our Sailors' Wants, and how to meet them." The Secretary to the Board of Trade, Captain Walker the mercantile member, and the registrar of seamen, also agree that it ought to be done; but, Gentlemen, it is *not* done! Now I hold that this style of work is the highest kind of charity, and as our Government already has shipping offices established in every port, fully supported by fees paid by seamen and shipowners, so that the expense of managing a fund would be nil, why should they allow the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, who have already delayed work, and written and asked the Board of Trade to start the fund, why should they allow them to go to the expense of establishing offices, &c., when Government can do the same work cheaper and safer, and why should they allow the sailors in the east end of London to start a fund which some of the best of them seemed to feel that they could not manage? These attempts show the *want*, and the difficulty of getting Government to work, shows that our seamen are not represented by men who know and feel their pressing wants. In these days of reform it becomes an important question to ask "In what way is the merchant service of England represented?" for, as I have before remarked, a short-sighted policy has unwisely separated the "shipping interests" from the interests of merchant seamen.

The only expense to Government would be the calculation of safe tables; this being done and the offer made, the Government could lose nothing more if no one subscribed, and they would have performed the great duty of offering our seamen a safe investment for their money.

There is another reason why our shipping masters would manage a fund successfully, which is that they see the men when they are being paid off, before they begin to spend their money, and are therefore in the very best position to offer to invest some of it for them.

This is perhaps hardly the place to go into detail, which is done in the pamphlet to which I have already alluded, but I will add that I think that most long-voyage seamen would prefer paying lump sums to annual premiums, because they do not know where they would be the next year. The fund should provide for old sailors, the widows and orphans of sailors, and to it might well be attached a benefit fund for sick subscribers. We hear on all sides that Government has a large sum of money belonging to deceased seamen, as also immense surplus sums from examination fees, shipping fees, light dues, &c. A great boon would be conferred upon the country, as well as upon our ship-owners and seamen, if some systematic use were devised for some of this money, which should encourage the men to be steady, and raise their social position. Let us suppose such a fund started with a benefit fund in case of sickness, numbers of sailors would subscribe, and if once the Government held £5 of a man's money, it would be a nest-egg which he would not risk by changing his name or his country. It seems not improbable that if tables were cast for our men-of-war's men, they would subscribe to increase their pensions due from the Government; every pound thus spent in providing for the future of themselves and their families would have a double effect, for it would be taken from the support of vice.

It is clear then that our Government could make such an offer to the Royal and mercantile marines by merely incurring the expense of calculating tables, all the rest of the machinery being ready to hand. One does not feel surprised that our seamen are determined to wait no longer, and my object, Gentlemen, in reading this paper before you is, to see if something cannot be done *at once* to prevent the unpopularity of the old Merchant Seamen's Fund being increased tenfold by the failure of further attempts to carry out privately, and at great disadvantage, what our Government might do with great ease.

The next matter in which I think Government might interfere is the treatment of seamen afloat. That I am not alone in this opinion is proved by the following extract from a letter addressed by Mr. Mackay, one of our largest shipowners, to a gentleman occupying an influential official position:—

"Although you are well known to me (in common with all ship-owners) from public reputation, I must be all but unknown to you; and only that the cause I espouse is well worthy of your support, I should scarcely venture to enlist your sympathies. It is to better the condition of the places where we berth our seamen. I often feel ashamed at the wretched accommodation which is usually given, and it is hopeless to elevate the sailor so long as we house him where no man with any self-respect could exist in comfort. Now as a Merchant Shipping Amendment Bill has been introduced, I would invite your assistance in committee in favour of two additional clauses, of which no shipowner could complain, for I am quite aware that, in the competitive struggle we have to encounter, there must be no trammels, fairly so called.

"My proposals are, to increase the space for the men to fifteen feet, the same as is given to emigrants, and also to have chain pipes through the topgallant-forecastle to the windlass, thereby preventing the hawse-holes being open, as they always are, until a ship is out of soundings. At present, unless under the most favourable circumstances, the forecastle, until the chains are unbent, is invariably wet, Nay, if I said that the men had sometimes to wade to their bunks, it would scarcely be an exaggeration. Surely this is utterly indefensible. And ship after ship goes in this way—no doubt my own amongst the rest—merely because it might be more troublesome to work the chains as proposed, and involve an outlay of £15 to £20. I am disposed even to go further, and let the agents of the Emigration Board control the amount of light and ventilation they deem necessary, for, at present, the forecastles in flush-decked ships have neither the one nor the other, while topgallant-forecastles are generally so much exposed as to set even decency at defiance.

"I am quite aware that the present race of seamen, as a rule, have done everything to extinguish sympathy in the hearts of shipowners, and nobody has suffered more than I have, from our ships usually trading to the gold-producing colonies, where desertion, and latterly incendiarism are the order of the day; but, notwithstanding, we have a right to see them lodged at least as well as our dogs and pigs, and then we may probably hope to see them more under the influence of sober reason than the recklessness of wicked instincts."

These are important suggestions; to them I would add that their victualling scale needs revision; it is true that Government has not fixed any scale, but our seamen sign articles before a shipping master, who is a Government officer, and supposed to see fair play done to the sailor; his signature to the articles of agreement seems to protect the shipowner from any idea that a change is required. During my thirty-three years spent at sea, there has been no change made in the rations of seamen, beef and dough one day, and pork and peas the next, the dough in many ships mixed with salt beef fat, instead of suet. Now I would not take away any part of these rations, for when they are of good quality sailors like them, but when the meat has been long in pickle it shrinks very much in cooking, which, in addition to the amount of bone frequently reduces the pound and a half of beef, and the pound and a quarter of pork so much, that we have to give a little more. No doubt many of my hearers are familiar with the sailor's yarn, of the man who went to the mess-kid containing their beef, and exclaimed *in anger*, "Who has taken all the *fat*?" "I have," answered one of his messmates. "And who do you think will eat the lean?" asked the same inquirer, *in greater anger*; "I will," quietly answered the same man who took the fat. Now a fellow like this must do terrible havoc amongst shrinking meat. I propose that one day in the week *at the least*, they should have three or four ounces of preserved potatoes per man, and on another day half a pound of preserved beef or mutton per man, with a few compressed vegetables and preserved potatoes to make an Irish stew; also mustard and pickles with their salt meat. It has been my good fortune to command a ship belonging to gentlemen who allowed me to give these privileges when the means were on board, and I speak from experience in saying that the men thoroughly appreciated them. The effect of these extras was spread over the whole week, for they enabled the men to keep cold salt meat to help out the next day's rations when they might chance to be short from the causes above-mentioned.

Another matter which needs correction is, that although the law requires that shipowners should give a part of his pay to each man before he leaves the ship, this is not done in practice, and seamen are obliged to borrow money from boarding-house keepers, crimps, or Jew tailors, to support them until pay-day. Those who know most on the subject declare, that this is fruitful of all kinds of evil; the young sailor feels himself in a way *bound* to the man who has advanced him money, and the married man whose wife may not live in London, has to wait there three or four days for pay-day, under the influence of those from whom he has borrowed money, with nothing to do, and surrounded by the strongest temptations; the result is that numbers yield, and never join their families. It is truly heart-rending to hear the details of some of these sad facts. Mr. Greatorex (chaplain to the Sailors' Home, in Wells Street) winds up a statement of three of these cases by saying:—

"Scarce a week passes but some poor wife comes up to look for her 'erring husband. I say without fear of contradiction, that nine-tenths 'of the misery suffered by sailors' wives and families might be wholly

“avoided if their wives could meet them at their ships and take them straight home. These homes must necessarily be close to the docks and shipping offices.

“A sailor must not have to wait at a Sailors’ Home or boarding-house until he is paid off, before he can go to his family. The chief mischief arises within 24 hours of his putting his foot on shore.”

