

The Online Library of Liberty

A Project Of Liberty Fund, Inc.

Thomas Hodgskin, *An Essay on Naval Discipline* [1813]



The Online Library Of Liberty

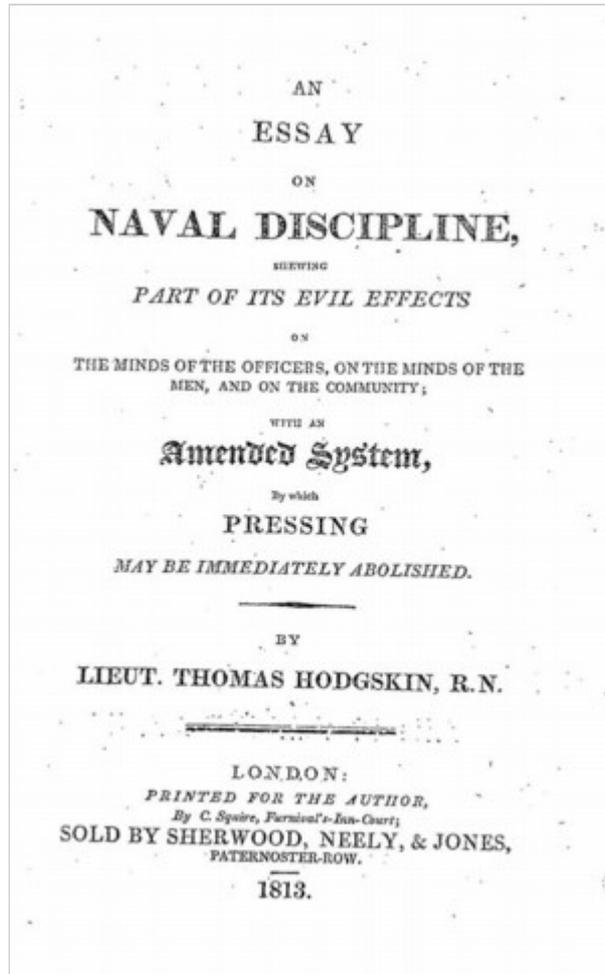
This E-Book (PDF format) is published by Liberty Fund, Inc., a private, non-profit, educational foundation established in 1960 to encourage study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals. 2010 was the 50th anniversary year of the founding of Liberty Fund.

It is part of the Online Library of Liberty web site <http://oll.libertyfund.org>, which was established in 2004 in order to further the educational goals of Liberty Fund, Inc. To find out more about the author or title, to use the site's powerful search engine, to see other titles in other formats (HTML, facsimile PDF), or to make use of the hundreds of essays, educational aids, and study guides, please visit the OLL web site. This title is also part of the Portable Library of Liberty DVD which contains over 1,000 books and quotes about liberty and power, and is available free of charge upon request.

The cuneiform inscription that appears in the logo and serves as a design element in all Liberty Fund books and web sites is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (amagi), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash, in present day Iraq.

To find out more about Liberty Fund, Inc., or the Online Library of Liberty Project, please contact the Director at oll@libertyfund.org.

LIBERTY FUND, INC.
8335 Allison Pointe Trail, Suite 300
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250-1684



Edition Used:

An Essay on Naval Discipline, Shewing Part of its evil Effects on the Minds of the Officers, on the Minds of the Men, and on the Community; with an Amended System, by which Pressing may be immediately abolished, by Lieut. Thomas Hodgskin, R.N. (London: Printed for the Author, by C. Squire, Furnival's-Inn-Court, sold by Sherwood, Neely & Jones, Paternoster-Row 1813).

Author: [Thomas Hodgskin](#)

About This Title:

Hodgskin began his interesting career as a radical individualist and natural rights defender of the free market with this pamphlet criticising the British naval policy of impressing (i.e. conscripting) sailors into the navy and using corporal punishment to discipline them. He based this account on his own personal experiences while serving the British Navy during the Napoleonic Wars.

About Liberty Fund:

Liberty Fund, Inc. is a private, educational foundation established to encourage the study of the ideal of a society of free and responsible individuals.

Copyright Information:

The text is in the public domain.

Fair Use Statement:

This material is put online to further the educational goals of Liberty Fund, Inc. Unless otherwise stated in the Copyright Information section above, this material may be used freely for educational and academic purposes. It may not be used in any way for profit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.	
	PAGE
DEDICATION	v
PREFACE	ix
CHAP. I.	
<i>On Pressing</i>	1
CHAP. II.	
<i>On the Love of Fame</i>	17
CHAP. III.	
<i>An Account of some of the Naval Laws and Customs, and of the Coercion used on board Ship to estab- lish Order.</i>	27
CHAP. IV.	
<i>The Effects of Naval Laws and Customs on the Minds of the Officers</i>	66
CHAP. V.	
<i>The Effects of Naval Laws and Customs upon the Minds of the Men; with an Attempt to estimate their Character</i>	80

Table Of Contents

[Dedication.: to the English Nation.](#)
[Preface.](#)
[An Essay On Naval Discipline.](#)
[Chap. I.: On Pressing.](#)
[Chap. II.: On the Love of Fame.](#)
[Chap. III.: Section First.an Account of Some of the Naval Laws and Customs,
and of the Coercion Used On Board Ship to Establish Order.](#)
[Chap. IV.: The Effect of Naval Laws and Customs On the Minds of the
Officers.](#)
[Chap. V.: The Effect of Naval Laws and Customs On the Minds of Seamen;
With an Attempt to Estimate Their Character.](#)
[Chap. VI.: The Ill Effects of the Coercion Used On Board Ship, and of the
Naval Laws and Customs On the Community At Large; With Some General
Remarks.](#)
[Chap. VII.: A Definition of Discipline; With the Modes By Which the Present
System Destroys It.](#)
[Chap. VIII.: An Amended System—general Observations.](#)
[Chap. IX.: Naval Tribunals.](#)
[Chap. X.: Naval Punishments and Rewards.](#)
[Chap. XI.: The Better Education of Officers.](#)
[Chap. XII.: Limited Service.](#)
[Chap. XIII.: Conclusion.](#)

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

DEDICATION.

To THE ENGLISH NATION.

Convinced that it is necessary opinion should precede *improvement*, I dedicate to you, for your attentive perusal, the following pages. Conjuring you to remember, that of all the blessings of freedom which you enjoy, not one has been granted to you, by any *God-like goodness* of men in the possession of power. They have given them up to you from their necessities, or resigned them from their *fears*. The patriotism or *disappointment* of individuals has, through the medium of the press, influenced your *opinions*, and in our country your opinion is all powerful.

From you, therefore, and you only, from the gradual progress of your opinions displayed through your representatives, can sailors expect any redress, or can laws be enacted having, for their bases, confidence in you, by which you will be taught to think well of *yourselves*?

It is an old saying, the voice of the people is the voice of God—it is likely to be the voice of truth; where many men are employed thinking on the same subject, if it is within their reach, as all moral subjects are, and this is one, it is not probable all should *err*.—To the truth and goodness of the following opinions, my heart and reason strongly assent. It remains with you to decide on *them*. If they are false or bad, if I have thought better of you than you deserve, you will for ever consign them to *oblivion*. If they are true, or you think them good, I hope you will cherish them as the peculiar offspring of liberty of thought.

That you and I may long enjoy this blessing, and the sailors participate in it, as the first step to their becoming rational beings, is the strenuous wish and ardent prayer of your admirer,

THE AUTHOR.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

PREFACE.

In compliance with the general intention of prefaces, I shall give some account of my motives for appearing before the public, on so interesting and *important* a subject as the Discipline of the Naval *Service*.

At a very early age I went to sea, with my head full of stories of the valour, generosity, and chivalric spirit of sailors; I thought that at sea, I might have the boisterous elements to contend with, yet that I should always meet cordial assistance, and always be supported by the harmony of *affection*; much was I disappointed, at finding one universal system of terror; no obedience, but what was forced; no respect, but what was constrained.—For a long time I acquiesced in other people's opinions on the subject, and, like them, I thought the bad character of the seaman required coercion to be corrected. But a little experience, a little reflection, and some little knowledge, taught me, that mankind were every where made alike; that the beneficent Creator of all had given to every man similar senses, and similar passions. That it was by the ideas acquired by the first operating on the last, either to restrain or augment them, that every diversity of human character was produced. That as the first of these are derived from the manners and customs of our fathers, and from our national *institutions*; that as our ships were manned with *Englishmen*, there must be some causes either in our naval *institutions* or the sea itself, that occasioned the bad *character* of seamen so much the subject of *complaint*, and so different from the character of my countrymen. To elucidate those causes, to eradicate the opinion that is entertained of the bad character of our seamen—thus to render coercion not necessary, and through making the naval *service* agreeable to the well-known feelings of our common nature, to do away the apparent necessity there exist for pressing, is the purport of the following essay.

To display to the public the abuses existing in the navy, has lately, to me, become an imperative duty: for, the absurdity of its laws and customs has deeply injured myself. My opinion of these is so irretrievably bad, that, in common with many others, I feel no shame at having fallen under their lash,—and but that they have deprived me of the good opinion of society, which is too generally built upon success; but that they have partially deprived me of the esteem of my *friends*; and, but that they have completely excluded me from that road to fame and fortune, the navy, in which my whole life has been past, I should not have felt *punishment* an injury. Having received so deep an injury from these laws, it has become a positive duty in me to attempt to alter *them* through the medium of public *opinion*; a duty equally strong with that which every man thinks it right to practice to relieve himself from a physical pain, by every possible means. When I look around *me* in society, and see the nations of the earth most celebrated for the rigour and despotism of their government, groaning under the most grievous *calamities*, while ours from her freedom has had safety ensured to her; can these calamities be possibly traced to any other cause than this despotism, which has destroyed every manly feeling; which, by unnerving the arm of the poor man (the legitimate defender of his *country*), has opened every pass to its enemies. Can the rise of despotism in any society be ever so well *resisted* as at first.—The first step it takes

gives it additional power to take a second. It goes on thus increasing, till men's opinions are bound up in its sanctity, and then it is *irresistible*.

When I confine my views to my own profession, and see the class of officers to which I belong submit to every *deprivation* however great, to every oppression however *severe*, because occasionally cheered by false hopes that can never be *gratified*, or chilled by fears of ill from their *superiors* power which can never *befall* them—when I reflect that their services are as necessary for the good of society as any others, and that if they were to exert a common spirit of resistance, oppression could not injure them;—when I see that submission to oppression is tacit applause and encourages it; and when I know, from history, that the very worst possible thing that could befall either my country or my profession, would be an unqualified submission to any one man, I must come to the conclusion, that patiently submitting to oppression (because it comes from a superior) is a vice—that to surmount your fears of that superior, and resist it, is a virtue. I must conclude so, whether I take utility as the prescribed end of my moral duties, or whether I go to the precepts of that religion that tells me to do justice and love mercy; the most sacred kind of justice is that which a man owes to himself, and to do that perfectly, will, in the end, be found most compatible with the real interest and good of society—such conduct may not please an avaricious governor, or a jealous superior, but it strictly accords with that utility which is the end of morality; it is virtuous and will ever remain *virtuous*, while virtue continues to be doing right, according to the extent of your knowledge, in hopes of enjoying eternal happiness. Since patience, under oppression, is a vice, and since our rulers seldom, in our profession, reward it in this life, no motive remains for submission to it, and I had resolved whenever oppression should hurt me strenuously to resist it. The occasion was unfortunately presented, and I complained of the injury done me, by a commander-in-chief, to himself, in the language that I thought it merited; he had unjustly deprived me of every chance of promotion from my own exertions, and that was robbing me of every hope. If this is not an injury, I cannot tell what an injury is; I can freely forgive the man, who, urged by the necessity of hunger, takes from me my money, but I never will cherish aught but indignation and resistance against the action of a man, who, invested with power for the good of his country, uses it for his own benefit, and breeds hatred against that country by exercising oppression, which the injustice of her-naval institutions *permits*. But in the navy, to complain in the words of freedom, which a man learns in our country, is sedition; to make use of the language of common sense, when unsanctioned by official forms, is mutinous and offensive; and the utterance of a philosophical moral truth is treason against the oppression, prejudice, and bigotry, that there reign in all the majesty of ignorance.

If I understand the good of my country right, it is promoting the greatest possible quantity of public happiness. This must have its foundation in justice, and cannot exist apart from moral *truth*; it is therefore necessary for its safety, (without which it is impossible there can be happiness), that its good faith should not be tarnished by its rulers, either to its own inhabitants or to others, it is therefore for the good of our country, that the rewards it has appropriated for our defenders should be given to them, and not diverted to other purposes by its rulers; that they should not be enticed to exertions by hopes, and then cheated of their rewards, for if they are, no motives remain for those exertions which are necessary for her existence, neither will they for

the future be produced. As the same power (which through the agency of custom punished me for claiming a right of reward), inflicts numberless cruelties on the seamen, and suffers our governors to create a much greater number of officers than there is any occasion for.—My cause is every lieutenant's cause, it is also the seaman's and the country's cause.

In thus presenting myself to the public, as a discontented and disappointed man, I am actuated solely by motives of candour and veracity;—I wish them to know justly how to appreciate my sentiments, and properly to discriminate what is derived from passion and what from reason. I know these virtues were never thrown away on my countrymen, and I have a proud conviction, that if they are pleased to enquire who I am, and what I am, I shall meet their approbation.

I do it not to move their pity; I ask them not to interpose between the individual and the government, but to abolish the principle that is doing us all infinite mischief. Were I a solitary individual, suffering under it, from knowing the intimate mixture of good and evil in all our works, I should bear it with patience; I should think it was the natural result of our numerous naval successes, and the pleasing reflection that I was deserving applause as a victim, for the good of my country would alleviate, if not destroy, the pain of *disappointment*. But no such reflection occurs, all the knowledge I possess combines to assure me, that in patiently submitting to oppression, I encourage what, if suffered to exist, must end in ruining that freedom which has supported us amidst a thousand difficulties, and made us the most gloriously conspicuous of modern nations.

In endeavouring to combat the existing opinions about the navy, I know I have a host of prejudices to encounter—military, arrayed by veterans in the habits of ignorance; and, unless public opinion should be already partly on my side, which I hope it is, I have but little chance of success. But a probability of being unsuccessful, was never with me a motive for abstaining from doing a duty, or I should not now have been making my sentiments known to the public; nor can I be deterred from doing this by my want of education, nor by my want of those many years of experience, which have permitted all the absurdities of which I complain. When education is grounded in wrong principles; it only leads to a multitude of *errors*. When experience has began with such principles, and when it has been restricted to one particular branch of knowledge, it only confirms errors, and shuts up the avenues of truth.

Neither of these deficiencies can convince me that I am unable to discover moral *truth*, or that actions denominated *political*, are not to be tried by the rules of morality. For, since the very hairs of our head are numbered, I cannot think that actions involving consequences the most productive of happiness or misery to mankind, can be destitute of that accountability, which is the foundation of *morality*. Now moral truth, by which a man can judge of these actions, is as equally necessary to the happiness of men, as food is to their *existence*. From analogy I conclude, that the same beneficent Creator, who has given us the latter in abundance with very little trouble, has bestowed the former with an equal or more bounteous hand. That like food it may be procured by every man of common capacity, with common industry,

and that consequently I am as capable of judging of political actions as the men who do them, whenever I become acquainted with their motives.

Truth, by men interested in obscuring it, has been said to lie hid in a well; I believe it is more frequently buried under a mountain of learning of human absurdities or human passions, but it is even there clearly discoverable to common sense, aided by common application. To oppose truth to a long existing prejudice is of more real value to mankind than winning a thousand *victories*. And this sentiment, aided by an imperative sense of duty to myself, is sufficient to make me stand forth unconnected with any man, unsupported by a single individual, the advocate of truth; under its banners, I hope to conquer; for its sake alone, I wish to be *victorious*.—I have no party to support; I am too humble an individual to have a political *existence*; yet, I am alike above the frowns of power, or the giddy applause of the multitude. I contend with confidence, for the goodness of my cause assures me I cannot be discomfited.

To display this truth in a forcible and pleasing light, is what my habits, as sailor, forbid me to hope. To expect fame from a correct or animated language, the neglected education consequent upon early going to sea, tells me would be folly; indeed, nothing could excuse my intruding myself on the public, whose attention must be occupied by so many writers of genius and of learning, or of deviating from the long settled habits of officers; but the importance of the subject, the connection it has with my professional habits, and the apparent ignorance of the better informed classes of society of those modes of coercion in existence on board men of war, which beget hatred in the minds of the lower classes of the community, and which only require to be thoroughly known, to be immediately amended by that humanity and love of justice, so conspicuous in other parts of our country.

In commencing a work of this sort, so opposed to all the reigning prejudices of the sea; I remembered the Italian proverb, that a work well begun is half finished, and I think if I can only draw the attention of the public to the subject,—there are men of genius and abilities, men of honour and philanthropy enough to take up and advocate the seamen's long neglected cause, and conduct it to a happy issue.

Much it wants advocating, for it is of vital importance to the safety of the country; her soldiers may acquire her glory, they will enhance her reputation, and make her more estimable among the nations of the earth; but it is from her seamen and her ships she must hope for the solid comforts of protection. Whatever adds to their love of their country, must be of the greatest benefit, and nothing can be more pernicious than whatever destroys it.

Sentiments of avowed discontent have frequently been seen amongst the seamen; yet, so confident has experience been of the efficacy of its discipline, that it has never been thought of as the cause. The word is wrapped round with a hallowed sanctity, and the navy has been so eminently successful in defending our country, that the evils which exist in it, have been thought essentials of its constitution to ensure its success. They have been regarded as sacred by the eye of prejudice, and no one has hitherto dared to condemn what all have been backward to examine.

The negligence of not enquiring into, and reforming the cause of this *discontent*, cannot be too much condemned. While our rulers have established boards of revision, whose cares have extended to the saving of a nail, not one thought has been given to form the moral character of our seamen; scarcely one endeavour has been made to attach them to their country, but by pains, penalties, and toils; as if what every man knows to be *pain*, could, by a decree of erring man, be made to the seaman a *pleasure*.

I have seen the discipline of the French armies and I have read of the despotism of the French emperor; I have witnessed, and heard of the calamities inflicted on negroes; but with the exceptions of our seamen being better fed, better clothed, and not allowed to be murdered,—what I have seen them suffer, exceeds the cruelties of Buonaparte to his army, exceeds all that the negroes have had inflicted on them: nothing could support them under their sufferings, but a great and noble consciousness, that they are the saviours of their country—that it is visibly their efforts alone, which prevent despotism from overshadowing the earth, and destroying that liberty they were in early life taught to indulge a love of, and which they still regard as sacred, though no longer permitted to taste its blessings.

To rescue our seamen from these cruelties, is, therefore, becoming every man of humanity; and, as while men labour under despotic oppression, they never can think well of themselves—to release our seamen from it, is the peculiar business of every advocate of virtue; for the first step to dignity of action is, that men should think well of *themselves*.

To abolish pressing, would be worthy all the eloquence, and all the abilities of a *Chatham*; it is even more worthy the exertion of Lord Holland, than the laws on libel — it demands more of the morality and patriotism of Mr. Wilberforce, than the abolition of the slave trade; its bad effects were confined to a few, and it was a dreadful stigma on the country. Pressing is a greater stigma, and has a dreadful effect on the morals of all.

To abolish it, strictly accords with that excellent sentiment of Mr. Stephens, which said, that to suppose men degraded, made them, in fact, become so; and thus they were made a disgrace to that society, which, but for a cruel injustice, they might have adorned.— Vide his speech on the Benchers of Lincoln's-Inn Bye-law.

If the nation, with Mr. Stephens, will apply this sentiment to the feelings of our seamen, they may feel as assured as he felt when he applied it to himself, that the result would be an increased dignity of character.

The general principles of the following pages are also agreeable to the sentiments of another honorable member of the House of Commons, who said, that “to applaud depravity, is to abet it—is to encourage an evil, whose extent is *indefinite*, and whose progress is uncontrollable.” And what higher applause does a captain of the navy seek, than the approbation of the admiralty.

When this has been bestowed upon the means used to establish order in the navy, it has applauded cruelty the most depraved, and the most replete with evil effects on the nation.

In condemning the means used on board ship, to accomplish order, it is my wish to convince the understanding of the discriminating, not to stir up the resentment of the oppressed; to awaken the justice of our legislators, not the anarchy of tumultuous people; to show that injustice is as impolitic as it is immoral; that if it is pursued, its end must be as destructive of national prosperity, as it is now of individual happiness and real national glory.—One other purpose of this essay is, to afford an opportunity to the advocates of the necessity of pressing and coercion to come forward and convince us of the existence of this necessity. I require my opinion persuaded, not my sensations compelled. We have long enough been governed in the navy by terror; it is time we surmounted our fears, and listened only to the dictates of reason for the motives to *action*. I desire to hear what the present system can give us, as a compensation for our real national glory which it destroys; for the slavery, hatred, and vice, which it occasions. I wish to know what can be bestowed upon us that is of equal value with the moral energy of character, which is the peculiar production of liberty, and which this system entirely prevents.

They cannot point out any advantages of this system, or, if they can, they will not; they think so despicably of human nature, that common men cannot, in their opinions, comprehend the exalted policy there is in injustice. When they are troubled to find any advantages themselves, it cannot be wondered at that others should not see them.

Let me now apologize to the public for the imperfections this work contains; it is a hasty composition, my individual interest, every feeling I possess, every hope of earthly happiness is so centered in knowing the public opinion of naval discipline, that I think the time would be ill bestowed I could employ in collecting respectable authorities for the principles I have advanced, in seeking facts to support them, or in polishing the language that conveys them. It probably might have added to my reputation, but it would materially have promoted my sufferings.

Though the composition is hasty, the opinions are *not*. Every day's experience of my services in the navy, has added to my conviction of their truth; they have been gradually growing up with me ever since I first went to sea; but the expediency of making them public, has only lately become so apparent through the medium of my own *sensations* of painful suffering;—an incident that added to my convictions, that it is time the public should know these things, was the attempt at murder on board his Majesty's ship *Union*—unacquainted with all the circumstances connected with it, except through the letters that appeared in the Plymouth paper, it would be rash to pass a judgment upon it. From the known high character of captain Lindsey as a disciplinarian, it is not too much to say that it was purely the result of discipline, that sudden feeling which was attributed to the man, as his motive belongs to religious enthusiasm, or the ardent feelings of liberty goaded by cruelty to despair, careless of existence and hopeless of *success*. And, but that Christianity has enlightened the world since the time of *Brutus*, it is not improbable this action might have deserved to have been classed with his.

Another incident that has hastened the publication is, the capture of his Majesty's ship *Guerriere*.

The fond believers in a moral energy of character springing from liberty, may, in the following pages, find a more efficient cause for her capture, than the loss of her mast.

If, in the following pages, I have appropriated the language, or sentiments of others to my service without acknowledgement, the diversified and occasional reading, which has been mine, and must ever be the sailor's lot, prevents me knowing to whom they belong, and must therefore be my apology.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

An ESSAY On NAVAL DISCIPLINE.

CHAP. I.

On Pressing.

Among the numerous political evils which, for a long time, have employed the attention of the most temperate and most enlightened advocates of reform, none stands so conspicuous, for its many bad consequences, as the present mode of manning our fleets. It has never been said that it is just—it has never been palliated or excused but on the score of inevitable necessity; but whence this necessity arises has never been enquired.

It is confessed, by its most willing sufferers, to be the foulest reproach that can be imputed to our country, and the vilest stigma that disgraces a constitution, the most perfect and glorious that ever existed.

Notwithstanding this universal acknowledgment, few efforts have been made to provide men for our ships by any other means, while the other political evils of our country have occasionally called forth all the energy, talents, and patriotism it possesses.

Admiral Patten's work on the subject deserves attention and praise, but it does not extend to the root of the evil; for while he proposes an extended bounty and higher wages, he makes no amelioration in our present system of naval discipline; on the contrary, the admiral makes it an object of his praise. It appears to be thought by him, as well as all others, the ground work, the basis of all our naval successes. I believe from experience, that this discipline is so much an object of hatred, that few men who have once served in a man of war, ever voluntarily returned when released, except some vile profligate scoundrels who were dead to feeling, and driven by poverty. I should, therefore, apprehend all the admiral's increased bounties must be totally inefficacious; that a voluntary registering, or a voluntary service could never take place on his scheme. The much additional expence that would be incurred by it is a great objection to a legislature and a people who, as the admiral says, desire to be defended without adequately rewarding their defenders.