Surely those business heads who manage the commerce of our nation, could devise a simple remedy for these terrible attacks on the moral and social state of so many who go round the world to serve them, leaving their wretched families unprotected. No, Gentlemen, they are too busy, and when we talk about a scarcity of British seamen, they say, “Well, it is the time of free trade, why should we not be allowed to go to Holland and other places for sailors?”

No one could complain of an undue interference on the part of Government if it so far enforced its own laws as to take care that on a ship’s arrival, seamen received sufficient money to support them until pay-day. Is it not an argument how much they need protection, that this law has been entirely evaded? I must however add, that two or three shipowners to whom I have suggested it, do give a pound to each man on the ship’s arrival, and one thanked me for the suggestion.

It would also be right that an inspector should report that the space, light, ventilation, and provisions for seamen were good, before the crew could be shipped. Lime-juice needs especial attention, for numerous complaints are afloat that most useless or even deleterious substances have been used in lieu of it, and scurvy has shown itself in consequence. My friend Dr. Norman Chevers, M.D., of the Medical College Hospital in Calcutta, a man of European reputation, has analysed the stuff called lime-juice which some ships bring to Calcutta, his attention having been drawn to it by several cases of scurvy in the hospital from ships lately arrived from England. I have written to ask him if he will report on the subject to the Board of Trade.

To prevent any future evasion of the law, it would be well to enter a few of the most important of our seamen’s rights in the heading of the Articles of Agreement, which are at present very one-sided.

I have now to say a few words on what shipowners may do to improve the social condition of seamen.

There is a very good reason why commanders of ships should bring this subject to the notice of shipowners, for “out of sight out of mind” is very true, and these gentlemen labour under the great disadvantage of scarcely ever seeing the men who may have served them for several years.

I will say, by way of preface, that if I were asked by our ship-owners to consider how their own pecuniary interests could be best served, I should give the following advice; so that the higher feeling of duty to those serving them, and self-interest, are in this, as in most other cases, inseparable:—

1st, then. Our shipowners should consider the forecastles of ships, and give to crews as clean, dry, light, and well-ventilated a space as possible. Mr. Mackay’s idea that it might be increased to 15 super-

ficial feet is good. The crew of a ship are the most valuable part of her. Let their employers treat them like men, and then make them act like men, for I am no advocate for letting Jack get the upper hand. I feel that respectable shipowners would gain if every forecastle were inspected. As it is now, the sailor seldom sees where he is going to live until his ship is at the dock gates, when he jumps on board, and she is towed away. So that when it is too late he often finds that because there is no responsibility attached to anybody, he has to take up his abode in a part of the ship hardly fit for human life, and even that part not cleaned out.

2nd. Our shipowners should fix a new and more liberal dietary scale for seamen; the inventions and social progress of late years demand it, and they will be great gainers in the increased health and steadiness of their men. If a man is poorly fed and worse housed, it is human nature for him to escape and try change if possible, but if he has been well fed and well housed, the shipowner has right on his side when he compels him to complete his contract.

Again, now that books are so cheap, a small library might be placed under the care of the commander of each ship, and he might also receive instructions to perform Divine service on Sundays if possible, and to give his men as much of that day to themselves as is consistent with their duty. For after all, the great source of human elevation is the *Christian religion*.

On a ship's arrival in England the moral interests of each member of the crew should be considered, all should have part of their pay as entitled by law, and those who are married should be encouraged to go home at once, with a promise that their papers and the rest of their pay shall be forwarded to them. The shipping offices would transmit the money, and the postage of their papers might, if requisite, be charged to the men. It just makes all the difference in the world to the social comforts of thousands of sailors and their families whether you say to the husband immediately he has arrived, "Here is money, go home at once," or "You must stop lounging about London with nothing to do for the next three or four days." This would cost the shipowner nothing, but he would be a great gainer, if having steady, trustworthy servants is a gain, when by so simple a means he could keep a man steady who would otherwise be mastered by temptation.

It is a question for consideration whether the work of ships in dock should not be performed by their apprentices and part of the crew; this would give employment to the steady men, several of whom would probably be married, and enable them to wait for the same ship.

One's mind constantly reverts to the fact that all men are alike by nature, and that difference in classes is produced by a difference of circumstances, so that to improve any class you must improve their circumstances. Now the circumstances of married sailors and their families are very trying:—

1st. Because the husband must be absent several months in the year.

2nd. Because he has very frequently to leave them in the lowest part of a seaport town, surrounded by fearful temptations, often ignorant even of how to send a letter to him.

3rd. Because in very many cases shipowners will not allow monthly notes, so that the wife and family get no half-pay.

4th. Because the young wife is generally brought as a stranger to these low parts, and does not know how best to get employment for her spare time.

I would not have my hearers suppose that the social difficulties of sailors are insurmountable on account of their long absence, for I am happy to say that I have had married men with me for several years whose wives and children meet them alongside the ship when we return home, looking most happy and respectable. Their circumstances were favourable, and I wish to see many more similarly situated, by getting our shipowners to carry out these or *better* plans for their improvement, because so long as human nature is what it is, the mass of men will marry, or do *worse*; and if men marry, and their wives and families go wrong, they are likely to go wrong also. Hence the common-sense view of the question is, that if you want seamen to be steady, trustworthy men, you must help them upwards out of their social difficulties.

Much experience in carrying home invalid soldiers has convinced me that the social condition of the army also needs deep consideration. Is it not an error to keep so many thousands of men in a forced state of celibacy, which necessarily keeps as many thousand women in the same unnatural state, upsetting the morals of the working classes fearfully? My idea is that a soldier should be allowed to marry after serving a certain number, say eight years, on the condition that he married a respectable woman. This gives them that great help upwards, the prospect of respectable marriage.

Those who have the advantages of a happy home, and who have heard the above-named difficulties of sailors' families, which, I think, all who know anything of them will say are not overdrawn, must agree that there is much to be done for them, and that something ought to be done at once. Having considered the subject for many years, I cannot devise anything better than "Married Sailors' Homes." These should be built on the principle of "model lodging houses," and placed under the superintendence of an old commander, who might be assisted by his wife; they could give all the advantages of a clean, well-ventilated, and well-drained house, with baths and washhouses attached, for the same rents which sailors now pay to have their families surrounded with filth and vice. There should be a few simple rules enforced by the superintendent, as is the case in all model lodging houses. The inmates should look up to the superintendent for advice and assistance in getting work, &c., and those who would not stick to the rules should be expelled; this would raise the moral standard of sailors' families, and not be a loss, looking at it in a pecuniary point of view, as I understand that model lodging houses pay 5 per cent. interest.

In June, 1863, we had a meeting in the London Tavern on the subject, and it was so favourably viewed by several shipowners that they formed a Company to build a block of *Married Sailors' Homes*. The gentleman who owned my ship put his name down for shares to the extent of £1,000, and we very soon had upwards of £4,000 promised;

in a few days I sailed for India, expecting to see one block completed on my return, but, alas! the plan fell to the ground, I firmly believe, because these gentlemen were too busy to devote time to its management. But, Ladies and Gentlemen, "Nil desperandum" is my motto, so, if you please, we will try again.

A further advantage would be to follow in the wake of our friends in Liverpool, and have a training ship for sailors' sons, who might be brought up for the sea; this, with schools for girls, is the sort of thing that would make it worth a man's while to be steady and trustworthy.

Several shipowners are in Parliament, and they would do good work by pressing on Government the necessity of acting quickly respecting the pension and benefit fund before-mentioned.

We will now consider what foreign ports may do to improve the social condition of seamen; by foreign ports I mean all those which are not the *homes* of the seamen, whether they are in the English possessions or not.

Calcutta is a specimen of the style of port to which I allude.

Sickness and other causes make it necessary that a Sailor's Home should be provided for those men who must remain on shore for a short time, between leaving one ship and getting another; for instance, there are always from one to three *hundred* sailors *living* in Calcutta, but there are always from two to three thousand *belonging to ships* moored in the port of Calcutta. Those who know the state of ventilation of most ships' forecastles, and who have experienced the heat of a tropical climate, made worse by mosquitos, will agree with me that the steadiest and best-intentioned seaman could not find recreation on board his ship under such circumstances; after a passage of from 90 to 150 days, fed on salt meat, he would not be human if he did not rejoice to see the land and long for a change; what is needed, is that steady men should be able to get this change in a rational way.

Hence the great need there is for "Sailors' Institutes," to be open to all seamen, whether they belong to ships or are living in the Sailors' Home; and because these men have homes elsewhere where they can get their food and drink, these institutes should not sell anything intoxicating, though they might sell light food and drink of other kinds. They should be supplied with books and newspapers in a large reading-room, and should also have a lecture-room which might be used for religious services on Sunday, a refreshment room, and a school-room for an evening school. In connection with the building should be a play-ground for cricket, quoits, skittles, football, &c. I am glad to be able to say that Calcutta has granted a fine play-ground, and hopes to be able to build an institute upon it. It is quite a treat there to see the sailors at football, which seems to be their favourite game.

The next question is, on whom should the expense of these buildings fall? my friends in Calcutta wrote home to the shipowners in England for subscriptions, and some seemed surprised that they did not get enough to pay the postage of their letters; but it strikes me, and so I told them, that a port with 200 or 300 ships always in it, each ship paying each voyage to her agents in the place commissions to the

amount of from £200 to £500, should not apply to shipowners for any local provision for sailors visiting that port. If our shipowners do their duty at home it is quite sufficient.

Besides, these institutes and play-grounds are also much wanted in England and I should be glad to see them, as well as good homes, in every British port. The one in Shadwell has done such good work that it is not necessary to enlarge on its benefits. It does seem right that the man who spends so much of his life on the sea should have a small piece of terra firma devoted to his especial use, and a place of this kind, where no drunkenness or immorality is allowed, forms a valuable resort for the many respectable young men who are trying to improve themselves.

We now proceed to consider how commanders and officers may best elevate the social condition of seamen.

They have them apart from the shore temptations, and especially during a long voyage might do much to improve them: first, by establishing a few simple rules for their comfort, such as seeing that each man has his allotted space in the fore-castle, also a proper bunk, or a dry place to sling his hammock, which latter should be brought on deck in fine weather; by having all their chests removed, and the fore-castle thoroughly cleaned one day in each week; by fitting their fore-castle with a locker and table for each mess; by giving them two hours for a washing day each week, allowing them to go to their meals regularly when possible, seeing that their provisions are well cooked, and by showing a willingness to listen to reasonable complaints and a desire to satisfy them.

I have found it work well to enter the few ship's rules as headings in the articles of agreement; for instance, no swearing or abusive language allowed; each man is expected to dress in uniform and attend divine service on Sundays, and to keep himself clean throughout the day. Then we never had any unnecessary work on Sundays, and if the wind changed so that we had to take in our studding-sails, we did not set them again between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. unless the safety of the ship required it, for it seems inconsistent to keep men up for church who have been eight hours on deck in the night, and then give them trifling work to do instead of allowing them to rest.

Nothing seems to have a more beneficial effect on them than a due respect for Sunday; the men seemed to calculate on having the day quiet, and it was quite pleasant to see them about the decks reading books from the library, and in the evening many of them came voluntarily to a short service. They also enjoyed something extra for their Sunday's dinner, which we were generally able to give them.

I have been laughed at by some for doing less work on Sundays, and asked if the owners of a ship would be satisfied with the improvement of the spiritual state of a crew in the place of a favourable balance-sheet; but these people forget that the chain of cause and effect extends far beyond human eye, and far from losing time I am sure the owner of my ship will bear me out in saying that he does not complain of results even in comparing our passages with those of much newer ships.

Then, again, having generally had ten or twelve young gentlemen,

we have had a navigation class for an hour or an hour and a half each forenoon, and for an hour every other evening in port; any man or boy in the ship who liked to put on his uniform suit and attend this class was allowed to do so. We did not limit it to navigation, but taught the three R's, and even languages and algebra in one or two instances. The result was that we generally had from four to five steady pupils in each watch, who made fair progress in their studies. I am happy to say that this year four of my fore-castle pupils are trying to pass for second mates; two of them have gone through the epitome, and work lunars very fairly. We have also found evening readings, lasting an hour, very attractive. It quite did one's heart good to hear them laugh at the jokes in "Peter Simple" or some such book. These might be practised very successfully at Institutes. I feel it due to sailors to say that they have really given me very little trouble of late years, although it is true that first-class able seamen are very scarce, owing to the paucity of apprentices, combined with the low social state of the British seaman in comparison with that of landmen of the same rank in life, whose wants force themselves on the public, while nine-tenths of our nation have but the vaguest idea of the condition of sailors.

In conclusion, let me give a short summary of the improvements suggested:—

1st. That *Government* should establish a pension and benefit fund in connection with shipping offices.

2nd. That the apprentice system should be re-introduced.

3rd. That ships' fore-castles and provisions, more especially lime-juice, should be inspected, and also a more liberal scale of diet provided.

4th. That the law should be put in force which requires that a seaman shall receive part of his pay on a ship's arrival in dock. Also, that married seamen may have the means of going to their wives at once, with the promise that their remaining pay and papers shall be forwarded to them.

Again, that in a business point of view, as well as from right principle, our shipowners would gain by helping to carry out the above suggestions, even although they may not be law. They might also have apprentices' homes inside the dock walls; they might give each ship a small library, and instruct their commanders to respect Sunday as much as possible. It has been also suggested that they should specially consider the circumstances of married sailors and their families, by building respectable homes for them, and letting them at moderate rents. They have also been asked to follow the example of Liverpool, and start training ships to bring up sailors' sons for the sea; and that of Calcutta, by giving a play-ground, and, as we hope, an institute.

I have gone on to say that ports where British seamen are not usually paid off, can help to lift them in their social condition, by building a well-placed sailors' home, an institute, and by giving a play-ground.

A few suggestions have been made as to what commanders and

officers may do in the good work; and when speaking to seamen I have always added the very important work which can only be done by themselves, but this would be out of place here.

I have not given an opinion on the seamen's strike for an increase of pay, but think that I express the feeling of all when I say that a first-class A.B. ought to be able to earn enough to support a wife and family, this the men declare that at the old rate of wages they cannot do, except under the favourable circumstances which they had in my ship, of earning money from the passengers and the "young gentlemen."

As Shakespeare so ably said, "The will is parent to the thought." Now in dealing with the social improvement of seamen, their employers have been too much guided by their wills. What employers want is that a sailor should be a strong able young man, steady and trustworthy, so they have provided respectable homes for *single* sailors, but nothing more, ignoring the fact that they are human beings with warm affections, which make a home and some one to love, as necessary to them as to people on shore, in fact from my experience, I believe that a happy home is more valued by the sailor than by those who are always enjoying it.

Instead of the above method I have been led to deal with the sailor as a *whole human being*, considering him first as an apprentice-boy, then as a young man earning money enough to invest a little for the future wants of his old age or of a wife and family, then as a married man, who must leave his wife and family for many months in each year; *lastly*, as a pensioner, after a steady, useful life.

Now, should the means suggested be constantly culling hundreds from those who would otherwise be wasteful and reckless, a good work will have been achieved, and we shall see large sums of seamen's money diverted from the support of gin-shops and vice, to the support of their wives and families.