I believe all are perfectly convinced of, and therefore it is needless to attempt to prove the hardships, cruelty, and injustice there is in forcing one set of men, who form a considerable portion of the community, unwillingly from their homes, and sending them to every part of the world, where they are exposed to every danger, to every sort of disease incidental to change of climate, and to death under every shape, for the purpose of defending the remainder from outrages similar to what they themselves are suffering, or, perhaps, to gratify the avarice of a few merchants, the chimerical ambition of some individuals, or the angry and hostile feelings which belong to all.

There is another point of view in which pressing has not been considered, which, as it forms the basis of naval discipline, it is necessary for me to examine. This point of view shews pressing possesses greater evils than any other, and, when added to its acknowledged and well-known absurdities, may induce reasoning, reflecting, and moral men to hasten its destruction. This effect will be best shewn by my relating two instances I have witnessed in the short period I have served in his majesty's *navy*.

Religion and a good education teach a Christian even more powerfully than a heathen, that some of his most pleasing and most clearly defined duties are to honor his father and mother, and to provide for the support of his wife and *family*. Now, perhaps, neither philosophy nor religion ever devised a better mode of honoring one's parents than Corporal *Trim's*. To contribute effectually to their support in our country is, with much propriety, honoured as a *virtue*; to desert them in distress is universally stigmatized as a *crime*.

I knew a young man who was an excellent shipwright, and the pride of whose life was to support an aged mother. Higher wages were at that time given to carpenters of merchant ships than the exercise of his trade allowed him to get on shore, and far exceeded his pay in a man of war. That he might the more effectually contribute to his mother's happiness he went to sea, and was there pressed. However strong might be his convictions of duty to serve his country, when every effort to procure his discharge had failed, strongly implanted affection for his mother (an affection mankind must honour as the source of so many virtues) led him to desert. He was, however, retaken, and only escaped being severely punished by a long fit of illness, brought on by the agitation of his mind and a long confinement in irons, preparatory to being tried by a court martial, which, it is probable, might have punished him with death, when he was doing a duty that he had been taught was to ensure him eternal happiness. What effect must this opposition of human to religious laws and instructions, founded as these last are, upon an intimate knowledge of, and supported by the feelings of our nature, have had upon this man's mind, and upon every other's who may be subject to both their influence? Can it possibly have any other than to make men think obedience to one, a crime, or give them a total contempt for the others, as the prejudices of old women, which they found mankind, particularly their rulers, whose example is so frequently held up for their imitation, and whose opinions frequently sway all their actions, totally despised, and which this individual's obedience to had caused him inexpressible *pain*? I trust I need not observe, that the religious laws and instructions, whose effects are so destroyed, are the only foundations of morality, are the very things employed by every Christian community as the bases of obedience to all human laws; and this destruction of religious principles is the chief cause of the now existing bad character of the seamen. This man's illness saved him from punishment; he wisely got over his fear of human laws, and obeyed one of the most pleasing and positive commands of his religion, by a second and successful *desertion*. Yet, as illness had procured him a sort of mercy for his first offence, he was universally stigmatised as a detestable and ungrateful scoundrel—but, with as much justice as a man might be called ungrateful who would prosecute a highway robber, when he had taken his money yet spared his life.

Another similar instance was a man who was pressed from being mate of a ship, and on whose exertions for an honourable maintenance a wife and four children depended. A Scotchman: this man had received a good education, and possessed all that well-known pride of independence so honourable to the lowest classes of that part of the community. It was a subject of deep regret to him, that his wife and family, accustomed to the comforts of life, should depend upon charity for their subsistence. To relieve them from it he deserted, a proceeding he well knew the laws denounced the severest penalties against; but they were not sufficient to deter him from the more rigid line of his duty. Aware of the immense importance of what has been called the narrow principle of self-interest, I must denounce that as a false love of country which begins from any other source than our own happiness, our families, and friends; I must denounce all exertions as absurd, and know, indeed, none such exist that have not for their immediate object our own pleasure, either now or hereafter. Therefore, this man could have no possible motive for serving in a man of war but fear, when he knew that his wife and family were starving, and that through their wretchedness he was completely miserable. Here was another perfect opposition of human laws to all the principles inculcated by religion, and the best kind of morality.

This man was also retaken, and certainly furnished to a captain an opportunity of displaying (contrary to the duty imposed upon him by his superiors) his own humanity and obedience to the laws of his God, by extending to this man a perfect forgiveness. Such an instance scarcely needs a comment; however, it is worthy remark, that the best of feelings and a knowledge of religion should so operate on this captain's mind as to make him do away the only motive a pressed man can have to serve his country—fear of *punishment*.

Such results of pressing as these have not generally been known, or not considered; its effects in this way are comparatively nothing on the worthless and profane, it is the man of a little knowledge whose mind it unhinges; it is the man who knows the blessings of liberty, and therefore loves his country, that it teaches to hate it; it is the good citizen whose affections it destroys, and very often converts to a bad man. When it is considered that death is the punishment denounced by the laws against desertion, do not these instances warrant the conclusion that pressing is wrong; for it destroys the legitimate bases of morality, the sources of obedience and virtue. That it is absurd, and must corrupt the mind, for it sets in opposition two principles of duty that are both alike imperative on man, but to obey both impossible. The principles it sets in opposition are not the dogmas of a sect, they belong not particularly to church-men, dissenters, or catholics, but are the only things in which they all agree; they are the acknowledged supporters of every kind of social intercourse and social order. When to this is added the well-known anguish of being torn from home, and forced into a service justly deserving hatred, what temper of mind will a man be thought to possess—what zeal can he be expected to have for the thousand uninteresting employments he is, on going on board a man of war, immediately called upon to execute. Sullen, sulky, and resentful, he goes unwillingly to work. The lash of terror is employed to quicken his exertions, which again generates hatred, and, as the conviction cannot escape his superiors that he is a much injured man, a still greater degree of terror is employed to prevent hatred growing into vengeance; and from this has arisen that system of coercive laws, and customs, infinitely worse than laws,

which, form what is called naval discipline, which again in their turn, as their existence is known to the lowest classes of the community, are the only possible reasons that can be assigned for the necessity of pressing. As these are dreadful evils, it becomes us distinctly to ascertain whence arises this necessity. At what period of our history did Britons forget the glorious example of their ancestors? When have they ever refused to perform all the moral duties that spring from the principle of self-defence? When have they thought it a crime, or when have they been cowardly enough to neglect to defend their country? My limited knowledge will not allow me to discover; but the existence of such a period in our history can alone have created the necessity of pressing; or it might have arisen at some period when the mass of the people possessing more knowledge than at present have refused some profligate sovereign or wicked minister to support them in an unjust war. Neither of these periods have ever been known. The mass of the people never possessed so much knowledge as at present; and never have our countrymen forgot the example of their ancestors; never have they been other than brave, and more ready for war than peace.

It is remarkably well known that the English people have always gone to war with alacrity, and seldom made peace with pleasure. I only know of one exception, and that was the Dutch war in the reign of Charles the Second. From whatever cause this necessity might have arisen, the well-known character of our countrymen assures us it no longer exists from any other than from naval discipline being totally opposed to every idea, we, as Britons, learn in early life; from its being in perfect opposition to that obedience every man is accustomed to pay to opinion.

Whether pressing is necessary or not is a question of feeling more than of reason or of knowledge, and it is one every man is capable of deciding. He who, laying his hand upon his heart, can think with sincerity, that he would suffer every one of its affections to be broken by the hand of ruffian violence without one effort to resist, may safely pronounce pressing to be necessary, and to him it should be immediately applied; but he who feels he would resist this ruffian violence till he had prevented every probability of injury, may agree with me, that pressing is totally unnecessary. Now there is not only a disposition in our countrymen to resist such violence, but there is such a disposition throughout human nature; and to suppose men will not defend their country, is so contradicted by the history of every part of the world, is so opposed by experience, that I scarce know with what arguments to combat it. As it is a question of feeling more than of reason, human learning will not decide it, and it therefore would be as rational to search for a solution of it in acts of parliament, as to go to them to find out why mankind love *praise*. We must go to something antecedent to acts of parliament—the human heart; and, as we shall find no reason for this necessity in the hearts of our people, we must look for it in the hearts of our rulers, not of this generation in particular, but in those prior. Are there not many of their actions which can be traced to no other cause but an unnecessary fear of future consequences; such, for instance, is the present needless opposition which they give to the free participation of all our rights by the catholics; such, for instance, was the establishment of the poor laws to compel people to be charitable, now so generally acknowledged as a great and growing evil; and there are many others of a similar nature. Talents have in our country received more praise than morality; they have frequently made a man a minister who has been destitute of every virtue; and such

people feeling their own fears, have distrusted mankind as equally bad. The opinion that our people need to be forced to defend our country cannot be derived from any other cause. Agincourt, Cressy, and Poitiers, give no countenance to such an opinion; neither is it supported by Salamanca, Barrosa, nor the misarranged battle of Albuera. In vain will our naval history be sought into to support it, for it teems with gallant exploits that put cold calculation to the blush; it furnishes innumerable instances of the ardent courage of the men, surpassing all that our rulers expected of them.

Our people have never been passive under injuries; they have never submitted to violence with patience. It is even with difficulty they can be made to bear with pressing and coercion, though patience under them is encouraged, by a general opinion that they are greatly necessary to the welfare of the *country*; and our people might be safely trusted to this principle of resistance, inherent in our nature, to man our fleets. Not only does English history furnish proofs that our people would defend their country if permitted, but the history of all *mankind*. The Spaniards and Portuguese are, at this *moment*, defending their country, when the fears of their rulers disarmed, and then deserted them. Did not the Tyrolese, against every difficulty, when destitute of every support, and when basely deceived by their rulers, the house of Austria, manfully and honourably defend their *country*? To go to America we shall find the Mexicans also, though desired to desist by that authority they had been accustomed to revere, bravely defended their household Gods; and no nation has yet been discovered who have refused to do so visible a duty as this whenever their rulers have permitted them. Our country can be defended no where but at sea; make this known to the people, and there will exist no more necessity for pressing than there is for penal statutes to compel men to labour when they cannot live without it.

Besides forming an opinion from my historical knowledge of our countrymen, that they do not require to be pressed to fight from any other reason than the opposition of discipline to our feelings, and the unnecessary fears of our rulers, I infer it from knowing the vast authority of general opinion, and from seeing that the fears of our rulers displayed through the laws to which all are obedient, and which many believe to be too sacred to permit examination, possess completely the authority of general opinion. Our rulers have supposed us incapable of defending our country, and making public this opinion by laws, they have absolutely created a vice which before only existed in their own imagination. There is no way so ready to debase a people as their governors (in whom they are so early accustomed to place confidence) forming bad opinions of the whole, from one or a few solitary examples of atrocious crimes, and enacting statutes to prevent them. Our rulers, at some period or other, have formed an opinion that we were unwilling to defend our country, but it is they alone who have literally created this unwillingness, and now our people positively *think* they are incapable of voluntarily defending our country.

When there is so strong a propensity in mankind to fight for their homes, when every man's indignation is even roused by the mention of violence, when this is taught youth as a virtue by their mothers, it begets a wish in many men to go to sea, and contribute to the defence, and share the praise of their countrymen; but when it is known that there is in existence so dreadful a thing as pressing, that this is sanctioned by an authority that men permit to guide all their actions, and when they feel that it is

employed to produce a virtue that they already eminently possess, it occurs to them that there is something dreadful at sea which they know nothing about. Such an opinion is strengthened by vague reports of the cruelties of discipline, and, like every thing with which mankind are imperfectly acquainted, imagination adds double horror to it. I will not encounter them, says one; I will not encounter them, says another; and so on through the whole community. In this manner the despicable opinions our rulers have entertained of us has partially begot a vice, which had its only beginning in their own fears, and now gives a colourable pretext to the necessity of pressing. Do away this despicable opinion, and the common passions of our nature, which our history shows our countrymen have always had in them, will do away every shadow of a necessity for pressing.

Men unaccustomed to reflect are not aware of the vast authority of general opinion, which I have before said the opinions of our rulers possess. Let me refer the reader for the proofs of this authority to any of the metaphysical writers of the day; but every man must know that the early life of all is wholly governed by its influence, as when we imitate the actions of the rest of mankind, and grow up like our fathers. The entire life of many never gets clear from its trammels. The longest period of reflection, and the most enlightened mind, frequently gives up its reason in compliance with this opinion without being convinced of its propriety. Now, as opinions guide the actions of men, whenever a general opinion pronounces a thing impossible, it becomes absolutely so. The general opinion in existence that we need being pressed has prevented our countrymen from attempting what they are so well capable of—*voluntarily* defending their country. If every man will apply to his own heart for information, and equally trust his neighbours, a general opinion can no longer exist that pressing is necessary.

The vast authority of opinion in promoting evil is not confined to pressing, but pervades every part of our country; its authority enforced by numerous penal statutes, and assisted by an opinion, yet much too prevalent amongst our people, that every man is prone to a particular vice is a conspicuous cause for the thieving and peculation which so commonly occur in our society. The legislature have added to it by the multiplied honours they have decreed to the possessors of wealth, making it the test of every virtue, making its possession or want the reason of admittance or exclusion to that highest honour a British subject courts,—a seat in our senate; and, while they have thus added to the already existing temptations to acquire wealth, they have destroyed more than half the power of resisting them by the authority of that general opinion that has persuaded men they were liable to commit these particular crimes. This vast authority of general opinion will teach us that too much care cannot be taken to prevent the enacting penal statutes, and it will teach us that mankind will universally become much better by being better though of. Though we cannot reach the perfection of the Deity, how much we may improve is yet unknown to every man; but, to attain any improvement, it is positively necessary that improvement should be supposed possible. Thousands have practised ardent and rigid virtue, and all are capable of doing it; thousands have voluntarily defended their country, and as many would as the country can need would our rulers but suppose us capable of doing it. Such an opinion is supported by an ardent love of fame in our people, which I shall elucidate in another chapter.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. II.

On The Love Of Fame.

By fame, to which, I have said, every Briton's bosom is alive, I do not mean that applause which posterity bestows, but that praise which makes a man feel a conscious superiority. For my part, I cannot distinguish any difference between a love of fame and a love of praise, except that the first is the unwilling resource of those men whose efforts have been directed, without success, to the acquisition of the last. They console themselves by thinking, that a more enlightened, or more virtuous generation will arise than the present, and that then they shall get their full share of *applause*. I believe both proceed from the same principle, which has been said to be natural to the heart of *man*,—a desire of superiority; for praise is an acknowledgment of *this superiority*; we bestow it on what we ourselves, or others do not possess.

Like every passion, which has been called natural, we can only be certain from consciousness of its existence in ourselves, but suppose it to exist in others from visible effects. I can assert I feel such a desire very strong myself, and I conclude, from analogy, others do also; and that, consequently, it is a general passion implanted in us for great and beneficent purposes by the hand of the *Almighty*. Other social passions are strong in proportion to the pleasure we derive from them; all are productive of pleasure, but they are variously modified by various circumstances; they are of different strength in different individuals, but still they exist in all. I apprehend the strongest proofs of the desire of praise, being a universal passion, are to be found in every man's bosom; and no man need be ashamed of acknowledging it for an *inmate*. It is equally as virtuous a motive for action as any other of the social passions; it is only when its desire induces actions, which we know to be destructive of our own and others welfare, that it ought to excite *shame*.

Taking, therefore, for granted, that the love of praise, or superiority, is a general passion of our nature, it will be stronger in our country than in any other; for it is one conspicuous effect of that liberty we enjoy to afford room for the gratification of, and consequently to excite, every human desire.

It is an observation of Mr. Locke's, that you have only to praise an action to produce an hundred imitators; he instances the acquisition of wit, the telling good stories, &c. And, what but the praise that has been bestowed upon the possessors of fine houses, fine gardens, and all the fine things that belong to *riches*, could induce the English merchant, already in possession of every real comfort, to continue his toils, in order to enjoy these fine things,—nothing: had they never been praised, they never would have been sought after. Can any other cause than the love of praise be assigned for many of our noblemen's wish to figure as superior drivers of four in hand vehicles; for their wish to be distinguished as the patrons of pugilism? Had fine horses and coaches, fine driving, and fine fighting, never been objects of society's praise; had they never collected thousands of individuals to gaze at and admire them, these and a thousand

such absurdities might have had a momentary existence, but a moment would have been the extent of their duration.

Is not the desire of praise the cause of scandal being so much a topic of conversation in country places? There many cannot be distinguished for their riches, and still fewer for their abilities; but, as all superiority is relative, a desire of distinction makes them debase their neighbours, that they may stand conspicuous amidst the *ruins*. Why have fine clothes been so much sought after by the lowest classes, since warm ones are all that is wanted for bodily comfort, but that fine clothes have been a mark of distinction, have had much respect paid them, and been much an object of praise. Why is skill sought for amongst the lowest classes of the people, in running, racing, &c.— but because it is an object of praise, for it requires exertion, and rather takes from than adds to bodily comforts. I believe that the praise which is bestowed is more the cause of the production of ingenuity in a man's profession than the solid comforts it brings. Now for all these methods of seeking praise, the English nation is more celebrated than any other; consequently, the desire that prompts to them must be stronger in our society than in others.

It is notoriously well known, that this love of praise pervades the very vilest parts of society; that a great thief, or a daring robber, becomes a greater thief, or a more daring robber, by a desire for the praise of his profligate companions. Thus many people have lived in the more open commission of every crime than their neighbours dared, simply because they would be distinguished. But (to my subject of paramount importance) what can animate our armies to those great military achievements but the love of praise; at reading the Gazettes, what heart but feels a momentary glow to share with them their toils and their praises; and what can stimulate the sailor in his arduous labours, but the praise he knows his country is ready to bestow on his success; for, like every other military exertion, praise is almost their only reward. Placed in a *situation* where the sailor is sensible the eyes of the whole community are turned for protection, he feels his consequence, and labours to surpass himself, well knowing he must exceed people's expectations to obtain much praise. On such a subject the authority of so profound a moralist as Dr. Johnson must be allowed much weight. He says,

“The Senate's thanks, and Gazette's pompous tale,
With force resistless, o'er the brave prevail.”

The English nation were brave then, and they are brave still; and that very bravery may be brought as a proof of the force and love of praise. Our country, placed in a situation of almost constant war, has praised the military virtues beyond any other; and every man knows to what an extent they exist: witness the plains of Salamanca, the heights of Corunna, the glorious victory at Trafalgar, and a thousand others. As the acquisition of wit, telling good stories, &c. are produced by praise, so is courage; it is acquired by exactly the same means. Practice is required in all to produce perfection; but the stimulus to practice is the desire of, and the reward of execution, praise.

It is the observation of some great man, that when ever a virtue is much wanted, it will be produced; and why is it, but that, like every thing else in repute, people give a good price for it; but no pecuniary rewards can excite to virtue, it is generally praise; and, it is praise plentifully, but judiciously bestowed, that produces whatever virtue is wanted. As courage and conduct in naval affairs, and, as an attachment to the sea is absolutely necessary, in a large portion of the people, for the safety of the whole community, I have no doubt these virtues would always be produced if they were permitted; it will hereafter be shewn by what means they are destroyed. From all the foregoing observations I conclude, and I trust they are strong enough to induce others to come to the same conclusion, that the love of fame or praise still animates every English bosom; it therefore becomes an immediate question, why the mass of our people, who can scarcely procure themselves food, will not voluntarily enter a service where it is provided in abundance, and where this strong desire of praise receives ample gratification? This question comes with still more force when curiosity is considered a passion, very strong in every young man's breast, which promises much gratification from going to sea, and which, it is well known, has rather been excited than repressed, by all the miraculous escapes from shipwreck which have been related to the world. It has been observed, that Robinson Crusoe made more sailors than any desire of wealth; and as sailors are so beneficial to our country, it is probable Daniel de Foe did more benefit to the community than half the men whose names have descended to us as the greatest of mankind. This question cannot better be answered than by detailing part of the laws and customs which have followed from putting in execution an imagined necessity of pressing. This shall be the subject of the following chapter.

It is, perhaps, misplaced, but I cannot help observing, what a means this love of praise, so universal in mankind, so powerful in Englishmen, affords of conducing to virtue. It is infinitely more powerful than millions of penal statutes, in as much as every man hopes to receive the prizes in the lottery of life, and not one expects the blanks. Praise is the prize mankind bestow on virtue; the punishment of the laws are the blanks.

What a heavy *responsibility* belongs to those writers, or men in authority, that praise, either by word or deed, any thing but virtue; for, it is probable, ambition would not now have been desolating the European world had not the names of those destroyers of the human race, Alexander and Cæsar, come down to us loaded with praise, and encircled with laurels for the victories which they had gained, while many of the real benefactors of mankind are not known, or known and not imitated. It is stretching the opinion too far to assert, that misplaced praise has caused all the evils of society; but to it we certainly owe a vast number. No laws can restrain actions that find praise in society; and to build them on bases opposed to the praise mankind are willing to bestow, must be absurd, for it can only tend to bring the whole body of such laws into ridicule and disrepute.

May not this love of praise, so clearly discoverable in every man, be adduced as a proof of the value, if not of the authenticity of the gospel, from this general principle being so perfectly in unison with its doctrines. There we are taught, as principles of action, to fear God, and to love our neighbour; the inconsistency of men is displayed

when they make the bases of our actions the fear of men and their laws. Every day's experience shew that this fear of men produces a thousand absurdities of action; that it is this which is employed by every tyrant, and with too much success, to produce that slavery which, by debasing others, exalts himself. Love to our neighbour is, probably, sufficiently strong in every man to produce all the good which is necessary for the happiness of society; for when this love shows itself in assisting our fellow-creatures, it immediately receives an ample reward from their praise; and where reward is certain, efforts to procure it will not be wanted, and this reward is confessedly one of the sweetest gratifications of the human heart.

We should, probably, approach somewhat nearer that perfection of society, which it is the end of legislation to seek, were these two principles, as they form the foundation of our education, made somewhat more than they are,—the bases of our laws. The idea of arriving at perfection has been very undeservedly ridiculed; we can yet make infinite improvement in our society, but how much our progress is prevented by entertaining an opinion of its impossibility must, from the authority of opinion, be obvious to every man.

Seeing this love of praise is so intensely strong in every man's bosom; seeing that the Almighty has vested the power in every man of bestowing or withholding it, to excite actions that promote his happiness, or repress those that injure him; and being firmly of a conviction, it would have had sufficient force (had it been properly directed from the beginning) to produce every kind of virtue; since it alone produces military courage, acknowledgedly requiring arduous exertions; since its force is sufficiently strong to make men violate all kinds of laws, as in our country, where no penal statutes can repress libels, I cannot be satisfied with those deductions of civilians that vest the power of life and death in the hands of any society. The claiming this power is only justified by the necessity there is, that society should have the means of producing its own benefit or perfection; but the love of praise is much stronger than the fear of death; therefore praise and censure, under all their modifications, are stronger as well as better powers, and appear to be what our governors may justly claim to exercise, to prevent vice and encourage virtue.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. III.

Section First.

An Account Of Some Of The Naval Laws And Customs, And Of The Coercion Used On Board Ship To Establish Order.

Out of this imagined necessity, of pressing, there has grown up in the navy a set of laws and customs sufficiently repugnant to the feelings of an Englishman, to his ideas of justice and liberty, to make him forget the principle of resistance so common in human nature, neglect the gratification of fame, and risk every disaster, even to starving, rather than voluntarily serve his country.

These laws and customs, like pressing, are defended on the score of inevitable necessity, arising from the bad character of the seamen. As they are also acknowledgedly unjust, it becomes their supporters clearly to show the existing necessity, distinctly to prove this bad character of the seamen, or amend the execution of these laws; but I think I can satisfactorily prove, that this necessity does not exist; that the frequent crimes and bad character they are made the vehicles of punishing they themselves occasion.

When, from a thorough conviction of its absurdities, I am about to condemn what is called naval discipline, or the means used on board ship to establish order, it is necessary I should assert, that no man is more a friend of order than myself; no person has a stronger conviction than I have of the necessity there is for a quiet and ready obedience, for the utmost attention to cleanliness and health, for the greatest alacrity in every minutia of duty, and for prompt and simultaneous efforts in every class of men of war to produce victory. The facts that will follow are not well *authenticated ones, borrowed from others*, but what I have myself seen; and the reasoning is the result of my own experience. In detailing these facts, I beg to be distinctly understood as making no reflections on any individuals; they are the genuine offspring of a dreadful system of laws, which corrupts the officers and debases the men; which, by tolerating and praising, encourages oppression; which furnishes principles of action directly opposite to the religious instructions of our youth; and which perverts those feelings of the heart that, under the guidance of these instructions, give birth to every virtue.