My hearers will not be surprised to learn that a "detective" told me a few days ago that the keeper of one of the lowest houses in the east end of London was "an independent gentleman," with a country house, and that he came to his daily business in his private carriage. Now we want to stop this successful trading on seamen's vices.

I have not sufficiently remarked on the great advantage it is to young people that they should be able to *look forward* to a time when in the common course of things they may be *happily married*, even though it may turn out that they *never do* marry. Whereas the absence of this prospect has the most baneful effect.

The principle which has been followed out towards soldiers and seamen reminds one of some other supposed *improvements on nature*, which we poor short-sighted creatures have practised, for instance the tight-lacing of Europeans, and the *iron shoe* of the Chinese.

Surely we ought to say, "Fiat justitia, ruat cælum," and instead of striving to dam up the stream of human affections in so many thousands, the result of which has been that it comes to the surface in black muddy fountains, and instead of a refreshing river, we have a stagnant lake of filth; we ought to commence *these*, or similar works, which will

by degrees drain away this sad accumulation of moral filth, and help to restore the beautiful stream of human affections to its right course.

Finally, the subject has such difficulties, and life is so short, that time should not be wasted in merely finding fault with the past; let me rather beg of my hearers to consider carefully what can be done for the future to raise the moral condition of our seamen; and I might add, our soldiers also. Is it right that a Christian Government and employers should sit down contentedly to enjoy all the blessings of social happiness, whilst the laws and customs of the country are such that two or three hundred thousand of their countrymen are labouring under such difficulties that they are almost driven to vice, and there is even a tendency to legalize that vice as being a lesser evil than the present state of things? Do not let us merely ask "What is customary?" or "What are other countries doing?" but also "What is the duty of Christians placed as we are, to Christians placed as they are?"

Mr. G. S. HARCOURT: I should like, if you please, although a landsman, to say a few words upon this subject. I most cordially agree with the gentleman who has just spoken so feelingly and so ably to this meeting. I go with him in every word in a Christian sense; and I go with him in every word as to the duties of the employer and the employed. At the present time, we who are interested in the welfare of our country, begin to feel the pressing danger of the question when it comes before us under the fearful word "Strike." We feel that at least one portion of our people are beginning to rise in their own defence. I merely wish to speak my own sentiments, as one deeply interested in the question; as one who has watched it for some years past, and who has, perhaps, some little information to impart that might be very valuable to our senators, and induce them to look into this question. It has come to this, that we are told by one of the members of the new Government, in his address to his constituents, that we are losing our seamen at the rate of 2,000 a-year. Is not that rather a grave subject? From what cause does it arise? Speaking my own opinion—knowing something of the men themselves, and having seen much of the interest that is taken in them by their employers, whether it be the Queen's service or the commercial service, I think it may be told in a very few words—want of sympathy between employer and employed. It lies simply in the accommodation afforded, and in the mode of manning your ship. When you want to man your ship, the practice has been to apply to the usual resources. You get your men, no matter by what means; they know nothing whatever of the employer they are about to serve; and, as Captain Toynbee has just said, nothing is done for their accommodation. What is the consequence? The consequence is just what we see occurring under our own eyes, and reported in every newspaper of the day, a fearful loss of life, without the ability to attach responsibility to anybody: Sir John Hay states that the evil of the increasing want of seamen is so great (he states this in his private capacity) that it is one of those things that must first of all attract the attention of the Board that he is about to join. He also says, and he is right in saying so, that it shall have the sincerest attention of the Government during the recess, in order that the difficulty may be met and provided for. But Sir John Hay does not touch one point that Captain Toynbee has brought forward; he says nothing on the question of the seamen's home, a question upon which I feel most strongly. Whether it be in the Queen's service, or whether it be in the commercial service, what do you do with the seaman when you have for a time no longer need of his services? Why, nothing, until you want him again. Then how do you get him? You know much better than I can tell you. Not fairly, or rightly. We, philanthropists, who feel for the men, want to see a different state of things altogether. I am not going to read to you a lecture, although I have some notes on the subject, but I shall be able to show you that, when Sir John Hay spoke of the "liberal" supplies that the country votes for the service, very little of it goes to the British Seaman's Home. I have

referred to the returns of the House of Commons, and I find the British seamen, in support of seamen's homes, received the enormous sum of £450 in 1859, and of £500 in 1860. These liberal supplies from the British Parliament through the Admiralty or Board of Trade, were divided amongst four homes in the one year, and five homes in the other. I am not speaking of the public grant for the wages and maintenance of the seamen, but of the amount which fell to the share of the British seaman in his home. The grant was £1,621; and out of that four Homes got £450 divided among them in the first year, five homes £500 in the second year. It is true there was a small sum added for a burial-ground, but that is not exactly the part of the subject we wish to consider. We have had enough of loss of life; we want to keep and maintain our seamen morally and bodily; and I quite agree with all that has fallen from Captain Toynbee on that subject. Since I saw the notice of the present paper at our reading-room door, I have looked back into returns for that period, and have ascertained what became of the other £1,100. But at the time the Government were voting liberal supplies, private enterprise was not I found altogether idle; in fact, private enterprise was caring much more for the British seaman than the public purse was. Out of 31 Homes that were then established, four or five of them were fortunate, because they were called "Royal Homes." Other Homes that had, perhaps, as large a claim, also put in *their* claims; but they were told they could not be assisted, because they did not happen to be born with a golden spoon in their mouths, not being Royal Homes. Now, I cannot see the distinction between a Royal Home and a Sailors' Home. I think the Sailors' Home that receives its 20,000 men a year is of as much consequence as a Royal Home, that receives its 150 or 200 men. The one happens to bask in the sunshine of Court, and has got its grant in aid; the other, from not having been so fortunate, has got none at all. I shall be able to show you what private enterprise did whilst the Board of Trade and the public departments were sleeping.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you will kindly shorten your remarks upon Sailors' Homes, as we have not much time for discussion on the subject of the evening, which is "The Social Condition of Seamen."

Mr. HARCOURT: I will do so at once, with the intention one day of resuming the subject in a more proper form. I may state that, while Government was granting to Sailors' Homes £450 and £500 out of a total of £1,621, the public was giving for the erection and carrying on of these Homes something like £22,000; and that in nine of the Homes from which returns were obtained, 63,458 men received the comfort that they provided, to say nothing of the numbers others were receiving, but plainly showing how valuable they would be as aids in encouraging the men to prefer such homes and their country's service to seeking that of other countries, at the rate of 2,000 a year.

Mr. L. R. VALPY: I should wish to ask a question, viz., whether any gentlemen present connected with the shipping interest, whether as shipowners or others, have anything to say against the proposals we have heard? If all present adopt the views of the gentleman who has read the paper, then the next question I wish to put is this, in what sense do those gentlemen view the proposals that have been made? Is there any means by which they can be advanced. I should be glad to know how the practical men connected with the shipping interest present to-night, if they do adopt the views of Captain Toynbee, can in any way aid in carrying them forward, either by a committee, or by some communication with the Government, or in any other way?

The CHAIRMAN: It is perfectly understood that it is optional to any one present as a matter of opinion, to oppose the proposition of the lecturer or to support it; but we have no organised mode of action.

Mr. THOMAS GRAY, Board of Trade:

"I see yon ship's a Frenchman!
Now, each man to his gun!
If we don't get the better of she,
I'll slog each mother's son."