The men who have legislated for the navy appear to have been ignorant of the characters of, and of the crimes likely to be committed by seamen; they have not only been ignorant, but they have been negligent in enquiry, or they might have ascertained what are the chief crimes, what is their cause, and what is their proper remedy. From this ignorance and this negligence, no moderate punishment is affixed to the thousand little deviations which sailors may commit, and which, from their confined situation, must be known to their *superiors*. These trifles are all left to the captains to punish; and he punishes whatever he thinks errors, and in nearly whatever way he thinks proper. He is sanctioned in doing it by the following article, which concludes those

articles of war by which the navy is governed. It says, "All other crimes, not capital, committed by any person or persons in the fleet, which are not mentioned in this act, for which no punishment is hereby directed to be inflicted, shall be punished according to the laws and customs, in such cases, used at sea."

Dr. Paley has asserted, in his *Moral Philosophy*, vol. I. page 5, "That it is tyranny in the legislature leaving to magistrates the power of defining what the laws intended to punish;" but our legislature has left to the captains the power of punishing according to custom; has left them the power of making customs equal to laws; has made them, when they form courts martial, the only judges of these customs, and they have the power of condemning to punishment: in short, they are legislators, they are judges, they are juries, and they are very often parties and executioners. This is, according to the dictionary, despotic power, and therefore these expressions are strictly true, and no apology, I should think, can be expected for using them in other parts of this essay. The entrusting arbitrary power to any governor or governors is not less destructive of his or their happiness than it may be of all the men governed; that this unhappiness to both is the fruit of arbitrary power being in the possession of any men, experience must show to all; that its fruits are the same in the navy, I am convinced from experience; it is as pernicious to the happiness of officers, through making them distrustful and jealous, instead of their having confidence and attachment, as it is to the seamen's happiness, through the cruelty that is exercised upon them. If it is so destructive of this happiness, what reason can be found for continuing it, since the happiness derived can be the only test of the utility of any law?

In consequence of entrusting such a power to captains, complaints are frequently made, and with too much occasion, that justice cannot be obtained at courts martial. Whenever the culprit is a junior officer, or a common seaman; whenever he may have violated any of the laws; whenever he may have offended the feelings of antipathy of an admiral or a captain, it is as rational to expect justice from a court martial as from a Turkish *Cadhi*; both possess the same power, and both are subject to the influence of that power through their passions upon their judgment.

To the mind accustomed to reflect, that ideas of right and wrong are, like all other ideas, not engraved upon our minds by the hand of our Maker, but are acquired from education (in the most enlarged sense of the term), what a sanction does this possession of power, this article of war, give to a captain for the persevering in any cruelties he may ever have seen inflicted or adopted as customs, by any of his superiors, in his progress through the subordinate stations of the service! Unfortunately, the infliction of severity of punishment comes recommended to the young officer with all the fascinating charms of success; it has often produced, and will again produce, great simultaneous, but temporary exertions. Its future consequences, in corrupting the mind of the sailor and of the community, in producing a still greater degree of hatred, which must, eventually, end in destruction, can never be attended to by men whose limited education prevents them knowing these future consequences.

It is this before-mentioned article of war which reconciles to every captain's conscience the infliction of severity of punishment, that neither the immorality, the

unhappiness accruing, nor the importance of the crime ever call for; it is this which convinces him that he acts perfectly just; and when the approbation of courts martial (the highest naval tribunal) has been bestowed upon bad customs—when, from beneficial but temporary effects, these bad customs have excited the applause of men, supposed to be excellent judges, whose lives have been spent in the service, whose years of experience entitle their opinions to much respect, but who have never known human nature, and possessed little knowledge beyond their ships; this article has then had additional force in perverting the ideas of right and wrong, which naval officers might acquire from their communications with other parts of society. Such customs have been sanctioned which deserve condemnation; such applause has been bestowed upon actions for the support, as it would be called, of discipline, from which the unsophisticated and enlarged mind of an Englishman recoils, as horrid and atrocious.

The opinion, that this article of war really perverts people's ideas of right and wrong, is not the fancied speculations of a man covered with the dust of a library, but the result of experience. I served a considerable time with a captain deservedly celebrated, whose whole mind was occupied with a desire of being distinguished, and who has performed several actions that have justly acquired him much reputation. He had, unfortunately, served all the early part of his life with officers denominated "smart;" he had seen men whom he had early been taught to fear and respect adopt many bad customs, with temporary success, in producing alacrity, but never having enlarged his mind with much reading, or much communication with society, nothing told him that following these customs was improper. This captain was a religious man, and a man, whom I believe, most firmly thought himself conscientiously just, and that, in committing numberless cruelties, he was promoting the good of the service, by keeping in order a set of men whom he was accustomed to consider as notorious rascals. My situation permitted me, and I took particular pains to find out his motives for the severity of his discipline, and I am fully convinced they all centered in benefitting his majesty's service, and in acquiring for himself, what has been much an object of naval society's praise, the reputation of a "smart officer." I have seen this captain flog, I think, twenty-six men, part of them by candle-light, at both gangways, because their hammocks were not properly cleaned. The only time the men were allowed for scrubbing was one hour and a half during the night; in this time they had their hammocks, half a week's dirty clothes, and, perhaps, a bag to scrub. It was not because they had not been scrubbed at all, but because they did not look well: I should say, it was flogging men for impossibilities. It was in a warm climate, and, in a warm climate before, this captain had seen such things done; he would allow of no relaxation whatever, justly observing, if he began to relax, he knew not where to stop. The observation is extremely good, but the application most wretched; for there exists a wide difference between relaxation from order and relaxation from the cruel means used to accomplish it. Part of the men so punished were some of the best men in the ship; but old or young, good or bad, they had disobeyed orders in not having their hammocks perfectly clean; they had merited punishment, and they were punished.

This incident forms a part of the customs used at sea, and what is more, this formed a part of a system of discipline, which system had received not only the sanction of a court martial, but its praise; it was said to be honourable and praiseworthy to the

captain. I almost fear, from the known humanity of the English nation, that I hazard my credit with them in stating this fact, but it is nevertheless true.

A consequence of entrusting to captains this power of punishing what they think proper is, that instead of one system pervading every ship, the discipline of each ship depends upon what is called the captain's natural disposition; so that both officers and men, at changing their ships or their captains, are often obliged to change every mode to which they have been accustomed. From being allowed to live in all kinds of indolence, they are suddenly required to assume a large portion of activity, and very often the want of this activity, encouraged by the indolence of a former captain, is imputed to them as a crime, and endeavoured to be conquered by flogging. From discipline depending on a captain's natural disposition, a naval life becomes a series of different educations; knowledge not established upon principles, is vague and useless, and the time that might be employed in improvements is devoted to the changing of modes. Surely this is miscalled a system, it is a collection of as many systems as there are different individuals; what is tolerated in one ship is in another a crime; what is in one applauded is in another punished; it is only a general system as it entrusts a power to men who have notoriously abused it.

Now it unfortunately happens, that the captains who feel the greatest predeliction for ships, and are, consequently, best acquainted with them, despise other knowledge, and therefore know little else but of their ships. These are the men most likely to be employed where merit is alone the question; these are the men most likely to have the education of our young men of interest, who are sure of promotion; and these are the men most certain to perpetuate all the errors and all the cruelties of custom.

The power entrusted to captains over the men was without any sort of controul until April, 1811, when punishment had then caused such frequent complaints from the seamen, and it had been proved they had borne with patience, and complained with justice, that the admiralty found it necessary to interfere; and they issued an order, that quarterly returns should be made to them of the number of men flogged in each ship; their crimes, age, time they were confined, quantity of punishments, &c. &c. but still leaving to the captain the power of inflicting punishment. Now it must be obvious to every man, that the same interest which can, in violation of every principle of justice, and of every incitement to officers for exertion, make a captain of a man, comparatively just come to sea, while thousands are toiling, and have been for years destitute of hope, must be sufficient to soften and completely obviate every censure the admiralty might be inclined to bestow on a captain - who should inflict, under the name of good for the service, unmerited or cruel punishment. As these returns are known only to the admiralty themselves, they are, therefore, responsible to nothing but their consciences for their conduct* and every man knows how easily conscience is influenced by interest. It is also rendered perfectly useless by the captains employing other means of punishment; therefore this order, though evincing the necessity there is for some check, is wholly ineffectual.

It is not my intention to point out and comment upon the effects of every one of the articles of war, or every one of the customs of the navy. Many of them are a perfect dead letter: I wish not to wake them from their dread repose, but just to direct the

public attention to the most prominent figures in the picture of naval discipline, I believe they will find all its characters, all its shades, of the same dark hue, unenlightened by knowledge, untinged with mercy or benevolence, and reflecting the heaviest gloom over the character of man. Yet there are some articles of war which deserve notice, as likely to moderate the cruelty of customs, and stop tyranny and oppression. It is enacted, by the thirty-third of these articles, “that if any officer shall be convicted before a court martial of behaving in a scandalous, infamous, cruel, oppressive, or fraudulent manner, unbecoming the character of an officer, he shall be dismissed his majesty’s service.”

This might be supposed to ameliorate or prevent cruelty; but as all cruelty is relative, and as a captain is tried by captains, who all, like himself, have witnessed cruelties existing as customs, and since they have all occasionally practised them, they are all ready, from similar feelings, to make every allowance for a man who states, and probably believes, he was only promoting the good of the service when he trespassed on humanity. Experience shews, that there is no punishment for a captain who does this, that nine hundred and ninety-nine instances out of a thousand escape; besides, a prosecution is not a simple business, few are the seamen that have knowledge sufficient to conduct it, for every effort is employed to keep them in ignorance; fewer still dare oppose an authority which they are habituated to reverence from terror, and when they do still fewer succeed.

The first article of war might also be supposed to produce good, since it recalls men’s minds to the Deity; but it is so little observed, and so frequently violated, that I fear its tendency is the direct reverse. It is ordered by it “That all commanders, captains, and officers, in or belonging to any of his majesty’s ships or vessels of war, shall cause the public worship of Almighty God, according to the liturgy of the church of England, established by law, to be solemnly, orderly, and reverently performed in their respective ships, and shall take care that prayers and preaching, by the chaplains in holy orders of the respective ships, be performed diligently, and the Lord’s day be observed according to law.” But so far is Sunday from being observed as a religious day, that it is generally devoted to some particular employments without the slightest necessity. I have seen forges set to work, rigging set up, *ships painted*, and all manner of work performed, from no other motive but that paramount one on board ship,—the captain’s pleasure.

I am not so determined a bigot as to condemn working on Sundays as a crime when the country’s service calls for it; but I think a whole code of laws are likely to be much more respected by the body of the people if they see no open violations of any part of them by men, their superiors, whom they are accustomed to obey and respect. This law stands first in the naval code; it is solemnly and impressively worded, and it is one that the lowest class of the people are accustomed to regard with attention; for the respect due to Sunday is enforced in millions of penny pamphlets in our country, and it ministers to their pleasure and their ease; therefore its total violation, which frequently takes place on board ship, must serve to bring the whole body of the laws into contempt, exclusive of its bad effects in destroying, by the ill example of their superiors, all attention to religion in the minds of the men; thus perverting the only

source of morality, and thus assisting to produce the bad character attributed to the seamen.

There is another law which has also the effect of bringing the whole code into contempt; it is the first part of the 27th article, which enacts, "That no person shall sleep upon his watch, upon pain of death or otherwise, as a court martial shall think fit." But times have so altered since this was made, or it was made with so little knowledge of the seaman's situation, that he is now permitted and encouraged to go to sleep. An obsolete or a contradictory law is of no consequence on shore, where people never hear of it, but on board ship this law is read, with the others, probably, once a month, with equal solemnity, and has equal force with others, to which the most rigid obedience is exacted.

CHAP. III.

Section Second.

Whenever, what is called, the natural disposition of the captain is severe; whenever he has a strong love of fame, and is careless or ignorant of the legitimate means of acquiring it, terror, from its temporary success, is made the means of promoting that activity in the minutia of duty which has been thought to deserve, and has received much praise. Custom sanctions flogging in all cases when the captain thinks fit; and the particular article of war that sanctions it for wanting activity is a part of the 27th, which says, "No person shall negligently perform the duty imposed upon him under pain of death, or as a court martial shall think fit." Captains are the sole judges of what is negligence, and the duty to be imposed has been interpreted by them as an obligation on all beneath them to do every thing in what ever manner they may think fit; and who can affix any other interpretation but captains? Any opposition to their will, any hesitation in obedience, and want of alacrity in fulfilling it, is punished by flogging. Some of the captains have insisted upon their people's flying, but not having the genius of a *Kali*, have enforced obedience by flogging. Lest the reader may be too much alarmed, it is necessary to state, flying, in sea language, means running up and down the rigging, in and out upon the yards, with breathless haste.

A great part of the punishments I have witnessed on board ship is classed under this head of neglect of duty; and when the punishment annexed to the offence is stated at from one to three dozen, it will, doubtless, be inferred, that there must have been some egregious inattention, some neglect, by which the ship has been endangered, or some want of exertion, by which an enemy has escaped. No such thing: such instances are very rare; but the captain has imposed some duty upon them which could not interest them; exertions have been required when no zeal existed, but this never was when an enemy was to be encountered. Some accident has happened from hurry, which it was the duty of the unfortunate culprit to prevent; perhaps his anxious wish to beat another ship, when they have been exercising together, and frightened by the terror-striking voice of his captain, or first lieutenant, has made him neglect it.

I have heard it has been avowed as a principle, by an officer of the highest reputation in his majesty's service, and I have seen it acted upon, "that no such thing as an accident could happen;" consequently, any misfortune must have arisen in some person's neglect, and some person must be punished to prevent its recurrence. To this, as a principle, between man and his Creator, I have no objection; in his all-seeing eye it is probable all the misfortunes of the human race may justly be imputed to themselves; but surely, man's fellow-creature, though his superior, is not his God. To continue the enumeration of those things that are punished as the neglect of duty:—Some of the iron allotted to a man to polish does not shine well; his hammock has not been clean scrubbed; his clues have not been blacked; his clothes have wanted mending; his shirt has been dirty; or, perhaps, he may have neglected the captain's stock, or the wardroom dinner: These, and a thousand similar trifles, are what seamen are flogged for, as neglect of duty. The captain's orders have made doing these things their duty; and custom sanctions his inflicting flogging for their neglect. No person who reads over these items for which sailors are flogged, whether sailor or not, but must know greater part of them have no real value in themselves; they have a beginning in the captain's will, and when he is pleased their utility ends. Those that are necessary or useful, must flow from regulations, and their being made honourable and praise-worthy should be the stimulus to conformity. Those polishings, &c. that are of no real use with a better system of discipline would not be wanted; for now they are adopted, as the means of employing the people, so averse to our common feelings is naval discipline, so dreadful are the means used to establish order, that, for a sailor to have a moment's leisure is, by many officers, dreaded more than a *pestilence*. As the real duties of a ship can never occupy the time of half of the men employed, the captain has recourse to his invention to find the seamen work; for so conscious are the officers that the seamen cannot reflect without being sensible that they have been unmeritedly punished, that they have received almost unlimited injury, that they are fearful reflection should make them compare their situation with the rest of their countrymen, with what they themselves once were, and that this reflection should rouse them to vengeance for oppression. What a thread is this for the existence of our country to depend upon? And not only our country, but every thing that can be dear to the reflecting part of civilized Europe.

It is those things which, in themselves, are indifferent, which have never been objects of praise, and which there exists no motive for doing, but the arbitrary will of a captain, or some capricious superior, that flogging is employed to produce. A seaman never neglects his duty in time of action, for success then has been an object of praise. In any time of trouble or of danger, whenever great energy, noble courage, or manly fortitude, are wanted, terror, in any of its branches, is never applied to call them forth. In such times is the seaman's greatest glory and his highest pleasure; then he feels that his efforts will entitle him to praise; then, cheered with the smiles of his officers* and the prospect of fame, death only limits his endeavours.

Once, indeed, I have seen an instance of British seamen's backwardness in a time of danger, when they were heartless, pusillanimous, and cowardly, but this was in a ship where a severity of flogging, and all the niceties of discipline were carried to a greater extent than I ever before witnessed; where the captain never permitted any other motive for action but fear of him; where, if the men were disposed to do well in their

own way, but, from other motives, they were not permitted; and where every action was prescribed by regulations, and enforced by terror; but, in a moment of danger, no terror could be employed, and, consequently, no exertion took place. By the operation of this terror, the men were deprived of every lawful and pleasing mode of excitement; they were debased into slaves, and slaves are incapable of energy. This circumstance is a strong proof, how much more powerful the hope of good is in promoting human labours than the fear of evil; for here no chance existed that was known to the seamen, but that they would be punished when fine weather should again return; and, if the fear of evil could excite men, I know no evil greater than flogging, and none was more certain of being realized. I have before observed, that from the power that is entrusted to captains, different things are punished, as crimes, by different individuals, and the same individual is, at times, so unlike himself, that what he once punished he is now inclined to applaud. This is so much so on board ship, that the seamen scarcely know themselves what will be punished and what will not. No principle, therefore, shorter in its duration, or more transient in its good effects, than fear of capricious man, can be applied to govern men.

I have once, and but once, heard of an instance of the seamen feeling any thing but pleasure at going into action. This took place, in a ship recently manned, in the West Indies, where scoundrels of every denomination are gladly accepted and classed with British seamen. The men were mostly foreigners, and very soon after leaving port, this ship fell in with an enemy of much superior size to herself. Her appearance frightened these men; the captain was informed of it by the few Englishmen on board, and with such base minds as these people possessed, punishment was *effectual* in exciting courage*

Another customary mode of forcing men's labour in men of war sometime ago in use, though now gradually and very happily going out of fashion, was to flog the whole of the men stationed to perform a particular service, such as the main-topsail-yard men, &c. if they were last at executing a part of their duty, or if, in the captain's opinion, they stood conspicuous for neglect. This custom, though now growing into disuse, had, and yet has the evil effect of begetting hatred to the service in the minds of the community; it has deterred Englishmen from voluntarily resigning the blessings of existence, by submitting to such horrors, though prompted by the love of fame. In compliance with this custom, not many years have passed since I saw all the men stationed on the main topsail-yard severely flogged for their dilatoriness.

This wholesale mode of punishment, this darling of what is called the St. Vincent system, was the pride and glory of discipline; its effects were exultingly pointed out to you in the superior alacrity with which men so punished performed their duty on the next occasion. Happily, public opinion has tended to eradicate this glory of *discipline*.

Section Third.

The second article of war is, "All flag-officers, "and all persons in or belonging to his majesty's ships and vessels of war, being guilty of profane oaths, cursings, execrations, drunkenness, uncleanness, or other scandalous actions, in derogation of God's honour, and corruption of good manners, shall incur such punishment as a

court martial shall think fit to impose, and the nature and degree of their offence shall deserve.”

Of all the crimes mentioned in this article, and which, with the others, is read to the seamen once a month, drunkenness is the only one for which custom sanctions the infliction of much flogging; of the other crimes mentioned here, cursings, execrations, &c. are known to exist in immense quantities, and are never noticed: indeed, it is a general opinion in the navy, that his majesty’s service cannot be carried on without (on the part of the officers) cursings and execrations. As for uncleanness and other scandalous actions, they are tolerated, allowed, and encouraged; why these words are permitted to exist in the same article with drunkenness, occasionally so much the object of abhorrence, and flogging, can only be accounted for in the ignorance of the people who made these laws, or in the changes to which the affairs of men are liable.

Of all the crimes that frequently meet with severity of punishment on board ship, and which are the cause of much flogging, drunkenness stands pre-eminent for the enormity of its consequences; for, whenever suffered, it can cause nothing less than destruction to every ennobling sentiment, of every regularity that can keep up order or preserve health. It deserves no palliation, and must, by some means or other, be repressed; but with the advocates of discipline I cannot agree, that flogging, inflicted at the will of an individual, is the proper mode of repressing it. This vice is as condemnable, in a moral point of view, as it is from its effects on order on board ship, and, consequently, habits of it ought never to be tolerated or allowed; but in the navy they are frequently encouraged and praised.

In the opinion of many officers, a sailor is not worthy of his name who goes on shore (though it is very seldom this is permitted) and fails to get drunk. A knowledge of this opinion, and a desire for the praise consequent on it, and in being deemed a good hearty fellow, prompts sailors to get, as fast as possible, rid of their sobriety whenever they set foot on land. When there, the civil inhabitants of our country give strength to this opinion, and act as if they were in a conspiracy to undermine the morality of our seamen; they are encouraged, by their smiles, to commit all sorts of excesses. Poor fellows, it is said, after their labours, indulgence is necessary: thus a most brutal state of intoxication is called an indulgence; and what general opinion pronounces an indulgence will be eagerly sought for, without any conviction of the pleasure arising from committing it. Who, that has ever been in a sea port, has not seen drunkenness encouraged in this way, and drunken sailors cheered and applauded while doing all sorts of mischief? But the privilege of getting drunk, as an indulgence, does not stop here; in many ships it is given to seamen, when in harbour, as a compensation for their other numerous privations. They are allowed to purchase liquor in certain proportions, but generally sufficient, with the usual allowance of spirits or beer, to produce intoxication. As this is always granted as a favour, it, of course, is an indulgence, and is sought after as a pleasure. Whenever this permission is given, all attempts to preserve any kind of order are perfectly fruitless. The horrid, the brutal scenes which I have known ensue from this indulgence, will not bear minute description: Mutinous expressions, horrid blasphemies, and perpetual fighting, distinguish the evenings of the days devoted to intoxication.

It is from this forbearance and indulgence at one time, together with a greater allowance of spirits than is necessary, that habits of drunkenness are produced among seamen of men of war, which, afterwards, the utmost severity of discipline can scarcely subdue, and can never destroy; yet the drunkenness produced in this way, is made the principal argument for the necessity of severity. Like other crimes, it is left to the captain to punish or not; it is encouraged or repressed; punished lightly or severely, just as he may be indolently good natured or diligently severe. Can there be a more effectual means of destroying the distinctions between vice and virtue, (remember that they are not innate) which it is the business of religion and education forcibly to impress on the mind, which it is one great business of laws to make, than in thus making convenience alone the test of guilt, than in thus reducing the eternal and immutable principles of morality to the narrow and vibrating scale of this man or that man's pleasure; than in superiors punishing at one time what at another they practise, encourage, and applaud. Goaded once to madness, by severities, the seamen mutinied, and, like other beings in their situation, they knew not, exactly, what to claim as their due; they thought more grog would drown every care, and hence, that greater allowance of spirits which they receive than is necessary for their health, and which is sufficient, under some circumstances, to produce intoxication.

Here was one instance, out of many, that might be produced, that where justice is not done, something that is not justice, will be obtained. When ever the seamen shall become sensible of their present situation; and, from the wide diffusion of knowledge, they are fast arriving at it, they will obtain, from the fears of their superiors, more than justice; they may, perhaps, (I fear it) hurl *destruction* on their country.

Reflecting, that men's characters are, in general, formed from the institutions of their country, or the immediate society in which they live, combined with the influence of climate, I formed an opinion that it was probable drunkenness in men of war, arose wholly from their existing institutions, and I enquired of many captains of merchantmen, if they found seamen to be frequently drunk with them; the answer invariably was, "not particularly, not more than the other inhabitants of our country, of their class, unless," it was rejoined, "they had been in a man of war." And more than one instance has been related to me, of sober, young men, who had been pressed, returning to their former employ at the peace, corrupted, drunkards, and unfit to be trusted; and after some short period of good example and seclusion from grog, returning again to habits of sobriety and decency.

I have witnessed many instances of young men just pressed, never being in the daily habit of drinking spirits, but in a man of war, aided by example, they have soon become drunkards.—But the fact, that the system of discipline which exists in a man of war corrupts a man, is too notorious to need much elucidation.

Section Fourth.

The nineteenth article of war orders contempt to be punished as a court martial shall think fit, but custom sanctions the captain's inflicting corporeal punishment for whatever he may deem contempt. And there is an article of the printed naval *instructions*, which without affixing any punishment to disrespect, vests, through the

medium of custom, a power in courts martial to punish it in any way they may deem fit.

Two such indeterminate words as these, left to naval captains to interpret, are very sufficient means; and they are made ample use of in inflicting punishment by men whose anger is roused by the slightest opposition. These things are thought the first steps to mutiny, and they are, therefore, repressed with what is even in the navy thought severity of flogging. Three or four dozen I have generally seen inflicted for what a captain, or a midshipman, a boy just from his mother's arms, might deem disrespect or contempt. It is here to be observed, that those beings whose conduct they themselves are conscious is creative both of disrespect and contempt, are the very people who inflict, and have most frequent occasion to do it, the greatest severity of punishment for these two things miscalled *crimes*. If the meaning of these two words is to be taken in its proper acceptation, they can mean nothing but that sentiment which arises in the mind, at feeling pain from the actions of others, at witnessing absurdity, folly, or vice; the greater a man's knowledge is, the greater his love for virtue; the stronger must be his sentiments of contempt and disrespect for actions vicious, foolish, or absurd. Now, as the Almighty has evidently bestowed upon man a power of producing, by his praise, those actions in others which may promote his own happiness, and of repressing, by his contempt or censure, whatever may injure him; to entrust captains or admirals with a power to injure a man, and then punish him for feeling contempt at such an injury, what is it but to punish us for the possession of feelings the Almighty has implanted in us for the most beneficial purpose, that we may be able to repress actions that injure us.

In my opinion, to punish any man's contempt of a vice that injures him, is to give a bounty upon vice, and to employ all the terrors of law in repressing virtue; it is to destroy all the boundaries of vice and virtue in the mind; it is to repress those sentiments of pleasure we feel at witnessing virtue, and which would lead us to imitate it; it is an endeavour to substitute pleasure, instead of that pain we feel at the sight of vice, and which would teach us to avoid it. Before the enactment of such a law, our legislators should have taken care thoroughly to convince us of their *infallibility*, then it is probable we should have submitted to the pain they inflicted, and thought it pleasure: but now, unfortunately, every day's experience only adds to our conviction, that they are more prone to errors than other men.

From the indefinite nature of these two words, it is not uncommon in the navy for looks to be punished as contempt, for a claim to justice, as a right belonging to every member of society, for a protestation of innocence, particularly if supported by reasoning, against the rash intuitive convictions of a superior, to be punished at this enlightened period of the world as disrespect.

The two words themselves, as applied to actions, are dreadfully indeterminate and ill defined; for no two human beings agree about what is the exact measure of respect. In the navy, with many, it is positive servility or unlimited obedience to any commands, however absurd: with others, it is simple obedience to positive and legal *commands*.

Section Fifth.

It must be evident to every person, that the crime which fills most of our gaols, which causes most punishment in the community, and against which most of our penal statutes are directed, is thieving. As our ships are generally manned with our countrymen, it might be supposed that this would also cause the greater part of the punishments on board ship, but it is not so; thieving in any of its branches is very little known there. The chief causes of this may be a certainty of detection, and the ample gratification which the seamen receive of the desire of praise. As I apprehend that, (some how or other) the desire of praise is the remote cause of greater part of the thieving in society; for to enjoy distinction is the chief motive for the acquisition of wealth, it seldom proceeds from positive want. We do occasionally meet with a few incorrigible thieves, but they are generally men who have been sent from the hulks or gaols, as a compromise for transportation or imprisonment. This custom is said to be abolished, and it was high time, for never was there a more absurd one, than thus taking from the seamen what is their only reward for all their privations, what is the only remuneration for all the injuries they suffer,—the respect and praise of society. It was adding the bitterest insult to the most violent injury. It is not more reprehensible in a moral point of view, than it is when contemplated as it may ultimately affect the pockets of the community; for if you take from the honourable feelings of the seamen, and degrade them in the estimation of society, they will necessarily require greater pecuniary rewards.

This would have been an admirable plan to have brought any thing into disrepute; that had been the organ of a minister, a burden to the country, or a useless expence to society. The navy possesses none of these characteristics, it is of supreme national importance, and can only be supported by the feelings of respect which ought to belong to it, and which the country must encourage by its praise.

Thieving, in any of its branches, forms but a small part of the punishments inflicted upon seamen. Yet, as society has marked it as a crime, it is punished on board ship with an additional severity; and as custom sanctions this punishment, being inflicted at the will of an individual without a trial, without an opportunity of a man's defending himself, as his judge possesses no feelings in common with those which led him to commit the crime, but is unassailed by temptation, it is high time the custom was abolished, and that thieving on board ship should not be punished till the man was convicted by trial.

Fighting and quarrelling are also occasionally met with on board ship, and, like the before-mentioned items, are repressed by flogging, which custom sanctions the captain inflicting at his will.

These are mostly the crimes for which seamen are severely flogged. I have not stated the number flogged, nor have I any means of determining the average amount, except by memory. In one ship where the complement consisted of 195 people, 15 of whom, from their rank, were not liable to corporeal punishment, the average number of men flogged was never less than 5 a week, this is speaking much within bounds. Yet, at the end of a year, 80 more men had been punished than the whole number amounted to,

who were liable to corporeal punishment: a proportion how infinitely great when compared with the number of persons who are even brought to trial in the rest of the community. As some of this ship's company were never punished in the twelvemonth, many of the others were punished repeatedly, which shows the inefficacy of flogging; indeed the remark is very general, that a man once flogged, is sure to give occasion for it again. For it has been applied by many officers so indiscriminately; the old and the young, the good and the bad, have been so alike subjected to the disgrace that, like every thing else which is the common property of all, it has ceased to have any value, it has ceased to be disgraceful; instead of his shipmates regarding the man with abhorrence, who has been flogged, they look upon it as a misfortune to which all are inevitably subject, and from the common sympathies of our nature they share his distress and relieve his pain, they shake hands with him, they console him with pity, and even share their *grog* with him; this last part of their mistaken *kindness* has made me frequently witness the man punished at noon, put in irons again at night for drunkenness. If nothing else could be said, this inefficacy of flogging is a sufficient reason for its immediate abolition at the will of a *captain*.

The number of lashes inflicted is seldom less than one dozen, I do not think I have ever seen above two or three instances of its being less, and frequently it amounts to three dozen. The smallest average number of men I have ever witnessed being flogged, certainly amounted to one a fortnight: out of such a complement as I have before-mentioned, this lowest average amounts to 26 out of 180 in a year, or a seventh part of the whole people, and this takes place amongst a set of men notoriously free from a great part of the crimes committed by the other parts of the community. Now is there any thing equal to the seventh part of our population ever brought even to trial in a twelvemonth? I cannot ascertain the number, but I should suppose it can never exceed the five hundredth part of the people who, from their age, are amenable to justice.

From conversation with other officers, and from observing that they express no sort of surprise at frequent punishments, I am inclined to think this last account of what men are punished on board ship, may be rather below the average number punished throughout the fleet in a year. I have not taken the mean of the two extremes I have witnessed, because I have generally served with officers denominated smart. I believe there are a few individual instances of much less punishment; but this can only be brought as an argument to prove the folly and absurdity, the cruelty and injustice there is in entrusting any man with the power of punishing another, when experience so fully proves that such a power never yet was possessed without being abused.

Section Sixth.

In the last section I pretended to no kind of accuracy as to the average number of men punished. Now, it is probable, the side of the question I have taken, and the well known passions of our nature, may have led me to mistakes. However, the proportion of men punished in the navy is much greater than in civil society. Those who wish to make accurate calculations on the subject, may have recourse to the punishment lists now transmitted to the admiralty; but it is to be observed, that this transmission is a late regulation, and it is probable the number of punishments may have considerably

decreased since the captains have known their superiors would see their works; and since corporeal punishment has been lately much an object of public conversation, public execration, and parliamentary enquiry. Besides the punishments stated in these public returns, there are other customs on board ship of punishing seamen, other more heart-breaking modes of compelling obedience. These modes and customs are only partially countenanced; the admiralty, I believe, disapprove of them, but courts martial do not punish them.

The most prominent of these customs is what is called starting, that is one man beating another with a piece of rope as hard as he can hit him; the other being perfectly defenceless, and forbid even to look displeased, as that is contempt or disrespect. No register is kept of this as of the floggings at the gangway; no account is rendered to any superior, the captain being responsible for his inflicting this punishment to nothing but a naval captain's conscience.

I am aware that this punishment is so dreadful, so hostile to the feelings and ideas of every Briton, unpolluted by naval discipline, that it is going fast out of practice; but I have seen it administered in 1812, and heard the captain alledge, for doing it, he should be ashamed of transmitting his punishment list, it would be so crouded was he to flog every man whom he thought deserved it. As one, design of this essay is to explain the effects of discipline on the minds of the community at large, in deterring them from serving their country, it cannot be improper to mention this mode of punishment, as the knowledge that it is growing into disuse cannot yet have travelled far into the community; neither can it be wrong to state, that though now totally in disuse, it formerly was the custom for every lieutenant, and even for the boatswain and his mates, to have recourse to starting, to quicken men's efforts.

Starting is more generally used for want of alacrity than for any other crime. I have witnessed its being practised in the following manner:

In hoisting the topsails to the mast-head, hoisting boats in and out, hoisting in beer and water, and such like duties, when they were not done with smartness, the captain stationed the boatswain's mates at different parts of the deck, each with a rope's end, with orders to beat every man as he passed them. The proportion of boatswain's mates to ships is two to the first hundred men, and one to every hundred afterwards. In performing all these little pieces of duty, every man almost, as he ran and pulled upon the rope, had to pass these boatswain's mates, who, of course, according to the captain's orders, beat them. Thus, whether good or bad, whether old or young, whether sailor or marine, whether exerting himself or not, nearly every man in the ship got a beating. This depended upon the time they were performing their duty. Sometimes these evolutions were frequently repeated for the sake of exercise and order; and I have seen them last so long, that, when done, the whole ship's company were lying about the decks like so many hard-hunted greyhounds: let me observe, that the men were not started at every time of performing their task, but only at those times when the captain might deem them particularly slow. These modes of starting have been sanctioned by custom, and have been, from their temporary beneficial effects, denominated, by courts martial, praise-worthy and honourable.

The other modes of punishing seamen, sanctioned by custom, consist in stopping their grog, confining them in irons, making them stay hours in the rigging, walk the decks with crow-bars on their shoulders, perform extra work, &c. and when work is thus made a punishment, instead of being made honourable, captains feel angry with their men because they take no pleasure in doing work (alias being punished). Here they bring a virtue into disrepute, than which none is more necessary to the existence of society, whether on board ship or on shore, forgetting, that though the Almighty has condemned the human race, for their sins, to eat bread by the sweat of their brow, he has made labour the means of bringing happiness, subsistence, and health to all; it is, therefore, as impolitic as it is unwise to make so necessary a virtue a disgrace. The end proposed, by all these punishments, is to produce simultaneous exertion. From this results the execution of a greater given quantity of work in a given time, by which means, at the end of days, weeks, or months, the ship's company have, probably, some idle time; and, as reflection might hurt his majesty's service, it gives occasion to the inventive genius of the captain to find them employment: this employment is, probably, similar exercises.

Having now stated the most prominent features of naval discipline, or the means used on board ship to accomplish order, I shall endeavour to point out some of their effects on the officers, seamen, and on the community.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. IV.

The Effect Of Naval Laws And Customs On The Minds Of The Officers.

Distinctly to analyse the human character in any situation; to unfold the complicated motives for the actions of men, or trace the effects of laws and customs, in forming the character, requires the patient, but keen investigation, and the knowledge of a philosopher; all, therefore, I can hope to do, in pointing out the effect of naval laws and customs, is to direct the attention of men of genius and philanthropy to its serious consideration, and to furnish a brief sketch of some of the prominent causes of that difference of character discoverable between men in the habit of going to sea in a man of war and other portions of the community.

On shore, though young men may, in the prosecution of the affairs of life, be occasionally moved from the society of their parents or friends, they never mix with people accustomed to set religion at defiance, or regard the principles of morality as things tending to hinder the good of the country. These are yet looked upon as valuable in England; and, on shore, a young man cannot well be removed from a society, where shame will not be the consequence of their open violation.

The foregoing detail of naval discipline must have satisfactorily shewn, that it is directly opposite to the principles of justice that are derived from religion and morality; and as naval successes, of which the cause has never been enquired, have fully assured our rulers of the goodness of naval discipline; as principles of justice would prevent the exercise of this discipline, success has been, I apprehend, the primary cause why religion and morality are so much in disrepute in the navy. That they are so is a truth too notorious to be denied; they are alike the object of the profligate youngster's scorn, as interfering with his pleasures; and of the older officer's ridicule, as stepping between him and that fame, which is the result expected from naval discipline.

Into such a society it is, that, at the age of thirteen years, a young gentleman, intended to be an officer, is sent: as that age is now thought the most proper time to go to sea. At such a period of life it is a precocious genius that has formed habits of reflection, or that is then capable of distinguishing right from wrong. The youngster's actions have, till now, been guided by a parent or a friend: he acts not from those principles which direct and pervade every movement, but performs all his duties from detailed instructions.

It is at this time of life that the passions of the man begin to open, that he daily feels wants unknown before, and that his former received instructions seldom direct him how properly to gratify. Thrown at once, from daily advice, amongst young men who, like himself, want every guiding restraint, amongst whom there is nothing ridiculed, but attention to religious precepts; nothing applauded but courage, to get rid of early

prejudices. In such a society the youngster becomes, at once, an adept in dissipation, for he has no one to countenance him in the practice of virtue; and what *boy* can resist the frowns of censure, or who shuns the applause of his companions?

That vice is habitual to the rising officers of the navy, every man may be convinced by going to a sea port, where he will find it scarcely distinguishable from the name of a midshipman; they are already excluded from civil society, and a certainty of being unknown, except to companions employed like himself, is the surest preventive to shame, and the most certain incitement to every crime which the laws do not punish.

We have seen, in the detail of some of the naval laws and customs, that captains possess an unlimited and unrestrained power. A man who has heard of the excellency of the English constitution, who has been taught, from his earliest days, that justice and freedom were its bases, will immediately conclude, that, since the legislature found it necessary to entrust such a power to a set of men; that since they took them from their friends so young, they would endeavour, by education, to make each of these individuals a Somers, a Cowper, or a Thurlow; that they would early learn them to correct their passions; that, as the possession of power is known to corrupt the mind, they would, as much as possible, repress its effects by timely severities and instruction; but it is not so; the education of these rising legislators, or captains, like every thing else in his majesty's naval service, is left to the will, or the natural disposition of the captains. The present state of naval society fully assures us that education is wholly neglected.' If any man is not convinced, I can only wish him to go on board ship, and see the hours of the midshipmen alternately employed, sleeping, playing, and walking the decks, with their hands in their pockets, that he may hear their conversation and see their amusements; and, if he would afterwards make them judges of the actions of men, I should pronounce him *mad*. The admiralty have lately done something to improve their education, by the better appointments they have given to the chaplains; but while the discipline of the navy remains as it is, and while it is a general opinion that to this we owe our successes at sea, the better education the officers will receive at sea will only enable them more artfully to cover their caprice with the pretexts of justice. With an education totally neglected, and a mixture with a society already totally immoral, as soon as a young gentleman goes on board ship he has duties given him to do which imply command on his part, and obedience on the men's; he sees the commands of his superiors given with arrogance, enforced by terror, and obeyed with fear; unrestrained by instruction, he imitates their example, and requires, like them, to be respected. His superiors enforce this respect; and I have known it carried so far, that a captain has declared, with all the solemnity of authority, that he would clothe a broomstick in the habits of a midshipman, and teach his men to respect it. The obedience they have to learn, as junior officers, is obedience to the capricious wills of their superiors; but as these often change, and obedience is not sanctioned or enforced by any other motive than that short-lived one,—terror, it is very imperfect. From this early possession of corruptive power, from the total neglect of education, and from the influence of already existing bad customs, from what natural cause will it arise, that the well-known influence of despotic power shall not operate in destroying the ideas of justice that might have been acquired in early life, or that might afterwards have been learnt from communications with the other parts of

society. It does operate; ideas of justice are destroyed or not learnt, as the foregoing display of naval customs must have convinced every man.

Exclusive of these obvious causes for ignorance and pride, they cannot, like people on shore, have recourse to libraries for information and improvement; or, if they could, it is so well known that the knowledge acquired from the best English writers is opposed to the slavery the naval laws produce; that every effort is employed to repress knowledge that would not support oppression, or encourage passive obedience. Indeed, from the known hatred a superior's ignorance bears to an inferior's knowledge; from the oppression a man is sure to meet with who dares extend his thoughts to the sources of human actions; who attempts to philosophise, or let one idea wander beyond the precincts of discipline, a bounty is given upon ignorance, and the iron hand of despotism is employed to stop the growth of knowledge.

There are many virtues which are produced and supported by going to sea; these shall afterwards be mentioned. Taking this for granted, can any other cause but this neglected education, and the well known operations of a system of despotism and slavery, be assigned as the reason why, in the midst of a vast quantity of leisure, so few improvements have been made in the management or construction of ships by naval officers; why, when they have more communication with foreign countries than any other people, they should have added so little to the general stock of knowledge. When ships are considered as machines capable of almost infinite improvement, must it not excite surprise, that scarce one of the principles on which they are constructed or sailed, are known to the men who guide them; that scarce any improvements have been made in them these last 100 years. From a good deal of practice, we know some little better how to manage them, and this is all we can boast. Whenever abilities do exist, the effect of this system is to destroy them: no inferior can feel himself at ease, though conscious of zeal for the good of the service, when the conviction cannot escape him, that some man above him, capricious and unjust, has power to annoy and deeply injure him, without resistance or retribution. Will not the natural result of such a conviction be to employ the whole of the inferior's time and attention to resist oppression, sensible, from their partial loss of the value of his political rights, he regards their possession as his greatest blessing. They are, to a reflecting mind, of primary importance; and, as they are not secure, they command its whole attention. The superior's time is equally or worse occupied, from causes wholly arising out of this system; sensible that his authority hangs by the slenderest threads, all his employment is to preserve it.

Many of the captains live in daily and hourly dread of mutiny; their nights are sleepless with anxiety, and their days restless with care. With a mind so feverish, there can be no thoughts for improvement; nor can a moment vacant from fear be found.

From these naval laws and customs, which so expressly encourage a captain in submission to nothing but his own will, which allow him to practice injustice without restraint, a system of discipline would have arisen infinitely worse than it is, were these laws not fortunately opposed by the natural love of fame. Praise has so

frequently been bestowed, by English writers, on humanity, that it does cause it sometimes to be practised.

It is to cruelty being, at all times, censured in England; and it is to its having, sometimes, been an object of parliamentary enquiry and general indignation; but, above all, it is to our national character, encouraged by our national institutions, we owe it that every captain is not much more a tyrant than he is; that our ships have acquired victories instead of plunging the nation in ruin.

The natural effect, then, of naval laws and customs on the minds of the officers will be to produce ignorance the most lamentable, and pride the most overbearing; to assert that they have operated so is to assert a fact too well known to need a comment. From so early an association with already existing immorality; from so total an absence of education, what knowledge can be hoped for? We may sow good principles in the seed-time of life, but if we fail to nurture the blossoms with the dew of instruction, and expose them to the pestilential effluvia of bad custom, what can we expect in the fruit season, but barrenness and sterility. It is under such barrenness and sterility that the characters, the happiness, and the honour of every junior officer and seaman have to repose for protection; it is to the judgment of captains alone, when forming courts martial, that every thing which is valuable to man, while serving in the navy, or can make the existence of an Englishman bearable, is *submitted*. As a strenuous believer in the theory, that there are no such things as innate ideas; that, consequently, there is no such thing as an intuitive moral sense in man; that we know right from wrong only through our acquired knowledge acting upon our sensations; I do not hesitate to assert, nor can it be far fetched, that, since religion and morality, the bases of right, are very generally laughed at in the navy; since custom sanctions the commission of injustice; since justice is universally thought a hindrance to the service, and is frequently censured; and since the other avenues to knowledge are shut, that the minds of naval officers can not know what a well-informed Englishman would call justice, but to them the legislature have committed the right of making laws, or customs equal to laws, and punishing their transgressors.

Perhaps I shall be told to look for justice from naval people, from that spirit of honour which military institutions produce. I might trust to this spirit, had I never witnessed it encouraging cruelty the most depraved, and malice the most bitter. I was some time ago serving under the command of a young man who was particularly distinguished as a man of honour; one of the lieutenants had an appearance and a manner with him that was rather eccentric: To these was added, what is generally classed as a disease, a habit of walking and speaking in his sleep; but he was as upright and as amiable a young man, and as good an officer as is to be found among five hundred. His strange appearance and manner, with a spirit above obsequious submission, excited the dislike of this honourable captain, who, after trying various means to get rid of him, which were not effectual, he endeavoured to persuade him he was *mad*. Not content with that, he used means to persuade all the lieutenants, his messmates, that he was mad; and, had they not been perfectly assured of his *rationality*, the captain's authority might have convinced them that he was. As this did not succeed, the spirit of honour stimulated the captain to employ the midshipmen as spies upon the lieutenant; they succeeded in discovering him neglect his duty, and the captain insisted upon his

getting himself invalidated, or he should try him by a court martial; he chose to be invalidated, and had the spirit of honour stopped there, we might have passed a censure upon it as *unhandsome*; it is doubtful if I should have condemned it as *malicious*; but as some other spirit, it certainly could not be honour, told him his conduct would likely be reflected upon, he took special care to obviate it, by spreading a report, wherever he went, that he had been fortunate, at last, in getting rid of his mad lieutenant.

Thus, it is probable, every prospect this young man had in the world is sacrificed, by his loss of reputation for rationality, which, from this report, must certainly take place amongst the captains; and I know no way more ready to occasion lunacy, than for a man to live with people who suppose him, and treat him, as mad.

This single trifling instance (as was said of Mrs. Clarke's business), is not one line of one page of one of the books of one of the volumes of the great history of cruelty, produced by the spirit of honour, being supposed fit to be trusted to guide the actions of men. What is this spirit of honour, but the gratification of every one of our passions, when it is not opposed by the loss of reputation. If I could discover any such principle in my own constitution, if I could find a single reason in any writer on human nature I have ever met with, to make me conclude there was such a principle distinct from the desire of praise, separate from the wish for reputation, I might rely upon it for protection; and had praise never been bestowed upon injustice, had chance success never received the rewards of merit, had cruelty not been applauded, and abilities united with vice, never had the praise which belongs to *virtue*; I would have relied upon this desire of praise, this wish for reputation, for justice. But naval society is not open to the correcting hand of the press, and in it no loss of reputation is incurred by cruelty. You are not degraded by the exhibition of malice, and you meet with no frowns for injustice.

The spirit of honour may satisfy the believers in sympathy or antipathy, as proper motives for the actions of men. It is fully sufficient for those people who feel this thing to be right, and know without a reason that the other is so, who rely without examination on the instructions of others to direct their actions, and who believe an institution to be perfectly just and true, because it has long received the sanction of mankind. But, as I do not feel any thing to be right without a reason, I require that this spirit of honour should be so directed by religious instruction, that captains should feel a thorough conviction of meeting punishment hereafter, if they not only practised the received ideas of justice, but took trouble to find out in what it consisted. I require that the laws should make injustice a crime, and punish its commission with severity, then, and not till then, I shall believe the captains have a motive to be just.

It is not only, as the education of captains regards the administering of justice, that it ought to become an object of legislative attention, but as it regards the character of the country. To their knowledge and their care its best interests are frequently committed.

Numerous have been the complaints of foreigners, of the treatment met with from our men of war, and from the attention that is paid to captains in their early life; they will not be supposed to have been made without foundation.

There is, throughout the navy, an avowed feeling of enmity against the Americans. It is to be accounted for, by their persevering constantly in pursuing their course when chaced: by their language, at all times, taking that tone of equality which is derived from the freedom of their own institutions, and from that language being used to men, who are at every other time accustomed to the most flattering submission, and who cannot, or who will not, distinguish the language of temperate and virtuous freedom from licentious impertinence. From the manner in which I have always seen American ships treated, I fear the Americans have complained with too much reason of the injustice of my *country*.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. V.

The Effect Of Naval Laws And Customs On The Minds Of Seamen; With An Attempt To Estimate Their Character:

To enumerate all the evil effects of naval laws and customs on the character of our seamen, would be to mention all the well-known evils which accrue to man in any situation, from being subject to a system of slavery which the naval discipline, combined with pressing and unlimited service, manifestly and acknowledgedly is. Why, then, has the universal debasement of character consequent upon slavery not had its full effects upon our seamen? Or why are they not as pusillanimous as they are *licentious*, as cowardly as they are *immoral*? The question is easily answered. Their courage, for its inestimable value, has received more general praise than any other virtue in any other portion of the community. It has alike been the object of the applause of the giddy multitude, and of the reflecting statesman. This system, also, has always been opposed by our national character, resulting from our national institutions, and by that courage, which has been said to be the heart and essential nature of an Englishman, or its effects would long since have been defeat, not victory; dishonour, not applause.

It is observable, that every nation possesses different customs, characters, and manners; and these are the effects of laws, institutions, and climates. Whether the difference arises from one or all of these causes, it is generally clearly traceable to circumstances independent of man himself.

It therefore becomes a question of importance to the community, how much of the bad character, imputed to seamen, arises from going to sea; and how much is the fruit of the naval laws and customs, particularly as this bad character is alledged as the reason for the continuance of the severities of discipline, which severities are manifestly the greatest hindrance to a voluntary service. The opinion that the character of our seamen is bad, appears to be founded on the quantity of punishment people know to be inflicted in the navy, without enquiring whether such infliction is just, without knowing or reflecting that it all takes place at the will of an individual.