In those lines are fairly represented the spirit of our Royal Navy and of our mer-

cantile marine very many years ago. The Royal Navy was at that time the receptacle for people discharged from prison, or sent out from prison on purpose. The discipline was maintained in a most frightful manner by irons, and by the hideous cat. In the mercantile marine the discipline was scarcely less stringent, and scarcely less repulsive. It is not to be wondered at, that in those times it was necessary that there should be compulsory laws for the enforcement of apprenticeship, and compulsory laws for catching seamen by way of the press-gang. We have passed all that, a state of things to be looked at with repugnance, and thought of with regret. The paper of Captain Toynbee shows how far feelings and ideas are improved. He now looks forward to improve the social condition of the seaman still more, not by the cat, not by terrors, not by force of discipline, but by leading him hand in hand, showing him his moral and social duties, his duties to himself, and to his employer; and so leading him on to become a better man and a better citizen. I must say I fully agree with Captain Toynbee's object; and if in any remarks I am about to make I differ as to the means by which he proposes to attain his object, it is not out of any unnecessary spirit of opposition, but really to raise the question whether the modes he proposes are the best modes that can be adopted. The first question regards compulsory apprenticeship. This really is one of the subjects that has occupied the shipowner and the country for a long time. I have lately visited many ports on the north-east and on the north-west coasts of England and Scotland, and I have spoken with many, I may say with a great many, of the leading shipowners upon this subject, and they all seem to think that it will be necessary to go back to some sort of compulsory law. But they all say that it will not do to go back to a law like the old law; and, further than this, they say that as long as there is no law, A, who lives in (say) Glasgow, does not see why he should rear apprentices for B, who lives in another port. So it is; the one man will not take apprentices because the other does not; because no sooner does the apprentice come near to the time when his indentures are up, and when he is as good as an able seaman, than he runs away to the other man, and gets employed as an able seaman. The next point was as regards the forecables of some of our ships. Nothing can be worse than the forecables of some of our ships.

Captain TOYNEBEE: Would it not be as well to suggest a way to meet the demand for apprentices?

The CHAIRMAN: I think we must leave it to every gentleman to take his own course of observations.

Mr. GRAY: If you can suggest a way to meet the demand for apprentices, you will do more than any one in this kingdom has done yet. As regards the forecables of ships, I do not think we can rely on inspection to secure good accommodation for the seaman. Of all things that are bad, of all things that are rotten, inspections in matters of detail are the worst and the most rotten. (No, no.) There are gentlemen who say "No, no." I think the case of the "London" is a case in point. (No.) Here is a ship nursed from her birth to the time she died. She was inspected by four or five sets of surveyors from her birth upwards. She goes to sea, and it is not until a fortnight after she is lost, that the inspector can say whether she had storm sails on board or not. She also went to sea with an engine-room hatch of 120 feet square without adequate protection, and her spirketing was some inches higher than the combings of her hatchway. I do not say that that case alone proves that inspection is useless. I think the root of the evil of the forecable and the seaman's bad accommodation in it, lies in the tonnage laws. Our tonnage laws are bad in that respect. They act in this way: space for seamen is only allowed to be deducted from the gross tonnage of the ship when it is placed above deck. Now, to remedy the evil, you do not want inspections; you would merely have to say in an Act of Parliament that the accommodation for the berthing of the crew shall be deducted from the registered tonnage of the ship, whether it is below deck or elsewhere. You will then, I think, meet by a simple enactment what you propose to meet by inspection. As regards the rations that question is really a question of wages, a question between the skipper and the master, and the men he employs. The same may be said with regard to libraries. As regards the age at which the soldier ought to marry, I do not think that is a question which we can well consider this evening. But there is one thing worth serious consideration—that is, a Merchant Seaman's

Fund. Captain Toynbee has proposed that there should be a fund under the management of Government, but that payments to it should not be compulsory. I must say I do not know what he means when he says that. I do not see how Government could undertake a pension fund unless the payments to the fund were to be compulsory. The whole thing has been considered before the Committee on Merchant Shipping. However, I have no doubt Captain Toynbee has also considered this subject carefully. A system of voluntary payments for annuities might be managed; but I should be very glad if he would show me how a pension fund could be established that shall be under the management of Government, and that shall not be supported by fixed and compulsory payments. I merely raise these points, not with the view to any captious opposition, but with the view to lead the debate to these points, and to arrive, if possible, at some satisfactory results.

MR. HARPER: I think the meeting will be delighted to hear that there is a slight departure on the part of Mr. Gray from the great principle that the Board of Trade is not to assist at all in remedying an evil. He appears to admit that a question has been raised in the admirable paper which has been read by Captain Toynbee to-night, which may make it advisable that an Act of Parliament should be passed. It is plain that Mr. Gray to-night is prepared for this slight modification of the absolute statement he made the other day, viz., that questions may arise in which the Board of Trade may make a start from a life of inaction, and may consider the propriety of an Act of Parliament. No doubt, the Act he contemplates is a little insignificant Act. Still, it is an Act of Parliament which he admits the Board of Trade may find itself, perhaps, under the necessity of some day considering. But I think it was a little amusing to hear Mr. Gray, if he will allow me to say so, adducing the mistakes made in the case of the "London," in support of the principle that all investigations by any Government department are folly.

MR. GRAY: Inspections, not investigations; which are very different.

MR. HARPER: Investigations may have a legal character, and may be conducted by persons of high capacity, and so forth; so there may be a technical difference between investigation and inspection. But an inspection by an officer of Government is supposed to be something in the nature of an investigation. It is an inspection by a qualified person, by a competent person in the opinion of the Government; and it is of the character, and it ought to have the weight of an investigation. However, in order to possess the meeting with the idea that the Board of Trade has no business with these investigations—in short, repeating the sentiments which we heard the other evening—he adduces the mistakes made by the officer of the Board of Trade in the case of the "London."

THE CHAIRMAN: I think you are rather diverging from the object of the meeting. We are now considering "the social position of seamen."

MR. HARPER: I was replying to Mr. Gray. I am quite ready to admit that perpetual interference by the Government, with respect to other trades, would not be tolerated. Of course, such interference must be limited. It is quite plain that infinite mischief would arise, however able the Government might be, if it were perpetually interfering with the relations of men to one another, and especially in the conduct of the industry and trade of the country. But the seaman is in an exceptional position. He is a perfect child; he is at the absolute mercy of the shipowner. And it was that towards which my argument tended, namely, to show the distinction between persons engaged in other industries, who may go to various places to seek their food and their homes, and the merchant sailor who is entirely at the mercy of the shipowner, both as to his food and as to his lodging. The country, I think, may call upon the Government to protect the seaman against the shipowner. In these respects the question is one which is not affected by the argument, that in general it does not do for Government to interfere for the protection of the labourer.

MR. E. SMITH: One of the gentlemen who sat down asked us to express any opinions which we had to offer upon the subject of Captain Toynbee's paper. Now, Captain Toynbee's paper must have commended itself to the mind of everyone. But as there are one or two points upon which we may all differ, I am sure this meeting will excuse me if I mention an objection to one point he proposed. He spoke of a compulsory apprenticeship-law. I have for some years seen a good deal of the

working of apprentices ; I can remember when it was compulsory ; and I am sure if we were now to have a compulsory law, it would be the worst thing for the merchant seamen possible. It would lower the *status* of the boys who come into the service. I can remember when every ship had to take a certain number of apprentices, in proportion to her tonnage. When that was the case, suppose a ship had to take four or six apprentices. You, perhaps, got three or four boys of respectable birth and respectable connections, but you wanted one or two more when the ship was ready to go to sea. The consequence of that was, you had to take anybody you could get ; and, as we know that a "little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," so, getting one or two bad lads among three or four good ones was much more likely to make the whole half-dozen bad, than to make the whole half-dozen good. I have seen distinctly since the alteration of the law, that a better class of lads have become apprentices, because the shipowners, having control over the class of boys they take into their ships, select boys of a better class than they could get before. Respectable tradesmen's sons are not ashamed to become sailors, because they know they will not meet with bad society as they used to do, when any ragamuffin might be taken up off the streets to make up the ship's complement.