There is one cause for the greater *immorality* of seamen, which wholly arises from going to sea. I think it may be expressed, by saying it is the want of an opportunity of virtuously exercising the social affections of the heart. It has been justly observed, that, “the evening meal, the warm fire-side, and comfortable home, lose half their pleasure when we want an object of affection with whom to share them;” and losing half their pleasure, half the stimulus to that industry is gone, which comprises so many of the virtues of the lowest class of the community; from this class our seamen are taken. It is to me reasonable that a much more virtuous conduct may be, expected from that man whose interests are bound with society, through the affections of parents or relations, wife or children, than from a man who wants them all. With the probable destruction of these affections, arising from going to sea, before the eyes of

legislators, it might have been thought one object of naval laws should have been, by all possible means, to have furnished proper objects for, and directed the affections of, seamen, to have made them citizens as well as sailors, and thus have ensured them a home in, and a love for, their country. But the men who have legislated for seamen have known them only in the sea ports, when they have for a moment broke lose from terror, and been seduced into vice by passions which they are unfurnished with principles to restrain.

They have never witnessed them braving every change of climate without a murmur; they have never seen them, when pestilence has converted our ships to hospitals, supporting themselves and sick messmates with mirth; they have known nothing of the cheerfulness with which they exert themselves when the name of an enemy is mentioned, nor of the impatient ardour with which they wait the moment of action. When naval men, who have known these things, have legislated for seamen, they have known little of human nature; they have seen sailors momentarily active under a severity of discipline; they have balanced the severity which has been active against the humanity which has been indolent, and they have ascribed to the first every virtue under Heaven. From such legislators laws have proceeded, which, instead of counteracting the probable destruction of the social affections from going to sea, have obliterated, through the means of pressing and unlimited service, every hope of ever enjoying them. After a man is pressed, he is not enabled even to see the legitimate objects of his affection for years; from the unlimited service and continued length of the war, he entertains no hopes of ever again returning to his native spot. Now to enjoy consideration there, to give the blessings of plenty to a wife and family, to rescue a father or a mother from indigence, are among the most conspicuous and ennobling motives for the acquisition of wealth, and the practice of virtue.

It was a just observation of Dr. Johnson's, "that it is the business of morality to direct, not extirpate, the affections of the heart;" indeed they cannot be extirpated, they grow with our growth, strengthen with our strength, and are the natural result of the laws which produce life. When they want the means of virtuous gratification, and are not restrained upon principles of morality, they will be unlawfully gratified, which is one great source of the vices complained of in seamen. A sailor universally hears avarice condemned; the laws deprive him of proper motives for economy: hence the manner in which seamen squander their money. The unnatural restraint which is put upon their affections, leads to that promiscuous sexual *intercourse* which exists in our sea-ports, which disgraces our country, and which must be a subject of bitter regret to every man who reflects, that more than half of the virtues of the civilised world arise from a restrained intercourse with the sex, who knows the mental debasement arising to both parties from promiscuous *gratification*. If any man doubts it is a vice most destructive, I have only to wish him to see the brutal scene which takes place on board ships coming into port, with the prospect of receiving pay or prize-money; where drunken sailors and prostitutes are promiscuously mixed, swearing, fighting, and dancing; where any mind would be shocked that was not totally destitute of religion and morality. Yet, sailors shall not, on the morrow, feel one conscientious pang, one reflection of impropriety, though assailed by disease the effect of *intemperance*. Whence can arise this torpor of conscience at committing what, in their early life, many would have shuddered at hearing described; but, from all principles of morality

and religion being eradicated from the seamen's mind, by the authority of laws totally opposed to them, and by their total disregard on the part of those men whom, in all things, they are accustomed to obey and fear.

Sailors are, very generally, accused of a careless, thoughtless, indolence, which makes no provision for the morrow. It is universally said, they are like children, who want every attention. Is such a characteristic not a peculiar mark of every system of slavery? Who cares to provide for to morrow, when he knows that its enjoyment can be prevented by a superior? This has double force with seamen. From the constant perseverance on the part of the officers, to prevent reflection; from the constant neighbourhood of their superiors, who vigilantly watch every action, and, from that vanity natural to man, officers are not content with thinking for themselves, but they must think for, and direct all, the actions of the seamen, whether relating to the service or not. Is not this preventing them from exercising a virtue, and then finding fault with them for not possessing it? But conclusive arguments, that the bad character imputed to seamen is the clear operation of naval laws, are that our ships are manned with our countrymen, who have never been an immoral set of people, yet they become so after being in a man of war. That the sailors of merchant ships are not so bad as those in ships of war; that the drunkenness, which exists, is known to be derived from the encouragement it receives there; and that even on board ship, it is observed, that the man who has been brought up from his infancy in a man of war, is a worse character than the man just pressed; and, surely, if severity could produce virtue, it would be found in a man who has, all his life, been subject to its influence. If it had produced any thing but debasement of character, here it would exist.

Now the bad character of the seamen is the imputed cause for the continuance of the severity of naval laws, for the entrusting to a captain the power of punishment; and, I trust, it is fully clear that this bad character is the result of these laws and this power. And can any other character but such a one result to the man who has nothing to prescribe his duty but terror of human laws; these cannot take in every possibility of vice, nor can they at all times restrain the actions. When not under their influence, an irreligious man wanders solely by the guide of passion, present sensation is to him all in all; he heeds not, indeed; he has not reflection; he feels not conscience; and, alas! sailors are not to blame. Their accountability, as moral agents, is destroyed by the operations of these laws and customs, which permit them in no case to direct their own actions.

I have mentioned the only probable cause for vice, which is peculiarly the result of going to sea, to give strength to the opinion that there is little necessity for coercive laws to keep seamen in order; to enable us to form an estimate of their character, it will be requisite to bring into view some virtues which may be the necessary consequences of a sailor's life. The most prominent is the awful circumstances in which seamen are very often placed. There is no occupation in life so productive of religious sentiments as that of a seaman's: none that so much encourages that fear of God; which is the beginning of *wisdom*. For though on shore, we occasionally witness storms and tempests, (yet, from comfortable houses and other causes) to meet with injury from them is regarded as a phenomenon. When pestilence or partial famine visits the earth, its cause is so obscured to the body of the people by our rulers having,

on all occasions, interposed, to assure them that every good was owing to their management, that when they suffer any ill, the people attribute it to them and the laws, and scarcely recognise in these things the punishments of the Almighty for their sins. Not so the sailors. They cannot, amidst the awful conflicts of nature, however ardently they may be striving to arrest their ill effects, let their minds stop short of a great first cause. Then no human beings or laws can intervene between man and his Maker. The strength of the strongest, or the arrogance of the most proud, then avail them nothing; all are for the time upon an equality. At such a time the fear of the Lord, a firm conviction of his superior power, and an ejaculation for safety fill the breast of the most obdurate. But these emotions are not suffered to continue. The laws and customs will not permit the fear of God to be the sailor's motive for duty, they will substitute in its place the fear of man. A worse motive could not be applied to seamen, for the praise of society teaches them, above all other things, to despise it.

Perhaps the worst injury seamen suffer from the laws is, the destruction of religious hope, which must follow from its principles being destroyed: our superiors, inflated by unrestrained power, wholly forget that love for their fellow-creatures which the scriptures teach; and they learn, by their example, the sailors, to despise them.

Another conspicuous cause why much coercion is not necessary, is the fame which has so liberally been bestowed upon the seamen, and which makes them peculiarly sensible of praise; of course, it might be substituted with advantage for coercion. It is this love of praise, and the general success of the navy, that makes desertion so much less frequent than it otherwise would be; or, indeed, that makes seamen serve at all. A succession of defeats that should take from them that estimation society now holds them in would, I apprehend, more than half unman our fleets, as the most vigilant watch could not prevent desertion. To eulogise their courage springing from this source would be superfluous; it is known to every man; it has caused joy upon the countenance of every friend to social order, and is indelibly engraved in the bosom of every enemy of their country. But this courage never was the produce of terror; then release our sailors from its operation; give them reason to love their country; abolish this abominable system. Let us confide our defence to a population notoriously willing to fight, and our country will be strong in the love and strength of its inhabitants, standing as she does, exalted in the world from her nobleness of character, the object of praise and admiration to every thinking man; all, evidently, must love their country. The sailors partake strongly of this sentiment, and how strongly let others judge, since the oppression that is exercised upon them is not sufficient to conquer it. Every place they visit gives them additional reason to love their country, for they see the immense advantages it possesses; they cannot help comparing its immense trade and its populous towns with the half-cultivated and half-peopled places they frequently meet with; and who can avoid feeling a pleasure in belonging to it. From charity having, in our country, been much an object of praise, and from sailors having little use for money, I believe it to arise that sailors have been so noted for their generosity and charity. Their hearts are never shut at a solicitation from distress, though reason may not direct them how most effectually to bestow their bounty. Instances of this are too numerous to need any relation of them; yet I cannot withhold two that happened very recently. When the subscriptions were set on foot for the relief of the widows and children of the people who had perished in the Saint

George, Hero, and Defence, the sum recommended to the seamen to subscribe was two days' pay each. I saw one of them come forward, and, in that open manly way, which is the peculiar characteristic of conscious rectitude of intention, said, "I wish, sir, to give ten days' pay; I cannot make any use of my money here (i. e. on board ship), and there is no better way of employing it than in relieving distress." He was not permitted, however, to give more than his two days'. The approbation the remainder of the people evinced was a decided proof, that all knew the value of such feelings. I believe it is also true, that it was the sailors them-selves who first set the subscription on foot in his majesty's ship Argo.

The other instance was a sailor, who saw, just as he was leaving a town in the west of England, a poor woman, with two children, apparently half famished, worn out with travelling, and exhausted with carrying a child. Too poor to buy her a shelter, she had taken up her rest upon a heap of earth: he immediately enquired her distresses, encouraged her with hope, and shared his purse with her. While he was busy in relieving her, a dignitary of a church, whose essence is charity and love, came that way; he gave the sailor and the woman a smile of contempt, and, like the Levite, passed by on the other side. Two ladies came next, whose souls, it is probable, heated into *sensibility* by a novel, would have shrunk into themselves, with the bitterest exclamations of regret and pity, at the cries of a lap-dog or a kitten; but when a fellow-creature was in distress, they looked upon her, and passed by on the other side. What a contrast was here; for, of all other beings, surely clergymen and women may be expected to be the most *charitable*, but they left it to the rough honest sailor; yet, the possessors of such feelings are thought to be bad characters, and to need compelling, by destructive terror, to do their common *duties*. Surely these instances do not want a comment; they do not require me to assert, that men, who can perform such actions will, if they are permitted, seek the praise society bestows on successful courage.

Another cause why sailors might be better than the rest of the community is, that going to sea imposes a restraint upon many of the passions, and no man can there escape the conviction, that they all may be subdued. A firm conviction of this kind is a good base for virtue; for the frailty of our nature is too frequently made the excuse for the commission of every *crime*. If sailors were taught to continue those restraints upon principles which necessity now obliges them to submit to, the task of governing their passions would be easier to them than to other men. I have already observed, that, from the vices connected with avarice, they are eminently and conspicuously free. In no other part of the community have men so good an opportunity of getting rid of those prejudices of early education, which, unnecessarily, make man the enemy of his neighbour; there it is that the Englishman, Irishman, and Scotchman, set together at the social meal, that the grog and the purse belong to all, none want while the others possess. At sea, every man is engaged in prosecuting the same-end, and the interest of all is the same: this begets a similarity of feeling and opinion; and possessing these is the surest bond of union and of every society; and that they are friendly with each other, is a proof that they do not want the social affections; they only want them properly directed. At sea it is that curiosity, whose gratification is knowledge, may be almost satiated; and it may be justly observed, that if the sailor

was not prevented from reflecting, he would, compared with that class of the community he belongs to, be an intelligent man.

On the whole, the character of the seamen may be summed up, by saying, that they are courageous, because our countrymen, and because they ardently love fame: that from this, which is the most conspicuous passion of their nature, they dislike work, because work has been made *infamous*; that they are *licentious*, because they want the opportunity of gratifying their social affections, and the principles that ought to restrain them are taken from them by the laws; that they are indolently careless, because not allowed to reflect; that they are given to drunkenness, because habits of it are encouraged as an indulgence, and occasionally tolerated as a *pleasure*; and we may add, that, if rationally governed, they would be the best race of human beings.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. VI.

The Ill Effects Of The Coercion Used On Board Ship, And Of The Naval Laws And Customs On The Community At Large; With Some General Remarks.

Though the effect of naval laws and customs is to engender pride and ignorance in the officers, and destroy the morality of the seamen, their worst effects are upon the community. These may be comprised under the heads of the vices committed in sea ports, of the destruction of our national character and discipline, and furnishing foreign nations grounds for an opinion, that, instead of being free, we are the vilest slaves. The first of these evils is clear to every man; sea ports are noted as the sinks of iniquity, and the contagion spreads from them far and wide. Vice is there so openly countenanced, so shamelessly committed, that no man can well go to a sea port without having his respect for virtue partially destroyed, by its open violation, and by the authority of example.

The destruction of our national character may not be so clear; it takes place in the following manner: For our countrymen to love their country, ought to form a conspicuous and valuable part of our national character; from this source to defend our constitution against what overpowering oppression might wish to dictate to it, is, doubtless, a great virtue; any thing that takes from our countrymen the wish to exercise this virtue, is destructive of our national character, of which this forms so material a part. This is peculiarly the effect of our present system of naval discipline; for no man ever voluntarily submits to pain. No other cause is assignable why our population, who love fame, and who have much curiosity, do not seek their gratification at sea, where knowledge may be acquired, and where honours and rewards are so abundant; why they do not go to the navy to seek a living, when a great part of them are subsisting upon ill-bestowed parish bounty. This cause is not so evident to the higher classes of the community, for they only know of the numerous provisions our country has made for disabled seamen, and know very little of the severe coercion in existence. Now the lower classes of society know nothing of the first, but have an exaggerated knowledge of the last; till convinced of this, from experience, I thought the coercion in existence was not sufficient to balance the love of fame and the fear of dependence. Upon an enquiry in the western and southern parts of England, the only places where I have had the opportunity, I found, that of twelve men of the working class whom I questioned, eleven knew of the coercive system, and but one knew any particulars of Greenwich hospital, or would believe that the old and the wounded seamen were ever taken care of; all had had friends pressed, and all shook their heads, as in doubt, when I described the provision made for the worn out and the wounded. How can it be otherwise? All the information the lowest classes possess is derived from deserters, who, of course, exaggerate all the severities of discipline, as an excuse for the infamy, which would deservedly follow, from abandoning the colours of their country; this is got to so great a pitch, that the

people in every part applaud and protect deserters. Another source of information is derived from those strolling impostors, whom every man has seen droning about the country, exposing their wounded or amputated limbs, and who universally tell the people, to heighten their compassion, that they lost them in defending their country, and that this ungrateful country has now left them to beg or perish. With such a knowledge of the service, will any thinking being say, that our countrymen ought to resign the blessings of freedom, which they enjoy, and a certainty of a subsistence, though it may be dependent, to embrace such miseries, and so precarious and dishonourable a subsistence, as they believe it. The proper remedy for such an evil is to give the mass of the people more accurate information of the good things belonging to the naval service; and here injustice and short-sighted policy are deservedly punished. Had pressing been long since abolished, and limited service allowed, thousands of the sailors would have returned to their native spots, with the prize-money they have, on so many occasions, acquired; and that they would then have had a motive for saving. They could have told tales that would have fired the blood of every Briton to seek similar opportunities of acquiring glory; they would have spread, far and wide, the knowledge of Greenwich hospital, a retreat so honourable for old age, and so preferable to that which a great part of the community have to seek, and which is uncharitably, because sulkily bestowed by parishes; they could have told of the numerous rewards bestowed upon bravery, and where the service might have lost one seaman it would then have had a dozen able and willing Britons.

But our rulers have given a preference to Russians, Prussians, Germans, Frenchmen, Portuguese, &c. and have even carried this preference so far, that, in 1811, I knew Africans, who had been stolen from Africa, taken in a slave ship, afterwards clothed, on board a guard-ship, and, without being able to speak a word of English, sent to man the British fleet, to fight the battles of our country. Such a thing is a burlesque upon a national defence. For the men, to whom our naval rulers have given this preference, the severities of naval discipline are admirably calculated. Accustomed, from their infancy, to regard their superiors as infallible beings, they bear, with patience and submissive obsequiousness, whatever they may inflict upon them, and a system of slavery for them has no pains. Hence, the undeserved good character, which Danes, Swedes, &c. have in the English naval service, as they are always observed to be quiet and peaceable; but an Englishman told, from his infancy, he is free, looks for the blessings of freedom; he writhes under the agony of this discipline, and wants but a little more knowledge to convince him, that, to resist it, is a virtue. This knowledge is fast coming to them, and he who then feels this oppression, and does not legally resist it, is a traitor to virtue and to freedom; he will be the incendiary, for he will encourage that oppression which must, if unresisted, end in destruction.

It must be obvious to every man, that a few crimes, amongst the lower classes, promptly excite our legislators to make laws to punish them, whose effects extend to all.

Upon this knowledge, I condemn the introduction of foreigners into our naval service; they are generally the refuse of all nations, an heterogeneous mixture of all the scoundrels upon earth; and these, with a few villains from our gaols, are sent to associate with men so alive to honourable feelings, or the desire of praise, as British

seamen; and they have been a materially assisting cause in strengthening that bad opinion which exists in society of the character of our seamen; they have given an appearance of reason to the dreadful system of coercion established.*

The reason assigned for this admission of foreigners into our service, is the want of men; but if there be any truth in that main principle of Mr. Malthus's admirable "Essay on Population," I apprehend it cannot be controverted, and hope that I have not misunderstood it—That population depends upon food; that, in long peopled-countries, it is only restrained from increasing, by the incapacity of the country to produce or procure a greater quantity of food: it follows that, if our country has sufficient food to give to foreigners, it has the same to give to Englishmen, and it would surely be better to give it to them, since they must be attached, by opinion, to their country; since they are, in every point, more industrious subjects, more courageous sailors, and better men; while the others have nothing to attach them to our country, they are destitute of legal principles for fighting in our defence, and have no motives for virtue but fear. Nothing can prevent these men from returning to their native spots, whenever opportunity permits them, and our enemies will acquire all that accession of nautical strength. It may perhaps, be said, that if our fleet was entirely manned with our own countrymen, when peace took place our country could not support them all. I doubt it much; if they were discharged in small numbers at a time, there is sufficient capital in the country to employ them all, and more food could, probably, be procured in peace than in war.

Perhaps it may be said, that our want of these men is immediate, and that Englishmen would require to be born and bred up; but this, I conceive, furnishes the strongest objections that can be urged against the admission of foreigners into any part of our country; for, if they were not to eat the food which our labours procure, it would have been shared amongst Englishmen; consequently, a greater number than now exist would have been reared to manhood. Now, as the general repressing causes of population are vice and misery, for even in our country moral restraint represses but a small part of it, this admission of foreigners has caused a greater portion of vice and misery than would otherwise have existed in our country. As the end of legislation, and entrusting power to any men, is to promote the happiness and morality of all, our rulers, by the encouragement they have given to foreigners, have acted in direct opposition to that end for which they had power entrusted to them.

When the English character is so much superior to every other; when English opinions are so strongly tinctured with the love of liberty, and liberty is so valuable to mankind, true policy would have dictated a prohibition to strangers entering the country, and an encouragement to emigration; then English opinions, finding their way all over the world, all might have been, like England,—free; then would the wants of America, increased by her increasing population, have looked to England for supplies; then she would have been our best friend, though, perhaps, neither lying at our feet, nor reposing in our arms, but with us engaged in the same cause, and contending for the same end; then would the continent of Europe, enlightened by English knowledge, not have been subjugated by one enemy of mankind. I fear, amongst the advocates for pressing, and permitting foreigners to fight for us, are to be found men in the higher stations of society, who, while they assert there is a scarcity

of men, retain a number, from useful employments to minister to luxury, and support an imaginary dignity. No man, who sees the herd of livery servants which infest the streets of London, and every part of the kingdom, can think that their masters are the men who complain of the want of men to fight the battles of our country; who deem it necessary to take, from his useful employment, the sailor, to force him from his wife and family, to rive every affection of his heart to defend them from oppression; I am not the enemy of this kind of luxury when the legitimate demands of the state for men are satisfied; when the people, who support these men in idleness, are not the advocates for compulsion and oppression.

It must now, I trust, be evident, that the evils of naval discipline on the community are not less than on the individuals who compose the service. They may be comprised in a few words: From discipline being so repugnant to our other national institutions, and our national character, it produces a hatred in the minds of the community for that service which can alone save the country from ruin; which has led her to the height of glory, and which will ever continue to be her main dependence and support.

There is another effect of the present system which particularly deserves the attention of every lover of his country. The length of the present war has kept sailors so long from home that they have ceased to have any other than their ships; they are so completely cut off from civil society, that they are no longer citizens, but are become entirely sailors, accustomed to a blind and rigid obedience; they could, conveniently, be made an instrument in the hands of an arbitrary prince, or an ambitious minister, to exalt themselves above the constitution. Limited and voluntary service is the effectual check to this evil; then the seamen will become bound to their home; they will have some regard to their country's interest, because sensible it involves their own; they will cease to be tools, and become valuable servants.

The evils of this system, as it affects foreign nations, are the dislike and hatred which they must have to our country. The lowest classes of foreigners have no means of knowing the English nation, but through the medium of our fleets and armies: surely, the knowledge acquired from them of our national character must prejudice them very much against us. The effects the army may have I am not so capable of judging of; but what they see of the navy must produce, instead of love, hatred; instead of admiration, terror; instead of a wish to imitate us, a determination to avoid our modes; they see sailors on shore, broke momentarily loose from terror, committing all sorts of offences and debaucheries, or they see them on board ship, exposed to punishments the most severe and cruel; they, probably, see naval officers, corrupted by the possession of power, unrestrained by morality, guilty of every enormity; and, if attempted to be stopt, if they meet with any thing short of the obedience they have been accustomed to, using violence to accomplish their ends. There is nothing in such things to produce love, but there is much to excite hatred. The higher classes of foreigners know the value of English liberty, but they will not impart it to their people, because they are sensible it would subvert that power which they, at present, enjoy; it can be, therefore, with no justice foreigners are frequently accused of not sufficiently admiring and imitating the English character. Ireland may, in some measure, be regarded in this point of view, as a foreign nation, lately sharing with us part of the blessings of equal laws. The lowest class of her people know little of their

neighbours, but by sailors and soldiers; and the knowledge derived from them will never attach them to us; but, had a system of limited service been in existence, I think it can scarcely be calculated how much benefit Ireland would have reaped from the return of thousands of her population, divested of their prejudices, increased in their knowledge, and, probably, with some wealth. Having now finished the account of the evils which occurs to me as arising from naval discipline, as acquainted with all its parts, it might be expected I should exhibit its goods. I cannot find one; if any can exist, why are they not now visible? Our navy has long been triumphant, and habits of order have long been known to be necessary, and are partially established, yet punishments continue as much as ever; we have seen that they are more numerous in the navy than in civil society. I trust it has been distinctly proved, that morality, which can be the only legitimate object society has any possible right to employ coercion to produce, can never be the result of this system; and I now assert, that it is not less destructive of this morality than it is of real discipline. It is from this opposition to real discipline that I condemn the present system; it is from its being built upon principles directly opposed to the religion and morality we are taught, in early life, that I so truly detest it; it is from its effects tending, like the effects of all systems of slavery, to destroy that national character which has made us pre-eminent among nations; it is the great inconsistency of at once attempting to make two such opposite principles, as the love of fame, and the fear of capricious man, the motives for arduous exertions, that I so vehemently denounce the present system. Let its supporters either explode morality or give up this system; either, at once, reject that religion which dictates our actions, or follow its laws; either, consistently, make us all slaves or all free.

Did every man but suffer the truth to come home to him, that without willing slaves there could be no oppressive tyrants, he would feel an individual responsibility upon himself to resist every species of oppression; was he to trace the consequences of submission to unjust authority, he would see there can be no greater morality than in resistance. I know no authority in our country so unjust as is displayed in the foregoing pages; and I can conceive no greater morality than in surmounting imaginary fears and resisting it.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. VII.

A Definition Of Discipline; With The Modes By Which The Present System Destroys It.

Before we can verify the assertion made in the last chapter, that the present naval laws and customs are destructive of real discipline, it is necessary to enquire what discipline *is*.

This word has been so wrapped up in the mantle of prejudice, so obscured from our view by the terror that surrounds it. Civilians have so entirely committed it to military men, and military men have so entirely neglected it, that it would be difficult to find out what it means; but it fortunately happens that we know, distinctly, the purpose for which men of war are built and manned; and that whatever best promotes that purpose must be discipline. The sole end of men of war is by conquering the enemies of our country, to permit us to enjoy peace and security. Now, as this end is to be obtained by the concurring efforts of a large number of men, whatever excites them to a zealous co-operation must be good discipline. But as every person knows that, however zealously disposed men may be, amongst many there will be many different modes of accomplishing the same end. It is, therefore, necessary that this zeal should have but one object, and one directing mind. Good discipline may then be defined a something, whether a code of laws or customs, that animates a large body of men with one-mind, and impels them zealously to pursue the same end. The detail of the means used on board ship to accomplish this end must, I apprehend, have convinced every body that they are really destructive of it. Zeal never yet was produced by terror; and the animating spirit that has, at all times, led our seamen to pursue the end of discipline, (or conquering the enemies of our country) has been the desire of praise. This can not be at all owing to that system of laws and customs which I have detailed, and whose effects are to make gaolers of the officers, and prisoners of the men, which must produce mutual distrust and dislike; when, to promote the end of discipline, there ought to exist nothing but unanimity, confidence, and obedience; and whose other effects are to set the marines in array against the seamen, and the seamen against the marines. It is the pride of the present mode to keep these bodies as distinct as possible, remembering the old maxim, of divide to govern. I know that this feeling does not exist at a moment of exigence; it is then swallowed up in their ardent love for the country, and their desire of praise; but this is to the credit of our national customs, and belongs not to the present system.

It is probable that our naval successes may be advanced as proofs, that the present discipline has effectually obtained its end; that to them, men may be exultingly referred as proofs of its efficacy and goodness; but I positively deny that these victories have ever, in any one instance, been the result of the present system of discipline. It never inspired one Englishman with courage,—the means of achieving victory, or ever made one Frenchman *tremble*. Our naval victories have been always owing to our superior national character; to our sailors own innate, unequalled,

unconquerable, courage: one consequence of liberty is courage; and of slavery, fear; from this it is just as wise to assert that the present patriotic spirit, evinced by the Spaniards, is owing to the *inquisition*, as that our seamen's courage, which has gained us victory, is the result of naval discipline. So conscious are naval officers, even the greatest disciplinarians, of the inefficacy of this system to produce courage that, in a moment requiring exertion, it is laid aside: then the captain becomes all affability; then it is what their country expects of them; it is then the reflection, that they will be praised that excites them to every effort. Victory has always attended the English, before this system was established. Neither our Harry's, our Edward's, our Alfred's, nor our Blake's, nor even our Nelson, ever wanted or had recourse to such a diabolical plan to conquer the enemies of their country.

It is a strange truth that the profession, which was adorned by the abilities of Lord Nelson, and which he carried to a height that never before was equalled, is the only part of the community that in any manner doubts his having been a great man; and this wholly from his neglecting to use the means generally employed to accomplish order. His lordship had no character as being a strict disciplinarian; a character which officers have heard so much praised, that they think it contains every thing that is needful.

That the present laws and customs are destructive of discipline is clear; from the well-known remark, that great disciplinarians have seldom been successful commanders. Nor can it be otherwise; no man, under their command, feels any zeal, it is destroyed by terror; no man does any thing but what he is commanded. He who makes use of those severities which, (though the laws may sanction) create hatred in the minds of the people, has a conviction within him which must unnerve all courage.

The effects of what is now called discipline, are also clearly seen in the loss of the *Africaine*, *Hermione*, and *Danae*, all commanded by wonderful disciplinarians. Captain Corbett was particularly known as one of these characters; and when the *Africaine* was taken, it was declared the people refused to fight, from the cruelties they had suffered. It was even rumoured he fell by one of them; whether this is true or not I cannot pretend to say, but such a rumour being in existence, is a strong proof of a general opinion of the destructive qualities of the present system of discipline.*

The inefficacy of a power to punish, or what is now called discipline, was forcibly shewn among the troops while retreating to Corunna; and the superiority of national character, in accomplishing the ends of discipline, was strongly evinced when there. While retreating, which they were conscious was discreditable and would obtain them no praise, they were all disorder; the utmost efforts of their officers could procure no kind of respect or obedience; but immediately they knew they were to fight, they were all alacrity and attention; on no occasion in the world did our countrymen shine forth with more brilliant lustre, it was only to be regretted it was under such inauspicious circumstances.

I trust I have now clearly convinced my readers that the main principles of naval discipline, as it now stands, viz. Pressing, compelling men to do their duty by terror, and permitting captains to employ that at their pleasure, are as destructive of real

discipline, as they are of morality; that they are not less opposed by the feelings of the heart than they are condemned by the dictates of reason; and that they are alike destructive of the energy of our national character and of individual virtue. The main spring of the coercion in existence is, the power the captains possess of making what they please customs, and punishing them at their pleasure; part of its ill effects are now before the public in a tangible shape, and it is for them to support or abolish it. To have called the attention of the public to the sufferings of an individual would have been trifling with its majesty; but the same principle that has deeply injured me, is now inflicting thousands of cruelties on the seamen; and the mischief it may cause to the community, from the destruction of our national character, is quite incalculable. Was it of importance, or did I, as an individual, ask the support of my country? I could, demonstratively, prove that I violated none of the existing laws of the navy; and that I acted in their true *spirit* when I remonstrated against an existing *injustice*. But I cannot avoid knowing that, in daring to step aside from a custom unsanctioned by laws, I offended against the mis-begotten, ill-directed, feelings of the pride of my superiors. That I opposed men who were cursed with the power of *punishing*, and who are accustomed to measure the feelings of our nature by the exaltation of our rank, who are themselves in the habit of tolerating and acquiescing in the Billingsgate language of a commander-in-chief; who have patiently, in their own progress through the service, borne with every contumely; and were, therefore, excessively displeased that a lieutenant, unknown to the world, destitute of fortune, or of rank, should dare to lift up the brow of honest *indignation* against destructive injustice, unmerited insult, and vulgar abuse. The propriety of this principle must not be left for military men to decide on, for they are so pleased with the power it confers, so prejudiced in its favour, from the pleasure its possession bestows, that they never will support opinions that will abolish it. To be properly examined it must not be called a military question, for its continuance conspicuously affects the whole community. The time may not be far off, if the present contest in the north should be unfavourable to us, when Bonaparte may man his ships with his victorious legions, who, animated with victory, and incited by their former fame, may (when contending against the foreigners who man our fleets) hope for victory on the ocean; the pressing may then be extended to all, we may have to contend upon our own shores for our national existence. And how will men, who have till then enjoyed all the blessings of liberty, submit to this system, when the longest habits of obedience never yet reconciled it to one human being? That it has not, at all times, produced all the cruelties and all the ill effects I have mentioned I am well aware; but the acknowledgement that these are bad, and the instances in existence, where order has been accomplished without them, is the strongest argument that can be used, that the power of producing them should not be entrusted to any man. The end of all the cruelties which I have detailed is never good for the service, though such is always made the cloak; they are never used to repress what education has taught me to call crimes; but their sole end is to enforce unnecessary labour, that the captain may enjoy a momentary reputation as a smart officer. It is here necessary to make a wide distinction between a smart officer and a good officer. Lord Nelson was a good officer; but a smart officer is a man whose merit is apparent to every body's eye, but foreign to every body's heart; whose ship displays wonderful alacrity in all the minutiae of her duty; whose appearance attracts every body's admiration and every body's applause, who does not enquire how it is attained. If this be all these cruelties are used for, there can be no motive for their

continuance, but as the power that occasions them flatters and engenders the officers' pride; but as it elevates a few beings above others, to a situation where otherwise neither their fortune nor abilities would have placed them; and can this be a motive for continuing them? Every reasoning man must object to it. This is one point where the misplaced praise of society has done the naval service much injury: had no comparisons ever been made between ships sufficiently clean for the purposes of health; sufficiently well ordered to be enabled to fight the battles of their country; and those delicately clean, and too gay to be useful: had the last not received unqualified praise, and the first unmerited censure, the naval service would not have been annoyed with so many *smart* officers as have plagued it; whose *smartness* is productive of hatred, and whose gay appearance is the occasion of strife.

In endeavouring to pluck down so noble an edifice as naval discipline has been called, I should imagine myself little better than a destroyer, were I unable to collect, from its ruins, materials for erecting a better; one that shall accord with the present state of the feelings and knowledge of mankind, and that shall be consistent with our national character; where it shall not be necessary for the ideas and actions of the man, to be contrary to the received instructions of the boy; and where, as in other parts of our society, terror shall repress vice, and shame excite emulation. Was I unable to sketch the outline of a system that shall have for its objects,—To make my profession honourable for its professor, as well as useful to my country: To make that country infinitely more just, and not lessen her prosperity: To help to deliver her down to future ages as a wise, as well as a great, *nation*.

Let it not be said that no reformation is wanted, our seamen do not complain: in every reasoning mind there must be a conviction of existing injustice; and it is an observation of Lord Holland's that cannot too often be repeated, that "wherever injustice is known to exist, though not complained of, it is a positive duty in legislators to amend it." Our seamen have frequently complained, and they have never been able to punish men, guilty of the greatest enormities, till they have become tired of complaining.

Can any man be on board ship for an hour, and not think there is a spirit of dissatisfaction and discontent existing? Every officer of the navy knows, as well as myself, that there is, and every man must be satisfied there is very just cause. This discontent is now regarded with satisfaction as a symptom of the seamen's perfect subjection, afraid to speak out. It is known with that same pleasure with which we hear the distant summer's thunder, conscious that it brings refreshing showers to the thirsty earth, forgetting that it may in a moment become the lightning's tremendous flash, that destroys too suddenly to permit resistance.

Sailors know not how to advocate their own cause. Carrying arms in their hands, they are wisely forbidden to deliberate, because they possess a power which could not be resisted; but can that be urged as a reason why they should be stirred up by oppression to use it. It ought rather to convince men, that there is a necessity for doing sailors every justice. Let us not forget that the lion was quietly at rest till provoked by his worryers, but when unable longer to endure them, he arose and crushed them.

Some reformation is becoming most essentially necessary, for every means is now taken to give information to every class of the people; and while you are teaching them that these things are wrong, can there be a greater absurdity than to continue to practise them? Can any rational being think that, when sailors are convinced of the uselessness, as well as the injustice, of this system, they will submit to it? It is impossible to keep this conviction from them; it is therefore absolutely requisite this system should be *abolished*. It is in vain to think, while you are teaching people to know right from wrong, that they will submit to a system of laws whose basis are injustice and terror; whose supporters are immorality and vice; and whose end, if persevered in, must be *destruction*.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. VIII.

An Amended System—General Observations.

From the definition of discipline in the foregoing chapter; from the necessity there is that one mind should direct every exertion to which zeal would give birth, it may be clearly deduced, that the power of commanding is materially necessary properly to fulfil the duties of a captain; and as I have clearly shewn, in the details; that the power of punishing is destructive of discipline, no officer ought to be entrusted with it except in some trifling cases hereafter to be explained; and in these cases the laws should strictly define the crime, the mode of punishment, and the quantity the captain was allowed to inflict. Rigid and severe punishments should be ordered, did he ever trespass on the bounds prescribed; and all these things should be known to every man, that, if any captain committed himself in this way, it would be immediately discovered; he would then have to pay attention to his general conduct towards the people; for, it is probable, that might determine them to prosecute him or not, was he in any case tyrannical.

This distinction between the power of commanding and of punishing should be made the foundation of an amended system; to execute which, properly, the naval code of laws must undergo a compleat revision, as many of them are now a perfect dead letter, from the severities of punishment attached to them, and from a want of minuteness in discriminating degrees of guilt. The first should, certainly, be remedied, for the certainty of a small punishment is much more efficacious in preventing crimes, than providing a much severer one, and leaving an opening for escape. The last of these faults of the naval code would best be remedied by having recourse to the punishment-books now transmitted to the admiralty? The crimes seamen are most guilty of may then be discovered, and each crime should, by the legislature, have an appropriate punishment affixed to it; there should be nothing left to be punished at the caprice or discretion of members of courts martial, according to any *customs* they might ever have seen practised. If a crime occurred for which no punishment was ordered, none should, in any case, be inflicted without the sanction of the legislature. I know that it is a general opinion in the navy, that, to take from captains the power of punishment is to take from the people every motive for obedience. This follows, of course, from terror being alone the motive that is allowed in the navy for action; but he may safely be pronounced a wretched legislator who attempts to govern men by one passion when there exists two,—fear and hope. It is not less absurd than a captain contending against a superior force with half his own. It may be said that I wish to destroy my country, by promoting disorganization and disorder in our fleets; but I wish to promote order and obedience; I wish to see them established upon principles agreeing with our nature as men, and with our ideas of happiness as Britons; I wish that my country may look to the opinions of her subjects for support, for that is the surest foundation of obedience, and never try, by legislative enactments, in opposition to opinion, to impose it.

But let us enquire what is this military obedience, in what it ought to differ from the obedience practised by the civil inhabitants of our country, that terror is required to enforce it.

The difference now discoverable between military obedience and what is practised by the civil inhabitants of our country is, that the former is obedience to an individual, the latter to the laws; and this is the difference that ought to exist between them, but it ought to be as small as possible. The authority of the legislature should prescribe, as much as they can, the actions of seamen that are necessary to promote the end of discipline (conquering the enemies of our country); and when it has done that disobedience to individual legal commands, as well as disobedience to the laws, should be punished as a crime. But the required military obedience differs in nothing from the obedience required from a servant by his master; and the good sense of society has long exploded that terror which was once employed to produce domestic obedience. Every tradesman who obeys his employer, every servant who complies with his master's regulations, is as obedient as military obedience can possibly be required to be. Long established opinion of the value of this obedience makes it so universally practised; and the conviction of a necessity of military obedience would be much stronger than this long established opinion, in as much, as the end, which can only be accomplished by it, may be proportionally seen clearer (the defence of our country), and is of infinite more importance.

Perhaps it may be advanced, that this domestic obedience, as well as resulting from opinion, is enforced by considerations of individual interest; that the tradesman is obedient because he fears losing his employment, by which, perhaps, he maintains a wife and family; and the servant, because he fears losing his place. With a voluntary service, the exact same hold would be had of the seamen; their individual interest would suffer as much from disobedience as the servants or mechanics; for, from the prospect of an honourable provision, there is, in the navy, for old age, from the pay and food the seamen receive, it appears to me not at all doubtful, that (taking away the present absurd laws) going to sea is a much better occupation, and possesses greater advantages than what can be enjoyed by three fourths of the community. But there is another and a very strong hold of sailors individual interest to make them obedient: if I understand this word right, it does not mean pecuniary rewards, so much as the pleasure arising from gratifying some of our desires. Now the desire of fame is strong enough in the whole community to produce the greatest part of their actions; I have shewn it is particularly strong in seamen; removed from the society of women, the dress of sailors occupies but little of their attention; it is an object productive of little hope and less fear; but this, among the lower and younger classes of our community, is a conspicuous motive for most of their actions, for much of their desire for wealth. Sailors have food and lodging provided for them, and therefore the common necessaries of life can occupy but very little of their attention, of their hopes or their fears. Every man knows, that when the mind is left quite free from desires, life becomes a perfect blank; the sailors can have none then of the common hopes and fears of that class of the community to which they belong; they have but one desire, and that is fame. To gratify this, every faculty of their minds and bodies is employed, for it is a well known and true observation, that when we have but one desire, all the

powers of the man are employed to gratify it. No man who has been on board ship, or who has ever heard of military duties, can escape the conviction, that obedience to one directing mind is absolutely necessary to ensure that success wherein centers all the seaman's hopes. With a voluntary service this desire of fame would be stronger than it is now; it, indeed, would be the primary, if not the only motive for every man serving his country.

With this strong hold of their individual interest, and to the conviction, that to gratify it they must be obedient, might our community be left to practise military obedience; and this will be the most perfect obedience, for it will have its foundation in opinion, the source of the actions of all mankind; but military men will not, or cannot see this, though the most perfect kind of obedience; it requires reflection to discover its cause. Military men are not much given to this; but the obedience that springs from painful terror is obvious to every man. From this clearness of being perceived, it alone is discovered and adopted; though the obedience that springs from opinion is so perfect in its effects, so diffusive in its example, our rulers will not suffer it to operate; they will intrude between the wish to obey and the power to execute commands, that worst of all possible motives for action,—terror, that is not less confined in its example than it is short-lived in its effects. In speaking of the perfect obedience that springs from opinion, it must not be supposed, that it requires arguments or language to produce this opinion in the people's minds, it already exists. Turbulence is only so observable in the navy, from the obedience there required being in perfect opposition to the obedience we are in the habit of paying, and which was taught us, in early life, by our parents, when we practised obedience to them; it was enforced at school, when we submitted, without knowing why, to our masters; and it is confirmed, by every day's practice, of our obedience to the laws and customs of the society in which we live, without asking ourselves the question, why are we obedient. The value of obedience has been so long established, that it has become, like one of the affections of the heart, one universal motive for the conduct of men.

There is an opinion afloat in the world from which, it is probable, it may be thought Englishmen cannot practise this requisite virtue of military obedience,—it is, that they are altogether a disobedient people; but I deny that such a character justly belongs to my countrymen. During years of privation and hardship, while the nations of the continent have suffered every convulsion, our country has remained quietly at rest, scarce an instance has occurred of disobedience or of partial revolt; it is only when the pride and vanity of our rulers require obedience to commands destructive of freedom and of general happiness, that our people have been disobedient; and who that reflects, that our present glorious constitution has arisen out of resistance to such commands, would not pray, that to them they may always be disobedient, may always resist them. An opinion is formed, that sailors would not be obedient, because they are now turbulent, because they are now disposed to resistance; but this arises from the opposition of the present system to every feeling of our nature; to every idea of a Briton; to that obedience we are all accustomed to pay to general opinion, particularly to that opinion universally acquiesced in,—that liberty is essential to the happiness of mankind. The little education a labouring man receives, almost convinces him that such resistance is a virtue; but let commands be given with reason; let them not exact

more than is necessary for the service, and obedience will be as prompt as the most ardent can wish.

I am happy, on this subject, to have an authority to support my opinion; its respectability I cannot judge of, but it proceeds from one of a body of men who, of all others, are, perhaps, less disposed to give human nature more credit than it deserves.—*Vide A Treatise on the Offence of Libel*, by John George, page 196, where it is laid down, as a first principle, “that mankind have, in their nature, a willingness to submit and lend their support to good government.” I have endeavoured to account above for this willingness to obey, from the habits of obedience that are constantly inculcated in the early seasons of life. Experience supports this opinion; for no nation have willingly overturned a good government, and permanently continued in a state of anarchy; and so strong is the habit of obedience, so great is this willingness to obey in human nature, that men submit to the very worst governments rather than live in anarchy. From it, at this very moment, is the continent of Europe submitting to deprivations, miseries, and partial ruin; from it, at this very time, are many of the lieutenants of his majesty’s navy patiently acquiescing under the destruction of every hope, quietly submitting to the unjust deprivation of every right years of toil have given them. As an individual I can assert, that I have more than once before suffered oppression in the navy, and reason told me that submission was wrong; yet so strong was the obedience I was accustomed to pay to opinion, so willingly did I obey, that it was not till my superiors had destroyed every rational hope, and produced a temporary despair, that I could surmount my obedience to this opinion, that I could get over my fears, and sensible no worse evil could happen to me, venture to resist.

If there was a disposition in human nature to resist more powerful than that which impels them to obey, would our seamen, so long as they have quietly submitted to the greatest cruelties, to the most barbarous injustice, to a system of laws directly opposed to the fundamental articles of our constitution; for they violate that personal liberty which is the first privilege of a free man; they expose him to imprisonments and punishments without a trial; and they condemn him to death by tribunals composed of men who are more frequently offended than the laws, before whom, from habitual terror, fear prevents him from pleading; and who, so far from being peers of his, stand, in the relation to him, of a superior order of beings. It cannot be the system of terror which keeps them in this obedience, as many men suppose; for when that is extended, as in the cases of the Danae, Hermione, and Africaine, human nature will no longer bear it; and, in every ship where this greater degree of the so much boasted terror is employed, obedience is, at all times, imperfect; and late occasions have shewn, that, so far from producing obedience, the men have invariably remonstrated against it with too little success, or I should not have had the occasion of directing public attention to the subject.

The perfection of obedience, which opinion produces, is clearly discerned in the navy, when every individual’s hope of gratifying his love of fame gives birth, in the moment of battle, to those arduous endeavours which have brought us victory; that prompt obedience which outstrips the orders, and even the wishes of the officers. But the obedience that we learn in early life, and that springs from opinion, is, in our society, directly opposed, and, I trust, ever will be, to many of the absurd commands

of naval captains, to which no terror that could be employed would ever ensure a quiet and prompt obedience.

These commands have no motive, no end, but individual gratification, and cause to the seamen inexpressible pain; and shall we continue such a system of terror as this, so ridiculously absurd, so terribly destructive, for the gratification of a few individuals' vanity; forbid it, reason; forbid it, justice; and policy alike forbids it.

The captains, without terror, have still another strong hold of the obedience of the people; many are the little offices in a ship which are objects of the seaman's ambition; the captain possesses the power of bestowing these, and he should still continue to enjoy it. On his giving them to deserving men, the order of the ship, in a great measure, and, consequently, his reputation, will depend; and, were they always bestowed on obedience and on merit, merit and obedience would never be wanted. There is one little part connected with the present system which here deserves notice; it is that from boatswains' mates, who are petty officers, being the instruments employed to punish the men. Good men have an aversion to the office, and it is very frequently given to the greatest reprobates that can be found; can a more efficacious mode be adopted to encourage vice than in rewarding it with honour, and bestowing on it authority?

I trust that my readers are as fully convinced as I am, that there is no occasion to entrust the power of punishing men to captains to produce the virtue of obedience; the authority of opinion is great, and this is decidedly in favour of obedience; we have seen that it, with the love of fame, (as in time of battle) enforces exertions, confessedly some of the greatest, which man is capable of making. It appears not less absurd, therefore, to assert, that these are not capable of creating all the minor virtues of regularity which are required to keep a ship in order, than to assert that the man who could lift a hundred weight was unable to move a pound. To make obedience perfect then, the laws which regulate our navy should resemble, as much as possible, those to which every man is in the habit of paying quiet obedience; and, under such an opinion, I shall proceed to point out some amendments positively wanted. It is not, for a moment, thought they are the best that can be made, but it is supposed, that the principles of their foundation must be adopted before any material improvement can take place in the situation of our seamen; before the service of my country can become strictly honourable, and obedience perfect; before that disgrace to our country,—pressing,—can be wholly abolished.

It is to be observed, and it cannot be too strongly enforced, that the principal virtues which are necessary to accomplish the end of naval discipline already exist, in a large proportion, in every part of the community.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. IX.

Naval Tribunals.

It has been asserted, and with apparent reason, that to organise tribunals so as to deserve and inspire confidence, is one of the primary duties of legislation. Now, can any man, accustomed to reflect on the motives of human actions, think for a moment that naval courts martial can inspire, or are deserving *confidence*?

Where is the fancied theoretical perfection in their *structure*, that can make a man cheerfully commit his life, his fortune, and his reputation, into their hands? We have seen that they are composed of men comparatively destitute of education; corrupted by power, and often strangers to religion and morality: that, as the naval laws and customs, which form their minds, are founded in *injustice*, as they can have no strong convictions of injustice hereafter to be punished; and as its commission is never punished in the navy; whenever their interest is concerned, they have no motives to be just.

Such an opinion of them is not contradicted by any well known facts, but there are many which support it. The marked inattention which prevails in these courts, is a sarcasm upon tribunals; a burlesque upon justice; and when they condemn to punishment, it is often adding the bitterest insult to the most flagrant injury.

In courts martial, when trying a captain, (a time when every member's mind should be deeply engaged with the business before him) I have witnessed them drawing caricature heads of the prisoner, and handing them about for *mirth*; and was I to relate all the improprieties I have been told of this sort, they would not only fill, but they would sully my paper. It is a well known fact, that a man's sentence does not depend so much upon his degree of guilt as upon the natural disposition of his judges. A word that offends the feelings of pampered pride, or an opposition of opinion, particularly if supported by reason, is in these courts, and by such judges, classed with the widest departures from moral rectitude, and visited with as great a severity of *punishment*. The man who reflects, or who possesses any knowledge of courts martial, instead of submitting to their judgment as just, spurns them with disdain, as wicked; instead of these courts inspiring him with reverence, they breed nothing but contempt. The believers in the existence of that military honour which it is expected will guide the actions of these men, may as well believe that they can discover truth without attending to the evidence; that they will pronounce a just judgment at the end of a trial, though during it wholly occupied in the manner I have before described, for they all have the same foundation, imagined *intuition*. I believe not in this intuitive light to discover truth or guide the actions of men, and I trust the better informed and major part of our community, like me, place no reliance in it, whether denominated honourable feelings or *inward grace*. To rescue courts martial from such imputations, to constitute them so as to inspire and deserve our confidence, recourse should be had to the tribunals of our country, already endeared to us by opinion and a knowledge of

their value: they do not punish the innocent, neither do they suffer the guilty to escape.