Captain TRIVETT, R.N.R. : Will you allow me to say a word, as one of those maligned compulsory apprentices ? I may say that I do not think that being a compulsory apprentice has made me the worse man, the worse officer, or the worse sailor. I see around me at this meeting several others who have been compulsory apprentices, and I think they will bear me out in that respect. I see one of my own apprentices here, and I think he will perform his duty on board ship as an officer and seaman as well as any of those kid-gloved gentlemen of the present day. I also wish to say a word about the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society which has been mentioned to-night. It would appear from the remarks of Captain Toynbee, that that society was acting at cross-purposes with the Government with respect to their pension fund. I may say that the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society had several deputations to the late President of the Board of Trade on the subject, and the Government then and there refused to have anything to do with compulsory payments. I think gentlemen here will admit that, after the recent failure of the Government to pay up the demands of the merchant seamen, after they had subscribed to the Fund for so many years, it would come with a very bad grace from Government to start another compulsory subscription to a pension fund. At meetings of sailors held in the north of England, representing some fifty thousand seamen who subscribe to the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, they said that they would readily come forward in support of a voluntary subscription for a pension, were it under the auspices of the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. The Shipwrecked Mariners' Society, conducted under officers of the navy and merchants in the city of London, guarantee the Fund, and they have won the confidence of the sailors. The sailors say they will subscribe to any such fund liberally and voluntarily, but they will have nothing to do with Government. These are the feelings of the seamen themselves. I merely wish to put the meeting right in that respect ; and I think the meeting will bear me out, that it will come with a very bad grace from Government, so soon after the recent failure, to establish any compulsory subscription.

Commander DAWSON, R.N. : So far as I can make out, the principal question brought before us by Captain Toynbee may resolve itself into the fact that we find the merchant seamen of England are decreasing in numbers, and that they are deteriorating in quality ; and that that has arisen from certain causes, which we are here partly for the purpose of investigating. I think it would be premature for us to pronounce absolute opinions upon the exact mode in which we should proceed in order to stop the decrease of numbers and to increase their efficiency. There are two facts before us. One is, that the number of apprentices is very largely decreasing. I hold in my hand a return from the Board of Trade, which shows that since the year 1858, the number of apprentices has decreased 4,000 in round numbers. At the same time the tonnage of shipping in this country has increased 1,000,000 tons, and the number of men manning those ships has increased 20,000. There is a fact which ought to be put before the country. We find, from a statement made by a lecturer in this Institution not long ago, that between 1858 and 1863, every day in

those years there were four foreign seamen added to the British mercantile marine, and that every day in those years there were two British seamen subtracted from the British mercantile marine. That is an important national fact that ought to be understood as bearing upon the defence of this country. Then, having established that fact, which we have on the authority of Board of Trade returns, we then proceed to inquire why is this continual decrease taking place? I believe, myself, that Captain Toynbee has brought before us one of the most prominent causes of it. It is this, as far as my own information extends, that the social condition of the merchant seamen on board a large class of ships—do not let us include all, because there is a large number of exceptions—is such, that no seaman who has attained skill in his profession, and who has any respect for himself, can or will remain on board those ships, because he can carry his skill on shore to a better market. A skilful and well-conducted seaman is sought for on shore, in a great number of occupations, not only in this country, but in the colonies. Only the other day I was talking to a seaman who had become guard of a train on a railway in the East Indies, and who had been promoted to the office of inspector. So in a variety of trades similar openings present themselves, and the respectable men leave the merchant service, because it is not possible for them to continue in it. Captain Toynbee has drawn a by no means exaggerated account of the accommodation of the ships to which I allude. There are a large number of shipowners and shipping companies who do treat their seamen very well indeed. I have made some inquiries on this subject, and I find among the large companies the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Company comes nearest to what I must say is the perfection of the treatment of men on ship-board. Every man is employed continuously; I think that is a very great point. We get rid of the crimps, and of the system of having men pitched on board half drunk, when the ship is ready to go to sea, and of being pitched forth again when the ship returns, to fall once more into the hands of crimps on shore. In the Peninsular and Oriental Company the men and officers, from always working together, get to know each other, and to have confidence in each other. Another thing I find in the Peninsular and Oriental Company is, that their seamen are very well housed. The third thing I find is that, although their scale of provisions differs very little from that of the provisions issued in most merchant ships, there is this essential difference, that the provisions are excellent in quality; and they never lose the opportunity of supplying the men with fresh meat and fresh vegetables whenever they come to anchor. It is very true that the Peninsular and Oriental steamers make very short voyages, and they are very frequently in port; but I am told that when they are in port they take care to get the best beef and the best provisions for their men, the same as they obtain for the passengers. Excluding this considerable class of respectable shipping companies, there is a very large class of small shipowners, who I am afraid do not supply proper accommodation. I have on this subject some authoritative information coming from a person, who has seen some thousands of these ships, in a very favourable position for seeing the actual state and condition when the ship is in sea-going trim in the outer roads. My friend has had the opportunity of visiting these vessels, several thousands in the course of several years; therefore, a rare opportunity of seeing the sailor at home—for a ship is really the sailor's home the greater part of his life—and seeing, therefore what sort of places these homes were. I shall read a short extract from a letter which he wrote to a shipowner, speaking of the state in which he found many of these ships:—

"I know that many of the rows on board ships arise from the cold, damp, and discomfort of the fore-castle. I ask, would the Passenger Act allow single men to be berthed in such a miserable hole as the fore-castle? Would the captain entrust a live sheep or pig there? Then why place those men there, on whose strength and good humour depend the very existence and safety of the ship? *The topgallant fore-castle must be destroyed ere the men will ever become satisfied with the merchant ship; it is as you say a nuisance and an evil.* It is neither wind tight nor water tight, and working down channel with a south-west wind the men have never a dry stitch about them, nor a dry bed to lie on, and how is it possible for any human being to be other than discontented or disaffected under such miserable circumstances. 'How is it possible,' said a sailor to me, 'to be comfortable in such a

"hole as this? We have not a dry stitch about us, nor a dry bed to lie on"—and "then turning up his bedding all saturated with the rain and sea, he said, taking out "his roll of tobacco, white with mildew, 'why, a poor fellow cannot even keep his "bacey dry!' Why not take a leaf out of the German ships? Give the men a "round-house amidships, or if this be objected against as interfering with the work- "ing of the ship, which I doubt, put the men below. Suppose the shipowner "does lose a little from his freight, are not the health, strength, comfort, and peace "of the crew of much more importance."

Without joining in the final part of his observations, I think the question of the fore-castle is the most important question that ought to be taken into consideration; and I think Captain Toynbee makes a very fair proposition as to the way in which that difficulty could be got over. Whether after having got the Act of Parliament, which sets apart 15 feet for the seamen, we are to have inspection or not, is another question. No doubt, it might be got over by having a heavy penalty, which would meet the case without having inspection. We find inspection a very important thing in the navy; and no doubt it might be equally useful if applied to the merchant service. But the question of provisions is another important thing, and it is a much more difficult question to meet;—that is, how to secure that the seaman shall be provided with meat that is not putrid, and with water that is not stinking? how we shall get rid of that scurvy which is increasing in the British merchant service every year, and which is not increasing in the foreign ships that come to this country? These are very difficult questions, and I do not yet see how they are to be met. I think it is of great importance that these questions should be ventilated, and that they should be known. And we ought to be exceedingly grateful to Captain Toynbee for having brought these things prominently before the public.