Whether the severity of the present code is to be continued or not, as men bear a portion of evil much better from the same authority that bestows upon them good; as no man can think naval captains are fit legislators, and consequently cannot respect their decrees; as it is right there should be a semblance of reason for continuing this severity, and that it should be sanctioned by deliberative wisdom, it is absolutely necessary that the crimes which sailors are liable to commit, should be correctly ascertained by our national legislature, and punishments strictly defined, appropriated to each.

When that is done, the whole code should be divided into three parts: the first part should consist of the greatest crimes, and they should be cognizable alone by a court, to be called a Superior Court Martial, which the admiralty and commanders in chief should alone have the power of assembling; the second part should consist of crimes of less magnitude, none of which were punished with death, and these should be cognizable by another court, called an Inferior Court Martial, to be afterwards described, or by the Superior Court: the third part should consist of the very minor crimes; the punishment annexed to them should be distinctly marked, and the more effectually to secure obedience to the captain, he should be ordered to inflict the punishment. These classes of crimes and punishments shall be afterwards explained, as I am now to point out how these tribunals may be constituted, just observing that the commissioned and warrant officers should never be tried but by a superior court martial.

The admiralty and commanders in chief should have the same power as they now possess, to order courts martial. The applications for them to go through the same forms and channels as at present. The person intended to be tried, to receive the same information, within at least the same time prior to the trial commencing as now.

The admiral or captain, being second in command, should, as now, preside or be the judge of the superior court martial. He should sum up the evidence, charge the jury, and after their verdict pronounce the sentence of the law, or return the prisoner to his duties. The other members composing the court should consist of thirteen, and should be called a Jury, of which the majority should decide upon the innocence or guilt of the prisoner. They should, at all times; be of the same rank as the prisoner, whether he was an admiral, a captain, a lieutenant, a warrant officer, or a seaman.

If the fleet consisted of fourteen ships, one of the rank wanted should be taken from each ship; if less than fourteen, two, three, or four should be taken from each, as might be necessary, but never more than four should be taken from any particular ship, none ever being allowed to come either from the ship to which the prosecutor or the prisoner belonged. These jurors might be sent from their respective ships, either by ballot or by the selection of the captain. The prisoner should have a power, as he has on shore, of challenging any of these jurors, not exceeding seven, or the larger half. When from three or four being sent from four or five ships, their number was more than thirteen, the president or judge should have the power of rejecting whom he

pleased; he should also have the nomination of a foreman from out of the jurors. These jurors should take an oath to do justice between our sovereign lord, &c. &c. and the prisoner, to the extent of their knowledge; and I think it would be advisable to read to them, at the commencement of every trial, a short address, stating the necessity there was for the good of the service and the country, that justice should be impartially administered; that while the innocent were sent away with honour, the guilty should not escape punishment; the importance of the duties they were about to fulfil, and the heavy responsibility that would lie on them, should they not execute them to the best of their knowledge and abilities. I should suppose, that a power in the hands of the captains of selecting what men they pleased from their respective ships, and leaving to the president the power of rejecting whom he pleased, when the number sent exceeded thirteen; and his also having the selection of a foreman, combined with the influence captains always will have over their men, would leave to officers a means of ensuring justice being always done; but, if it is thought this will give officers too much influence, let the jurors be taken by ballot, and let them have the power of choosing a foreman for themselves; and I should conceive, making men, who are subject to the same laws, and likely to be in a similar situation, will secure to the prisoner that sympathy of feeling, from being subject to similar temptations, that must convince him of the justice of his sentence, as well as erring man is enabled to judge. This jury then, should, after hearing the evidence, give in a verdict of guilty or not, and leave the judge to pronounce the sentence ordered by the law.

When a captain is deprived of the power of punishing men at his pleasure, I foresee there must be more courts martial than at present; but I have conveyed my opinions very ill to the minds of my readers, if I have not convinced them that much the greater part of the punishments which now take place are unnecessarily and wantonly inflicted; that the crimes they are made use of to repress, are the natural effects of the present system; and, was that amended, courts martial would not much exceed their present number, and would soon rapidly decrease. One advantage of the mode I have proposed is, that it will allow courts martial to take place very often; when, if they were composed entirely of captains, circumstances would not permit them.

The jurors could very frequently be sent from their respective ships to the ship of the second in command, and the fleet proceed upon their duty; when from the absence of so material an officer as the captain, they could not. But, farther, to promote the speedy execution of justice, and enable the superiors of my profession to establish order in it, an inferior court martial might be constituted, who might take cognizance of the second class of offences. The admiralty and commanders in chief should, at their discretion, upon application, order this court to assemble in preference to the other; and they should have the power of appointing as the judge, any captain they pleased, he not being less than six years a *post captain*. The jurors to be composed exactly as in the superior courts martial.

A general authority should also be given to all captains to order an inferior court martial, to be assembled whenever five ships might meet promiscuously, having no immediate opportunity of communicating with a commander in chief, or the admiralty; and the second in command of these five ships not being less than six years a *post captain*. This court should be composed precisely like the others, the second in

command being president, and should be assembled by the orders of the senior officer of these ships, upon receiving the regular application that is now made. The punishments for the second part of the crimes, and that this inferior court martial should have the power of adjudging men to, should be such as the captains should be enabled to inflict on board the ship where the offence was committed; but, as the sentence would be known, it would never be possible for them to exceed the quantity appointed. This subject shall, in the next chapter, be more fully explained. In an essay of this kind, where it is merely intended to give a brief sketch of some easily accomplished improvements, a detail of every little circumstance connected with a court martial, will not be expected: the minor parts of them might be conducted as they are now, without any apparent disadvantage; an open court, a judge advocate, or clerk to take minutes, who might, as well as the judge or jury, question or cross question any evidence, first obtaining the judge's permission; but these complicated arrangements I leave to those people who have made them the study of their lives. I shall feel happy if my country will, with me, adopt the principle, and introduce it into naval jurisprudence, of trying every man by his peers. It is a system that has been long acted upon in our country with the happiest effects; and to introduce it into the navy, would be sanctioned by every Briton's heart, from its affinity to those tribunals he is accustomed to respect and revere. One effect to be expected from this system is, that it will make our officers, as all may at some time or other expect to be judges, feel, more than they do now, the necessity of acquiring a little knowledge: a responsibility will lie upon them properly and clearly to sum up the evidence, perspicuously to charge the jury, and legally and strictly pronounce the sentence of the law.

The responsibility now belonging to condemning men to punishment, is so much divided amongst the thirteen members of courts martial, that every man thinks it lessened; and I apprehend this conviction of a necessity of acquiring knowledge, this responsibility properly to act, to be much wanted by every officer.

Such a mode of trial will give to our seamen an idea that they very much want; it is, that they are of importance to the community for other things than fighting the battles of their country. When the life and death of a fellow-creature shall depend upon their decision, it must give them habits of reflection; it must elevate them to dignity of action; it must learn them to discriminate more clearly than they do now, right from wrong; and teach them, in comparison with what they now feel, to think well of themselves, which is the first step to propriety of behaviour, and what elevates man in the scale of being, and brings him nearer to perfection.

Let it not be said of seamen, that they differ from the jurors of their country in possessing no property: what influence has this property on men's minds, that it so clearly enables them to distinguish right from wrong? I know of none, but that it gives a man increased facilities of acquiring knowledge. This is, in our country, now open to all; and I feel no hesitation in asserting, that amongst the leading seamen, are to be found men more intelligent than usually compose the provincial juries of our country.

It should be remembered that nothing can well happen at sea requiring the abilities of an Ellenborough or an Erskine to decide; there are no intricate questions of property; there can scarcely exist any circumstantial evidence; it is generally plain matter of

fact, fair subjects for military men to judge of, which the common sense of the seamen, permitted to reflect, is as likely to discriminate as the refined understanding of the judge.

With such tribunals, and with laws founded in justice, I cannot see any objections that can be made to subjecting the whole of our merchant sailors, as well as those in men of war, to the judgment of these tribunals, which would teach them naval laws, train them in habits of proper obedience, and, at all times, fit them for men of war.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. X.

Naval Punishments And Rewards.

The first class of crimes should consist of those to which capital punishments were annexed. These should be cognizable by no other tribunal than a superior court martial. About these offences, I apprehend but little difference of opinion can exist; they occur so seldom, that I feel indifferent what punishment they have annexed to them. They are known in the present naval code as mutiny, spies, pillaging, or evil treating captured persons, neglecting to fight, or neglecting to encourage others, cowardice, suffering enemies to escape, not doing the utmost to assist friends and allies, and hindering the service on any pretence of injury. With a voluntary and limited service, it might be just to punish desertion capitally; but the flagrant injustice of now doing it, must be apparent to every man; concealing traitorous or mutinous designs, murder, unnatural crimes, striking a superior, disobedience to positive commands, with a permission of remonstrating if they are thought improper or illegal. If disrespect and contempt are to be punished when exhibited, it is absolutely necessary that the crimes should be defined; and if their exhibition is of so much injury to society, the conduct that causes them must be more so, and should meet an equal severity of punishment.

Since possessing power has ever led to oppression, and since there is nothing attended with more baneful consequences to the community, from the hatred, contempt, and disrespect which must invariably follow unmerited punishment, more positive laws, than now exist, should punish all superiors who may, in any instance, be guilty of cruelty or oppression. Their various shades might be visited with various degrees of severity, from a simple reprimand by a court martial to death. There are many other crimes which might be classed with the first part; but the whole seldom occur, and are never punished but by a court martial; and they are so little productive of flogging, that I do not mean farther to enlarge upon them. What I have said is sufficient to shew what is meant by dividing the code into parts, and its intention is more speedily to promote the execution of justice.

The great fault of our present naval laws is a want of minuteness; as, for instance, what a variety of faults come under the head of negligently performing your duty, which, by the present code, has a penalty of death affixed to it; or to be punished according to the judgment of a court martial. A sailor neglects some trifle of his daily business, the captain reads this article of war to him; inflicts upon him one or two dozen lashes, and obtains a reputation as a merciful man. Now if these common daily neglects are to be classed as crimes, and so severely punished, then the punishment should be affixed by the legislature, the degree and mode, and every thing relative to it. They should mark the guilt there is in neglecting well to polish the iron allotted to this man to brighten, or in having failed to make a hammock look white, or a deck look clean. But I am convinced every reasonable man must smile at legislative enactments, or any others being wanted to accomplish such objects as these. If they

are not, then their omission should not be classed, or punished as crimes, at the will of captains. As well might legislative enactments be demanded, by husbands, to compel their wives to wash their dishes, polish their kettles, or whiten their thresholds: as well might they be punished by the laws for omitting to do them.

The minuteness of discrimination that is wanted in the naval code, will best be learnt from professional men; and the legislature taking these to their assistance, should mark out one form of punishments and rewards for the whole service; they should be the same in every ship, so that men, who had once served his majesty, might know that what they had then seen punished, would again be punished on its commission. These punishments and rewards should extend to every action likely to injure the health, prevent simultaneous exertion, or destroy order and regularity. Perhaps it may be thought that this minute provision of the legislature will interfere with the power of governing the military force, which our constitution vests, exclusively, in the hands of the first magistrate.

I have already made a distinction between the power of commanding and of punishing. The first essentially belongs to the chief magistrate, the second may be divided into two parts,—the power of declaring what ought to be punished, which belongs entirely to the legislature, and the power of determining whether a man has trespassed against what the legislature have declared to be wrong; which is committed in every part of our country to a jury of a man's equals. As well as give the chief magistrate the power of making laws for the military force, why not entrust him with the power of making them for the whole country, since its good equally requires that his orders, when agreeable to law, should be obeyed by every civilian, as well as every military man?

Among the crimes which professional men could point out to the legislature as deserving punishment, as now frequently causing it, and as wanting their degree of guilt discriminated and repressed, are drunkenness; want of personal and general cleanliness; want of alacrity; of diligence; of attention; and an aversion to work, when such work does not involve their reputation. These, and such things, are what should form the second class of offences; they might be punished with solitary confinement, not exceeding a month, by wearing a clog, not exceeding a month; was there ever an obstinate and hardened man, a determined and repeated offender, he might be punished by flogging, with any number of lashes not exceeding fifty; and as sailors are so much alive to fame, labels, descriptive of their offences, might be affixed to them, for any length of time not exceeding a month; but none of these punishments should, as now, be inflicted by the individual captain. The sentence of one of the courts martial, alone, should sanction their being inflicted; and they might all be put in immediate execution on board the ship where the man had been guilty. If there ever was a necessity of inflicting corporeal punishment, the executioner should not, as now, be a boatswain's mate, who is, and ought to be, a respectable petty officer, having authority, and commanding obedience and respect. The executioner should be a man, or men, who had been guilty of the crime for which corporeal punishment was ordered to be inflicted; and the power of ordering men to do it, might be left to the captain to be inflicted as a punishment, for any of the third class of offences; holding this execution up as a shameful office, and the punishment never being inflicted

without the sentence of a court martial, would immediately make the punishment itself shameful and dishonourable, instead of, as now, being regarded as a misfortune, and exciting our pity instead of our abhorrence.

As the existence, in a large proportion of this second class of offences, is made the excuse for the captain's being entrusted with the power of punishment, I shall shew how they may be repressed or produced without this power.

And is it not already evident that these things, which now are the occasion of so much flogging, are, with the exception of sobriety, the distinguishing virtues of our countrymen; and are not our sailors our countrymen; or are they so contaminated, by a mixture with the scum of every other nation, that the character of Britons is no longer distinguishable amongst them? It still exists; as Trafalgar, Aboukir, and many such places have loudly attested; our superior national health, though we live in crowded cities, is a demonstrative proof of our national habits of cleanliness. The various arts which, at once, adorn and enrich our country, are proofs that we are not a phlegmatic nation, and that the versatility of our national genius is not less than the variableness of our climate.

This alacrity of mind, or of temper, has ever been, and still is a distinguishing characteristic of liberty; and it belongs equally to the sailors, as having been free in their early life; no terror can then be wanted to produce that which already exists. Our national industry is proverbial; it pervades every class of society; the English merchant ships are distinguished as working with less men than any other nation; and this virtue would equally belong to the sailor of the men of war, but that he is early taught to love fame, and work, on board men of war, is made disgraceful. This national industry is produced by individual interest, which gets its daily pecuniary rewards; and sailors have a fixed pay, whether industrious or not. But I have before shewn, that sailors have a great individual interest in keeping their ships in order, as that alone can ensure them fame, and which can only be done by means of industry; and this individual interest, opposed as it is by absurd laws, every officer knows now operates in making seamen proud of their ships; in making them emulous to excel whenever permitted, and not compelled, and already produces many beneficial regulations that promote willing industry. As these national characteristics may not be so clear to others as they are to me, I shall now point out some more easily discoverable modes of accomplishing order on board ship; where the evident interest of the sailors shall prompt them to quiet and ready obedience, and the equally apparent interest of the officers incite them to promote order, by attention to regulations. Experience, that fruitful parent of wisdom, has shewn, that the most effectual means of maintaining the much-admired cleanliness that leads to health; the quiet obedience that promotes regularity, and the ardent simultaneous exertions on the parts of the inferiors, which is immediately instrumental to victory, are best promoted by a firm and impartial administration of justice on the part of the superiors, and by their most constantly and vigilantly requiring all these duties on the parts of the inferiors. The one set of virtues are as necessary on the part of the officers as the others are on that of the men; they should, therefore, be equally enforced with legislative enactments, punishments, and rewards.

Now no distinction is made between him who maintains order, by regularity and attention, and him who, given up to idle pleasures, produces its semblance by dreadful coercion.

If there ever have been distinctions made, the rewards have most frequently been given to the latter; for they have generally been found amongst the young men of interest, whose vices have been flattered from their infancy; who, feeling fully assured they would be promoted, have never taken any pains to deserve it; who have wanted every rational motive for the acquisition of knowledge, or the practice of virtue.

These have been the men who have always had the finest ships, the finest stations, and, from the admiralty,—the only judges of their methods of attaining order,—the greatest recompense; these are the men that are employed when they ask it, while many of our naval captains, who have promoted order, by their example and attention, are left to pine in inactivity and obscurity.

I shall be told that, to gain promotion and reward by interest, is the necessary and just influence of property: in my opinion, it is taking from virtues that are essentially necessary, for the good of the country, the rewards appropriated to them by her, and with them encouraging vice; it is giving a bounty on idleness, cruelty, and oppression; and repressing, with a golden heavy hand, industry, justice, and mercy.

How our rulers can expect order to be promoted when they thus encourage vice, I am at a loss to know; for it unfortunately happens, that this encouragement is not subdued by the censure of society. Though interest may procure a man a situation on shore, he is so watched by all his neighbours; so open to the correcting hand of the press, that he generally makes some efforts to qualify himself for his situation. Not so the naval captain, he is above any such controul; the only praise society bestows upon him is given when he is a fortunate commander. Now, with some exceptions, most of the naval combats have generally commenced from some fortunate combination of circumstances, over which the commander had no controul, and, consequently, he can deserve no praise. The innate courage of our sailors has ensured the victory, but he has received the reward. Society knows nothing about his habits of regularity or order, whether they may be good or bad; if he is fortunate, he receives all the praise society has to bestow. When this shall be altered; when attention to these duties on the parts of the officers shall be enforced by laws, they must acquire knowledge: indeed, with the power of punishment taken from them, they must have recourse to such means to accomplish order, as their reputations, which is their interest, will then materially depend upon their abilities.

Drunkenness, the first and the most prominent of the second class of crimes, which is now, occasionally, allowed, and sometimes severely punished, should, at all times, be repressed, with some of the punishments marked out for it, but never without the sanction of a court martial. From its being thus constantly punished, men would have a firmer conviction that it was a vice, and ought to be abstained from; and no officers should be allowed to encourage it by granting to the seamen liberty-liquor as an indulgence.

There is, sometimes, a difficulty in proving drunkenness by any other means than a positive oath; therefore, any man whom the officers suspected of being drunk should be submitted to the examination of the surgeon, whose evidence, unless opposed by very numerous witnesses, or very strong circumstances, should, at all times, be decisive. But, under a better system of laws, where drunkenness was never encouraged by the same authority that afterwards punished it, if the allowance of grog was somewhat reduced, or, at least, care taken to dilute it on going from a cold climate to a warm one, as the stimulating effect of heat is frequently sufficient, with their allowance of grog, to produce intoxication in a whole ship, I certainly think drunkenness would seldom be witnessed among seamen.

There is no place in the world where personal safety is so much endangered by intoxication as at sea; and self-preservation has been said to be the strongest law of nature; no place where the necessity of sobriety is so apparent to every man; the safety of the ship, and all that she contains; his own and his country's honour and reputation, of which no sailor was ever yet regardless, depends upon his sobriety. With such powerful motives for abstaining from drunkenness, if sailors were left to the common feelings of our nature, unperverted by despotism, but enlightened by being permitted to think, sobriety would be one of the distinguishing characteristics of the sailor.

If, after all, drunkenness should not disappear, the admiralty might order the captains to select some man from each ship, who had been distinguished for his sobriety, and, as we know, that praise misplaced is powerful enough to create the most glaring absurdities; as its love is particularly strong in seamen, it may, surely, with propriety, be made the auxiliary of so necessary a virtue as sobriety; medals, or some meed of the admiralty's approbation, should be bestowed upon these men. A knowledge of this should be circulated in every ship in the service; and their being held up to naval society for imitation, would do more for sobriety than all the flogging that can be used. The remainder of the second class of crimes should also be similarly punished, and their opposite virtues induced in the exact same way.

The want of cleanliness, so much complained of, is solely engendered by the sloth attendant on a state of mind bordering on despair. A voluntary and limited service, with rational laws, would make this be heard of no more; but if it did exist, it could be subdued, and cleanliness encouraged by the same means employed in quelling drunkenness. That want of alacrity, which is displayed in not reefing, or not furling their sails well, and which, when it exists, is visible in every manœuvre of their ships, arises from the sullen temper, conscious of injuries impossible to be redressed; limited and voluntary service is the effectual cure for this. The simultaneous exertion necessary in all evolutions with ships to do them well, must have its source in the cheerful alacrity of voluntary obedience; and, to arrive at any sort of perfection, must flow from regulations on the part of the officers; if, after that, and a proportionable quantity of practice, any particular ship was complained of, as generally negligent in performing her necessary duties; as this want of alacrity generally prevails through the whole ship's company, any number of captains might be ordered by the admiral or admiralty (to whom ever the complaint might have been made) to inspect the modes of doing the duty in the ship complained of. If their report went to censure the

officer's negligence, and this is the most general cause of want of alacrity, after the evil temper produced by pressing, I think it would be right they should be tried by a court martial. If to condemn the people, the ship's company should, by the admiralty or admiral, be reprimanded in public orders, and these read to every ship's company in the fleet; they should be held up as unprofitable servants to their country, and as deservedly incurring disgrace. In this manner might all these deficiencies of duty be remedied, if they should exist, with a voluntary service; my own opinion is, that then they would never be experienced.

The necessity of the opposite virtues, like sobriety, must be apparent to every man. It is as clear as possible, that, without cleanliness, ships cannot be healthy, nor can any man experience a moment's ease; that, without the other excellencies, ships must frequently be captured or destroyed. Never was there a place where obedience to one person, directing all their efforts for the common good, is so visibly necessary as at sea; from the frequent squalls and sudden gales of wind, encountered there, whose ill effects, if not prevented, must destroy the ship,—never was there a situation which so much required diligence and alacrity. To these paramount necessities, and the well-known character of our countrymen, aided by the slightest attention to regularity on the part of the officers, might seamen be implicitly left to produce all the virtues at present so rare.

There is, in most ships, a written set of orders for the daily direction of the seamen's duty and conduct; from some of these a code of regulations should be formed, and any person trespassing on them, the captain should be permitted to punish; but the manner should be exactly prescribed to him, and should be known to all. These punishments should never exceed ordering a man to inflict corporeal punishment when necessary, and adjudged by a court martial, wearing a label for the day descriptive of the offence; a day's privation of food or grog; a day's solitary confinement, or wearing a clog; being separately messed from the unoffending part of the people; and, by all these means, held up to shame, no man would be found to trespass on laws that were well known, and whose punishments were certain; for, on board ship, detection is so sure, that no fallacious hopes of escape could intice men to commit crimes.

And this power is all that is necessary for a captain; is all that can benefit the service, or promote the good of the country; or, indeed, ultimately produce his own happiness. There is another way of leading to virtue in the seamen, whose effects are admirable, but not sufficiently extended; it is that of having daily, weekly, or monthly bulletins from the captain, admiral, or admiralty, in proportion to their importance. These bulletins, or public orders, should exist in every ship; every man that was promoted to be a warrant officer, with the particular virtue he was promoted for; every punishment that was inflicted by a court martial, and what was the crime, should be told the seamen in these; and they should be encouraged by the language of commendation, or of censure, to practise the one and avoid the other. All national concerns should certainly be told them in these bulletins; was a victory gained, authority should tell it them in the language of exultation, tempered with gratitude to the giver of all good; was a defeat suffered, they should be informed of it, but without despair, relying on their ardent courage to retrieve its ill effects. What has been called an *esprit de corps* will also operate powerfully on the sailors to practise virtues the individual would

never think of; were they in these bulletins, as occasions offered, distinctly made to understand how individual virtue or vice honoured or disgraced their profession; were they convinced that their own vices were, in some measure, the reason assigned for keeping up a system of severity so disgraceful to themselves and their country; were they encouraged to take an interest in the concerns of that country, I know no virtues sailors might not be taught to practise through influencing their opinions.

But there is a miserable ambition among our superiors of governing too much; it sees not the means of producing the obedience that springs from opinion, and has hitherto stepped in and destroyed all the virtues the seamen's situation would produce. Aiming at making them mere machines, it has reduced them below the level of human beings, and caused those evils it was its professed intention to prevent.