Captain WILLIAMS: I should like to say a few words. I am very much obliged to Captain Toynbee for moving in the question. But I think the greater part of the meeting are not aware that during the last few months a society has been originated among shipmasters, pledging themselves to attend specially to the social and spiritual wants of the seamen on board their ships. It was first commenced last November at the Sailors' Institute, Shadwell. In a very few weeks there were no less than 106 shipmasters, whose hands on board their vessels ranged from five up to sixty. I have no doubt that up to the present time the number will exceed 200 or 250 shipping masters, who have pledged themselves to promote abstinence and morality, and to attend to the comforts of the men or board their ships. Let me now state what my own experience has been with respect to seamen and apprentices. For several years past I have had young men, who have continued with me up to the present time. I have had them from the Orkneys; and they have been stout able young men. For the first voyage, we have given them a pound a month; for the second voyage, thirty shillings; for the third, two pounds. We have not paid them the paltry stipend of £5 a year; but we have given them sufficient to keep them, and we have had no reason whatever to complain. With respect to the apprentices, the great evil that I have seen in my own experience is, that from their paying a premium we do not get the right kind of lads. Their parents expect that unusual attention shall be paid to the youngsters; and so we are placed between two fires. Now, in the position in which I am placed with my owners, we take no premiums from any one, but only from the midshipmen. Therefore, I have a body of strong young men to go in my ships, and I could half fill the ship with such young fellows.

The CHAIRMAN: What age are they?

Captain WILLIAMS: They come in at sixteen.

The CHAIRMAN: And they get £1 a month the first year.

Captain WILLIAMS: Yes. With respect to the dietary scale, during the last few years a change has been made. Instead of the men getting their pound and a half of beef, and their pound and a quarter of pork, four days, they have also butter. A part of the salt meat is taken away, and they have so much butter allowed them; and instead of the men receiving a small mite of a pound and a half of flour a week, they have with us, generally, as much as they need. They have two pounds and more. We give them oatmeal for their breakfast in the morning. I could name men that have been in our ships from the time they were launched until now. I may

say with Captain Toynbee that I have men continually with me. The want that Captain Toynbee has most prominently brought forward we feel greatly. We require a Home for the married seaman; we want our married seaman elevated in the social scale, not that they shall be degraded beyond all conception when they arrive at every port. I have been so favoured during all my life that, where I have been able to trust a man, I have never had to refuse giving him the half-pay note. I went to the Colonies during the whole time of the gold mania; and I can say that I was never once detained an hour from the want of men; I was always able to get my men. I have had no desertions with the exception of four that deserted the first year the gold mania broke out. I for one am much obliged to Captain Toynbee for the practical manner in which he has been trying to carry out these things; and I do hope the shipowners of London will support him.

Mr. JAMES JACKSON: I shall be happy to be allowed to make one or two remarks with regard to apprentices, and the Pension Fund. For some years I have paid considerable attention to questions affecting not only the shipping interest, but also the shipping service; and I must say, in looking through the evidence that was given before the House of Commons with regard to the repeal of the Navigation Laws, that the Committee seem to me to have imagined that, because some three or four large shipowners—who had, I think, quite a different interest in shipping from the generality of shipowners in England—recommended the abandonment of compulsory apprenticeship, it ought to be abandoned; whereas, the majority of shipowners, if they had been called, would have given evidence in favour of the compulsory apprenticeship system. The largest shipowner in England gave this peculiar evidence; that he would not so much object to the repeal of the Navigation Laws if Parliament would repeal the apprenticeship system. I have no hesitation in saying in this room, before a large number of ship-masters, that the repeal of the apprenticeship system has exercised a more baneful influence over the shipping interest of England than the repeal of the Navigation Laws. What do we find at the present day? Great complaints from shipmasters that they cannot get able seamen. How can you expect to get able seamen when a large number of the finest ships in England do not manufacture seamen at all? They manufacture that of which you have a surplus at the present moment—fancy officers. I do not mean to use that term offensively, but I say it is impossible, from the way in which many of our midshipmen are brought up in large ships, that they can ever make first-rate practical captains or officers. I am quite sure, if you take the opinion of five hundred or a thousand of the best practical masters in the kingdom, they will say that I am stating the simple truth, although it may be unfashionable. Now, one great objection that the shipowners of the United Kingdom have to carrying apprentices is that they run away, and the shipowner cannot compel them to return. In conversation with numbers of shipowners the best suggestion I have ever heard to meet the difficulty of that case is this—that after a certain number of years, Government should pass a law that no man above a certain age shall be allowed to ship as an able seaman unless he can show his clear apprenticeship indentures. If such a law as that were passed, I am certain that a large number of shipowners, who now object to carrying apprentices, would carry them. A gentleman has already remarked that one shipowner will not carry apprentices because another will not. I know a large number of gentlemen in the north and west of England who do carry apprentices, because they say they find it cheaper to carry apprentices than to carry what are called ordinary seamen—men who have not been to sea more than one voyage, and who yet want their £2 or £3 a month. If any modified form of the apprenticeship system could be introduced, it would be a great benefit to the merchant service. With regard to the Pension Fund, I do not agree with Captain Toynbee that the Belvedere is not the right institution to assist in that Pension Fund. I know no institution that has so much the confidence of the seamen as the Belvedere. There have been many meetings, and I never remember one at which the seamen were in favour of a compulsory fund. They were quite willing to subscribe to any well organised institution where they had a warranty from the high position of the gentlemen connected with it, that anything they subscribed would be fairly carried forward for their benefit. I am quite convinced that a compulsory Pension Fund would never answer; therefore, we must fall back either on the Belvedere or on some institution of that kind.

Captain HORTON, R.N. : As two of the gentlemen who have spoken are officers of the Naval Reserve, perhaps I may make a practical suggestion to them, based upon the excellent paper that Captain Toynbee has given us. We live under a Government that is not ready to act, although it takes good action when good cause is shown. The Board of Trade is perhaps not the most active branch; but the branch of Government under which I have the honour to serve is one that has introduced great improvements into the Royal Navy during the last few years. I think the close connection existing between the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Navy might prove the means of introducing into the merchant service many of those benefits of which Captain Toynbee spoke, which are so near akin to the improvements that have taken place in the state of the seamen in the Royal Navy. They being under the Admiralty, I would suggest that action should be taken by the officers of the Royal Naval Reserve, as a body, to try and procure through the Admiralty such regulations for the benefit of the seaman as Captain Toynbee has pointed out. I believe the Admiralty might be a very efficient channel for the attainment of that end.

The CHAIRMAN : It is our rule here that no gentleman should address the meeting more than once; but Mr. Gray has asked my permission, which I shall give with your sanction, to make a few remarks in reply to something that has been said by some of the speakers.

Mr. GRAY : It is this,—My friend Mr. Harper, who is on very good terms with me, and who has a remarkably clear and logical head generally, seems to have got into a little "muddle" over inspections as distinguished from inquiries. I certainly think that preliminary inspections in matters of detail never have done any good, and never can effect any good that cannot be better effected in another manner. But I do say, that inquiries which are not, as Mr. Harper seems to think, surveys, but which are investigations into the facts, on evidence, after accidents have happened, do an immense deal of good. It was for the purpose of removing any misapprehension that might have been raised by Mr. Harper, who is known and relied upon as a clear-headed man, that I make this remark. Another thing is this: when I come here by invitation, I understand that I come here on the same footing as any other independent person, and that I am not to be treated as the representative of a Government department; and, therefore, I think it is a little unfair that in consequence of my opinions, attempts, through me, should be made to run down the Board of Trade.

The CHAIRMAN : Perhaps Captain Toynbee will now reply to the various points raised in the discussion.

Captain TOYNEE : I would first remark upon the Fund, which Mr. Gray and one or two other gentlemen have spoken of. They have mistaken me in supposing that I wished there should be a compulsory fund. I have a great aversion to compelling anybody. I prefer *leading* men to do right; but, if this will not do, I *make* them. It is not without having very frequently consulted sailors, that I propose this style of fund. I thought this paper explained it sufficiently, but it is gone into more fully in a small pamphlet, called "Our Sailors' Wants, and how to meet them," published by J. Nisbet and Co. My idea is, that as the foreign-going sailor receives his money in a lump sum, he can best part with it in lump sums; but he cannot take the responsibility of paying annual subscriptions, because he does not know where he will be when the next subscription becomes due. My special reasons for wishing Government to manage this fund are—1st. Because Government has offices already established, thereby saving expense. 2ndly. Because the shipping-master is considered to be the friend of seamen; he pays them, and is therefore in the best position to make them the offer to safely invest part of their earnings. 3rdly. Because a Government guarantee is safer than that of a private society. I know there is a feeling among sailors generally against the Government *compelling* them to subscribe; and it has been pressed upon them by some gentlemen that the Government mismanaged the old Merchant Seamen's Fund. But so far as I can understand it, they only mismanaged, by *compelling* the men to subscribe, and then putting the management of their money into the hands of local committees. Now, what I want them to do is, *not to compel*, but to allow the men to subscribe, and to keep the manage-

ment of their voluntary subscriptions in the hands of Government. I cannot understand those gentlemen who say that a private company could manage the fund more safely, because we have heard of secretaries going away with large sums of money. Who will guarantee that these secretaries will be always honest. Any persons who may have read Mr. Gladstone's speech on the subject a few years ago, will understand this. He gave a sad account of the number of private clubs which had failed. The Rev. J. Patteson, Rector of Spitalfields, told me that he asked a sick workman if he subscribed to a club. He said, "I subscribed to three, and they all failed." Mr. Gray says he cannot see how Government is to manage a fund without *compelling* seamen to give their money. I cannot agree with him, because it is very clear that if a man does not give his money, the Government has not to manage it for him, or grant him any benefit.

A MEMBER: The Post-office Savings' Bank.

Captain TOYNBEE: My reason for wishing for something more than a savings' bank is, that if "Jack" puts his money into the savings' bank he will very likely take it out again.

The MEMBER: The Government manages the Post-office Savings' Banks, which are not compulsory.

Another MEMBER: There is the Post-office Benefit Fund.

Captain TOYNBEE: What I want is, to have the Post-office Benefit Fund modified to meet the circumstances of sailors, which are, that they get their money in a lump, and they would rather give it in a lump, because they do not know where they may be the next year, which makes annual subscriptions almost impossible for them. With respect to *apprentices*, my idea is that the apprentices who go to sea now are boys whose aim is to become officers; they are not apprentices whose aim is to learn the duties of able seamen. One gentleman suggested that it was difficult to know how to insure that seamen should be better fed. Now merchant seamen are not in the habit of getting preserved potatoes. Why should they not? We carry preserved potatoes for soldiers and for emigrants. Again, why should sailors see soldiers and emigrants getting fresh meat and they not. I think one day in the week they might well have preserved fresh meat, and one or two days preserved potatoes, also mustard and pickles with their salt meat. I do not think that shipowners will object to it in the least. The only difficulty is, that these gentlemen have not time to attend to these things. I see a shipowner present whose ships I have commanded for many years; he allowed me to do as I liked, and I have given fresh meat and potatoes to the men. I may say that I belong to the Belvedere Committee, and should be very glad to see that institution succeed. There are a number of old seamen who have not had any opportunity to provide for their old age, and they must go into the workhouse if the Belvedere does not provide for them. Still I do not see that the Belvedere and Pension Fund are necessarily connected: the Pension Fund has been tacked on to it. A remark has been made about surveyors. I think inspection is good, just because "prevention is better than cure." But, as with troop and emigrant ships, it should be understood that inspection does not remove any responsibility from the owner or commander of the ship. We see that all the insurance offices have surveyors to inspect ships before they insure them, which is a plain proof that the business men of the day seem to think that inspection is of use. From my knowledge there are a number of shipowners who would do more for seamen if they were not too busy to attend to their wants. It is not natural for the shipowner to spend his time thinking about the fore-castle, &c., but he would be willing to put things to rights if somebody said "you must do this," or "you must do that." Therefore I cannot agree with gentlemen who find fault with inspection.

The CHAIRMAN: I concur entirely in the remarks of the lecturer, and am of opinion that a recurrence to a system of apprenticeship in some modified form is the one remedy for the deterioration of our merchant seamen, and of the great evils which result from the presence of the large and increasing number of foreigners. Speaking from my own knowledge derived from visits to the principal seaports, I am confident that a modified system of apprenticeship would be welcomed by the shipowners, if accompanied by a relaxation of some of the existing laws which they

consider press unduly upon them. With regard to training ships, I have no doubt that they are of great value. The Board of Trade has been accused in this room of being at the same time dilatory and over-active—of negligence and of unnecessary interference—but I believe it is a department that is always ready and able to carry out thoroughly and efficiently any duties that are imposed upon it by the legislature. I happen to be aware of the fact that within a few months after the Manning Commission reported in favour of Government training ships for the merchant service being established at each of the great commercial ports, the Board of Trade had prepared a scheme complete to the minutest details, and which is now merely waiting for orders from the Government to start into life. The various points touched upon by Captain Toynbee are of great importance, but I would wish to draw attention more particularly to a peculiarity in the position of sailors' homes, which cannot be made self-supporting, so close is the competition as to charges between them and the low class boarding-houses for seamen. A subscription list, producing from £200 to £300 a-year is absolutely necessary to meet the charges of rent and management, and enable the home to provide board for seamen and apprentices at the usual rate of from 12s. to 14s. a week. Other important points requiring attention are the diet and the medical attendance; the establishment of libraries on board the ships; the establishment of evening navigation schools for apprentices and young seamen, close to the docks; the erection of homes for seamen's wives and families under the Model Lodging-house Act now before Parliament; the encouragement of ship-to-ship visiting by clergy appointed for the purpose; the creation of a seamen's benefit Society in connection with the Post Office Savings Bank and Deferred Annuity Acts, so that a portion of the seamen's pay might be made available to their families during their absence, which often extends over twelve months. I may here observe that the Royal Naval Reserve may be considered as a seamen's benefit society, as a Government pension may be secured by a Royal Naval Reserve man, not only for himself, but for his widow. I believe that great advantage would result from a close inquiry into the causes that lead to the enormous amount of desertion among apprentices and seamen in the merchant service, and into the existing system under which advance notes are issued. On many of these important questions Captain Toynbee has given us most important information, and I am sure you will all concur with me in thanking him for his most interesting paper.

Mr. JAMES JACKSON: Will you allow me to state that we intend to ask the Government for a restitution of the funds belonging to the Mercantile Marine, amounting to upwards of £300,000, and we think the Belvedere the proper institution to administer these funds? Mr. Henley, when he was at the Board of Trade, said he would hand them over to a properly organized institution, representing the mercantile marine of the kingdom.

Captain TOYNEEBE: I am much obliged to you Ladies and Gentlemen for your thanks. There is one remark I should like to make upon what the Chairman has said. What I ask is, not that Government should give merchant seamen money, but that Government should manage the sailor's spare money after a modified plan of the Post-office Annuities for the Working Classes, and not leave it to be wasted on vice. If the sailor wishes to invest his money let him do it by means of the shipping-master, he knows nothing about going to a post-office. If Government will not do this, I would persuade seamen to go to the Shipwrecked Mariner's Society, which seems to me to be the best of private societies. I have just been asked to join another deputation to the President of the Board of Trade, to beg of him to manage a seamen's fund in connection with the shipping offices.