They have been insensible to the superior dignity there is in governing men to governing machines; and they care not how despicable they may make our people, that their small portion of virtue and abilities may fit them to be our rulers. When the captain was deprived of the power of inflicting any but the lesser degrees of punishment; when tribunals were established congenial with the feelings and character of our countrymen; when what is called discipline was made agreeable to the dictates of reason, was the navy then to receive as much praise as it has hitherto done? Instead of being obliged to press men to man our fleets, we should have to reject the services of many; instead of taking Africans, and all sorts of rabble, we should have stout, able, and willing Britons. Combining these alterations with a limited service, the government might get over their fears, and rely upon the long-tried valour and zeal of our countrymen voluntarily to defend themselves. If they will not, then their country is not worthy of being defended. The pain of her being captured and destroyed, by her worst enemy, is not equal to the anguish which ensues from pressing and flogging: the one would cause a terrible, but a momentary pain; the other is a never-ceasing, heart-destroying misery; but I feel from my own heart, and a knowledge of my countrymen, that they would defend her; such an opinion is supported by every event in our history, and they are the vile calumniators of my country who doubt it; they are the base assassins of that by which she is eminent among nations,—her moral reputation; they are the people who seek to build up a throne of despotism, upon the altars of that vice they encourage, by supposing us capable of committing it.

Under the impression of such opinions, I shall propose a scheme of limited service that will give the seamen their liberty without unmanning our fleets. If the rulers of our country will not adopt it, let my countrymen be but convinced there is truth and reason in it, and the knowledge that is fast spreading its beneficial effects throughout the community, will give sufficient strength to the gradual progress of opinion, to make it or something like it be adopted. I shall first of all devote a few pages to the better education of our officers.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. XI.

The Better Education Of Officers.

Though taking from officers the vast and unnecessary power they now possess, will tend to make them feel the value of improvement; yet, as captains must frequently have a discretionary power of acting, where the interests and honour of their country are concerned; as they may, more than any other race of men, have the power to suggest improvements in its commerce; as the best interests of this commerce are frequently committed entirely to their protection; as they are, sometimes, placed in situations where negotiation is necessary; and, as by their conduct, they have frequent opportunities of making impressions on the minds of foreigners, which may ultimately tend either to benefit or injure our country: better education is for them absolutely necessary.

At present it appears requisite that officers should go to sea at the age of thirteen; this is not because six long years are required to learn a man to fulfil the duties of a lieutenant; they may be learnt better than they are now known in two years at the most; but, it is because every man, who goes to sea, late in life, is observed to feel a repugnance for the service, which prevents him properly executing his duties; with a better system this repugnance would not exist. As I believe it arises wholly from the opposition of the present discipline to the ideas of liberty and happiness acquired on shore; ideas which the boy has but imperfectly learnt, and he grows up with the knowledge to be procured in the navy, and is therefore satisfied with whatever is there in existence; I should therefore say, sixteen years of age is quite early enough for young men to go to sea, when they should be obliged to possess a specific quantity of knowledge before they were permitted to enter. Property could alone procure this knowledge, and this is the influence it ought to possess—this it can buy. Their emoluments should be very small till they were nineteen, or had served three years, when they should be certain of receiving a commission, because they have acquired a right, to be afterwards explained, of subsistence.

If it is still thought necessary to send them to sea so young as they now go, their parents should wholly provide for them, and pay all the expences of their education, till they were sixteen; and till that age, they should never be suffered to do any duty that in any way involved command. The duties they now have to do, would, under a better system, not be in existence, as they wholly arise from that suspicious mistrust the officers have of the men. The Admiralty have partly began a better system of education, by combining the offices of schoolmaster and clergyman; but, as these men require an excellent education, and as in early life they are accustomed to enjoy, and to look up for the comforts of existence; as their situation on board ship must be materially different to what they would have enjoyed on shore; as they share not in the rewards bestowed on successful courage, their situation is yet hardly good enough to tempt men of abilities to accept it. It should be made better by ensuring to them, after a certain period of service, comfortable situations in some part of our immense

church establishment. They should also have entrusted to them the power of punishing or rewarding their scholars, without the interference of the captain. One effectual part of this power, and what I should think would be fully sufficient, would be leaving to the school-master's discretion, without confining them to a few months of either side of the three years, to pronounce, when their pupils had attained knowledge to fit them for command.

To commence this part of their duties would doubtless be eagerly sought for; their own conduct would facilitate or retard it; they would be respectful and obedient to their master, because it depended upon his decision. The better education wanted for these officers, and which of course their masters should be able to teach them, is a knowledge of the present state of the feelings of mankind, of the languages most commonly in use, and of the sciences connected with their profession.

It is that manly kind of knowledge which gives energy to talents, which creates virtuous and honourable conduct, which on shore prevents them being evaporated in love sonnets, frittered away in criticisms, or foundered in horse-racing; that on board ship teaches nobler employments than placing blocks, leading ropes, or polishing iron, and prevents idleness heating the imagination into tyranny; that is absolutely wanted to make naval captains properly execute their duties. To promote knowledge amongst officers, libraries might be established at the different naval stations; such things already exist among the naval officers of every division, and among the military officers at Gibraltar and Malta. If these were countenanced by government for us, if they would furnish the building, our own pecuniary means would do all the rest; and they would, at all times, be a refuge from that perfect idleness which now on shore tempts us to dissipation, and they would materially benefit the country.

Unfortunately, in the navy, knowledge has hitherto been derided as useless, despised as superfluous, and treated with contempt as a hindrance to advancement; but, I hope, better days are coming, when officers will be themselves sensible of the value of knowledge; when, instead of being forbidden to think (as they now often are), they will be encouraged to it, as advantageous to the country, as the noblest prerogative of our nature, and the greatest distinction between man and brutes.

Nothing can so effectually make knowledge desirable, or be so strong a stimulus to its acquisition, as abolishing the compulsory mode of doing naval duties; then men will feel they will be respected, and willingly obeyed, in proportion as they merit it; the reputation of a smart officer will then, probably, depend upon a man's virtues, and then talents and abilities will not be deprived, as they now are, of their legitimate reward—*praise*.

With this better education there will be a necessity better to provide for officers, since the world bestows much respect and praise on dignity of appearance; since the character of the country frequently depends upon the appearance her representatives make among foreigners, captains should be enabled to support a dignity of appearance.

Since the necessary education for captains, and since the situation of a lieutenant, gives men wants, which in the individual would never have existed, it becomes those who have created them by their encouragement, to afford us the means of gratifying them, or restore us to that situation, where they would never have been created.

It is distinctly stated, by Doctor Paley, in his *Moral Philosophy*, that any conduct towards another which excites expectations, is as much a promise as the most express declarations, and creates as great an obligation.—Vide *Moral Philosophy*, page 128, vol. 1. Can any person believe that there is not a tacit promise upon the part of the country, that lieutenants shall be promoted if they do not behave ill? Is it not clearly exemplified in the country making no other provision for us but this promotion? Is the pay of a lieutenant superior to the pittance daily labour acquires in our country, and is not their situation one requiring some dignity of appearance? Are they not exposed to more numerous privations and hardships, in the service of the country, than falls to the lot of similar classes of our community? Does not the waste of the early part of their life, in acquiring the knowledge to fit them for this situation, completely unfit them for every other employment? Is it not heart-breaking to be accustomed, on board ship, to every sort of superiority; and, when on shore, where wealth is the only distinction of rank, or the means that connects society, to be degraded to the very lowest classes of our fellow-creatures, or shut oneself up in anchorite obscurity? Is not a promise of promotion the means employed to promote industry in our profession, for our country reaps the fruits of our labours? Is the right to promotion not clearly exemplified in its occasionally being given to a few of the eldest lieutenants? I think it has also been expressly declared, by some of our senators, as an excuse for not increasing our pay, that we had promotion to look to as a reward. If this then is our only reward, if we are deprived by education of other means of seeking an honourable subsistence, and if we are taught by the praise, society has bestowed upon us, to seek its applause in preference to every other good; to deprive us of this right to promotion, to take from us the only means we have of acquiring this applause, must be the height of cruelty and injustice; it is no less than encouraging us, by promises, to employ our time in the prosecution of a particular object; and when we are completely unfitted for other occupations, when we are completely at the mercy of our rulers to deprive us of our reward, for claiming this right in the manly language of a Briton, for refusing to ask it as a favour. Naval custom, as interpreted by naval captains, have punished me; but I shall now shew to the public, by demonstrative evidence, that such punishment is not less destructive of my individual happiness, than it is of the public good. It will remain with them to support or abolish such illegal customs: I have done my duty in resisting them.

I apprehend, narrow as the principle of self love has been called, it is the sole motive for the actions of human beings; that the desire of happiness of one kind or another, or a wish to escape dreaded punishments, is the universal incitement to action, exclusive of the many solid arguments which learned men have advanced to support this opinion. It alone is the motive employed by the gospel to lead mankind to virtue; every individual is there taught that he is to do good, and shun evil, to promote his own individual happiness. Had there been any other motives, would they not have been employed by him who so well knew how we are made? Indeed, to assert that any human being acts without any intention of adding to his own happiness, either now or

hereafter, appears not less absurd than to assert an effect exists without a cause. Now, surely, the hope of happiness hereafter can seldom cause those greater exertions, and submission to those greater privations which are required of naval people. Every man knows that the greater part of all military efforts take place from some hope of happiness here; they are produced by expecting the praise of society, or by the hope of bettering our condition; and that these military or naval efforts are absolutely necessary for the preservation of every state, and for ours in particular. Society has been generally benefitted in proportion, as its rewards for the production of virtues have been certain. Surely, the quiet obedience, the diligent application, and the occasional arduous duties of the lieutenant, are absolutely necessary; and as they cannot be produced in a Christian community, by any hopes of heavenly happiness, it is manifestly the interest of society to reward them. I have before shewn that promotion is the lieutenant's reward, and to deprive him of it, and of every hope of enjoying it, is to take from him every motive for performing those duties which so materially benefit the community: as far then as utility is concerned, there is a moral obligation on society to fulfil the promises held forth to lieutenants. Though no man believes more than I do in the efficacious power of praise, in bestowing an earthly reward, praise is not the lieutenant's lot; he is punished should he neglect the duties of a gaoler, and society marks that situation as one of dishonour and disgrace, should he repose an unsuspecting confidence in a British seaman, a man engaged in the same cause as himself; and should the man deceive him, naval customs, as interpreted by naval captains, severely punish the lieutenant: there can be no honour or any praise in this. Lieutenants are exposed, after years of service, to the intemperate, rebuking, and heart-breaking language of a boy, whom interest has made his captain, from being a youngster under his orders; praise, therefore, is not the lieutenant's lot, and the nation may thank our rulers, should they come forward in a body and demand greater pecuniary rewards, for customs are established in the navy through the ignorance of our superiors, which take from them their honourable feelings; which take from them that praise so conspicuous a part of their legitimate reward for exertion, and creates a necessity for greater pecuniary emoluments as an indirect road to it.

Had our country made a provision for lieutenants as they grow old, I might have thought a right of promotion did not exist; as they have made no provision of this kind, they have left it clear to every man that it does; nor would it ever have been doubted, but for the absurd prodigality of our rulers, who, by multiplying, without any necessity, the number of officers, have created an apparent impossibility of gratifying us all. The bounty of our country has been ample to the navy, but they have spread it abroad over so large a surface, that it has failed to fertilize any part; indeed, it is lamentably astonishing, that, with rewards in its possession, no individual can have to bestow, every inferior department of government service should teem with dissatisfaction; and it can arise from nothing but the improvident waste of the legal and beneficial patronage the country has vested in the crown. Perfectly convinced that I have this right to promotion, I never will resign it; it may be taken from me, as it has, but I never will acquiesce in it, or ask its restoration as a favour, convinced that such acquiescence or solicitation is immoral, and an injury to society. This must not be narrowed, by being called a military question, and left for the executive power to decide; it has the right of commanding us, but not the right of punishing us; and, assuming it in the military power, it may assume it in the civil, and thus lay waste the

dearest rights of civilized society. In this question there is a wide distinction between our country and our rulers; the first has provided promotion as our reward; the last take it from us; with it they gratify themselves and their friends, and sacrifice the good of the country to their avarice; and, in resisting this usurpation of our rights, a man resists the few, and supports the virtues and the cause of many.

The apparent interest of our rulers and of our country is frequently in opposition; the first know that they are but tenants at will, and many of them care not how much they injure the estate, in order to enjoy a little present wealth and power; they heed not, that themselves and their children-must, ultimately, live by its produce. Could the question be examined, in all its bearings, upon individual happiness, the good of the country, and the real good of the individual are always the same. Had lieutenants long ago resisted this power in the Admiralty of taking from them their promotion, the country would long ago have seen the necessity there is to provide for them; and from that it would have clearly resulted, that bounds would have been set to the power of the admiralty to make as many officers as they please; and we should not now have had a naval list of 180 admirals, 798 captains, 595 commanders, 3227 lieutenants, besides superannuated officers of all classes, when the country only employs, afloat, about 35 admirals, 350 post-captains, 200 commanders, and 1900 lieutenants, and never can want or employ the sixth part of the remainder. I could not furnish a more demonstrative proof of the virtue there is in resistance than this, since not only the moral character, but the pecuniary means of the country would have been materially improved by it.

When, in the navy list, I see names that have never been heard of enjoying the half-pay of the re-spective ranks to which they belong, at the rate of 2*l.*—1*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*—1*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*—12*s.* 10*s.* or 8*s.* a day, I cannot wonder at the country's just complaint of expence; nor at the excessive dissatisfaction too generally and too justly manifested by the subordinate classes of officers. It is not right it should be concealed, that the greater part of this list consists of men who have owed their elevation to the influence of property alone; and here, the rewards appropriated by our country are taken, by our rulers, from virtuous endeavours, and given to vicious inactivity. Another instance of the unjust and injurious influence of property; for it absolutely (though the proportion may be ever so small) takes from the daily labourer to give to the idle gentleman. A principle of reformation that wants immediately applying to officers is, that when they had discontinued serving, their emoluments should not increase,—that is, they should have no more than the half-pay they enjoyed when they last served; but now a man is made a post-captain at an early age; he serves a short time, or, perhaps, not at all, yet his half-pay goes on, increasing from eight to ten and twelve shillings a day. With a very small portion of servitude, he receives his flag; and, without any further service, his emoluments continue to increase, till he receives from the country *two pounds a day*; and it is possible this man may have never served his country above seven years, six of which he was a boy, and was a burden, not a service. It is a rule in the navy, that officers-receive half pay in proportion to their seniority on the half-pay list; this might have been very well had no more officers ever been made than employed; but, from the present increased list, and from those who stay on shore being likely to live longest, they who render the least service to their country are likely to receive the greatest rewards.

The constitutional mode of preventing all this is, by the house of commons appropriating certain sums for the payment of a certain number of each class of officers, as many as the service might want, then no more could be promoted than paid.

As the soul of the military profession is the hope of bettering your condition, my opinion is, that lieutenants pay does not want to be increased, but they want a certainty of provision ensured to them; it is sufficient for a young man of nineteen, just beginning the world, but it will not supply the wants of age; it is as much as a man who has been brought up at the expence of the country can ask, but it is not enough for him who has spent his life in its service; it is abundant to supply the wants of the boy, but it will not provide for the man. Our country has, evidently, left promotion to do this, and fully to ensure it to all the lieutenants: I should say, that those employed might, with benefit to the service, and great advantage to the country, be reduced in all ships one-half. The duties they now have to do are not the duties of men of education; but education is absolutely necessary to make a captain. The greater part of them spring from that distrust which exists of the men, but which would not be known with a voluntary service; they are the duties of guards and upper workmen, and belong, with much greater propriety, to that class of men known as petty officers.

Another principle of reformation that wants immediately applying to the navy, is to forbid more than a certain number of young men being allowed as midshipmen; for it is now evidently impossible for the country to provide for them all.

It is cruelly unjust to encourage them by hopes which can never be fulfilled; to waste the seed-time of life in pursuing unprofitable knowledge, that, when they possess it, only unfits them for other occupations; indeed, by permitting them to spend their youth in the service, the country becomes pledged to provide for them by the tacit promises of its rulers; and, as to provide for them all must be utterly impossible, the good faith of the country becomes sacrificed by the inattention or neglect of its rulers. There are many young gentlemen, just entering the service, who should, in justice, be sent back to their friends; for the country cannot provide for those who are already its servants. There is an apparent and an ungenerous aim by this unnecessary introduction of young men; it is to make all more slavishly dependant. The service gives us numerous wants which we can gratify no where else; and, as our superiors have the power of employing us or not; they have the means of depriving us of an honourable subsistence, and, consequently, a very strong hold of our fears, to compel us to do every thing, however unworthy; and its end will be the reduction of men, whose souls ought to be sensibly alive to the praise of society, to a compleat state of dependant pauperism. Whether this, when combined with the destruction of the seamen's energy, by the existing system of cruelty, will produce a frame of mind capable of defending our country, of bearing hardships, and of winning victories at sea, appears to me not at all doubtful. It may conquer the slaves of a military despot, like Bonaparte, but will inevitably fail when opposed to the free-born sons of America. For my part, this degradation is what I cannot submit to; I must have a conviction, that my life is useful to make existence bearable; I must feel that my exertions entitle me to subsistence, and that it does not depend upon the arbitrary will

of others, for I cannot live upon the eleemosynary smiles of any men. Indeed, I cannot find a single motive for submission to so great a degradation. Neither religion nor morality furnish me with any; it is destructive of the virtue and happiness of my country, and dreadfully pernicious to my individual good. Fear might teach me submission; but the principal end of a sailor's education is to teach him, that fear is the most short-sighted and base of all motives for action.

To me, contending for slavery appears to be a vice; when seeking the enemies of my country, I must know that I am serving its cause, and the cause of morality and liberty; that I am its honourable servant, not the menial of my superiors; and if they will interpose between me and my country, and require me to act in opposition to that country's interest; if they labour to reduce me to their tool, they take from me what can be my only, (and, I suppose, every reflecting man's) rational motives for fighting; they deprive me of some of the dearest privileges of an English-man; and the same principle, followed from its beginnings,—self-defence, which could justify me to resist, with all my might, the French despot, is more imperative on me legally to resist oppression at home, in as much as the danger is more certain and evident.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. XII.

Limited Service.

As pressing appears to exist for no other reason, but, (as children say) because it does, it wants nothing to make it totally unnecessary but a simple declaration on the part of the legislature, that it is so; and reconciling the naval service to our ideas of justice and happiness. I have shown how the last may be easily accomplished by the establishment of tribunals, deserving our confidence, and by taking from captains the power of punishment. More fully to accomplish the first, a legislative enactment should immediately take place, abolishing pressing, and establishing the improvements mentioned; and, as a farther inducement for Britons to serve their country, limited service should be authorised under the following regulations:

A twelvemonth after this legislative enactment, all the men who had served their country twenty-one years, from and after the age of twenty, should be entitled (if they pleased) to their immediate discharge, and should, at their own choice, be entitled to and receive the in or out pension of Greenwich Hospital. If the funds of that place are not rich enough (but I believe they are) to answer this purpose, and others afterwards mentioned, they must be made adequate by the country. If these men were pleased to continue at sea, and I think every one would, whose health and strength permitted, they should be allowed to do so, if fit for service; but no farther reward than one of the pensions of the hospital should be given them, whenever they chose to retire; twenty-one years after the age of twenty is long enough for the country to claim of any man; and few men are fit for much active service, as a sailor, at that period of life.

I have no means of ascertaining what number of men of this description there are in the service; but I should not suppose they can exceed the complement of one frigate; and should the voluntary service not cause many to enter before the end of a year, the deficiency of disposable force from this class of men would be very small; therefore, from trying such an experiment, no injury would result to the country. From a twelvemonth, as before stated, all the men who had served fourteen years and upwards, from and after the age of twenty, should be entitled to their immediate discharge, but without any sort of reward, it being left to themselves to stay or go, and, of course, having the same claims as the first-mentioned class of men, after their period of twenty-one years servitude. I do not wish strictly to confine the benefits of Greenwich to men who have served twenty-one years, but certainly no men should be admitted to them, who had served less than fourteen years, unless he had received some injury in the service.

Under the improved system of discipline few men who had served fourteen years would quit the service without a pension, when, by remaining in it, they would be sure to receive one at the end of seven years, and should also receive it at any period between the fourteen and twenty-one years, when they might, from a survey of medical men, be deemed unfit for service. These men should also, for a reason, and in

a proportion, to be afterwards assigned, receive an increase of pay. From these inducements to remain in the service, I should apprehend but a very small loss of men from this class; but I am wholly unable to estimate the amount.

By the end of two years, from this legislative enactment, experience will clearly shew whether our people will voluntarily serve their country or not; if they would not, perhaps the safety of the country might make it absolutely necessary, that no more men should be discharged; but of this I have not the slightest fear, and if they did voluntarily come forward at the end of two years, all the men who had served ten years, from and after the age of twenty, should then be entitled to their discharge without any reward, staying if they pleased. At the end of three years, all the men who had served seven years, from and after the age of twenty, should, in like manner, be entitled to their discharge. This should include all the boys and young men now serving, who should, when they arrived at their twenty-seventh year, (if the war continued so long) be entitled to their discharge.

With a voluntary service, no man not brought up as a sailor should be permitted to enter, for the first time, after the age of twenty five. I do not even apprehend, at the commencement of a war, there would be any occasion to deviate from this; for, under a better system of discipline, the inducements to enter would be so strong, that there would be always an abundance of young men; neither should men, brought up to the sea, be permitted to enter the service, for the first time, after the age of thirty; there might be a necessity to break through this regulation at the commencement of a war, but at no other time. We absolutely bring our service into disrepute by holding it ourselves so cheap, as admitting the aged, the lame, the halt, and the blind into it, when it possesses advantages superior to any private service for labouring men in the community.

It would not be advisable to adopt recruiting parties for the navy; they are an immense expence, and, I should think, perfectly useless. If the broad principle of population is at all true, that countries are always fully peopled up to the means of their subsistence, there will always be just as many men to eat the naval provisions, with a voluntary service, as now, and, indeed, more, unless it can possibly be supposed, that the increased pleasure, which will result to men from a voluntary service, should prevent, instead of inducing them to serve. The government, therefore, only require the means of providing these provisions, and they may safely rely upon the courage and zeal of our countrymen going to sea to consume them. As men, who have the slightest hope of bettering their condition, from coming to London, always find their way, those who wished to enter the service from any inland parts of the country, would certainly find their own way to the nearest naval depot; and, doubtless, many bosoms would ardently wish it, as an honour, instead of thinking it, as they now do, the last refuge from despair. Naval depots are already established at all the principal sea-ports of the united kingdom, and would want no alteration, except being deprived of their prisons. Care should be taken to spread a knowledge of these depots throughout the kingdom. I shall afterwards point out a proper means of doing it; but I just wish to call the attention of the public to the immense expence which arises, in very part of our military service, in every part of our country, from this utter want of confidence the government have of the people, arising, apparently, from that most base, most

destructive of all motives for human actions,—fear. Such a want of confidence is contradicted by every event of our history, by every sort of experience, and, therefore, cannot be produced by reflection, nor is it supported by reason. I defy any man to find one instance, in the history of our country, that can be urged as a proof of a want of will in our countrymen zealously to defend it, or zealously to support that glorious constitution so much our pride; but this expence is the exalted policy there is in injustice. These are the sublime effects of that incomprehensibility of conduct in our great men which lesser folks cannot understand; this is what is peculiarly denominated policy, which requires a man's whole life to learn, and then he knows it but imperfectly. To me it appears a vile submission to the worst passions of our nature, uninstructed by experience, and unenlightened by reflection, where that green-eyed monster,—jealousy, fear, pale and trembling, wrinkled anxious avarice, and violent and stormy anger, alone direct the actions; and policy will become infinitely more perfect when the common rules of morality, when the simple, but sublime precepts of the gospel, to fear God, but love our neighbour, shall direct the actions of our great men; neither do the ill effects of this want of confidence stop at the greater waste it causes of our pecuniary means, but it wastes our physical strength.

All the recruiting parties now employed in the united kingdom, had our rulers reposed confidence in us, might have been aiding Marquis Wellington; indeed, I should say, that three-fourths of our militia, as they are, apparently, embodied but to keep us in awe, might have been employed in the same service; proper means being taken to influence their opinions, they would have voluntarily gone; the remainder of our people could have defended our country from invasion. Do we not live secure, protected by the efforts of our gallant sailors; and where is the Briton, who, having a musquet or a rifle placed in his hands by the government, would not have been inspired to exertion by such confidence; who would not have manned a battery, or flown to a post assigned him, at a moment of danger, and died in defence of that liberty such confidence would have given him a double pleasure in? The immense expence which now attends our military, and with confidence in us, a useless staff-establishment at home, joined with that caused by recruiting, would have furnished Marquis Wellington's military chest, and have placed him, without any additional taxes upon the people, at the head of 150,000 brave English troops; with such a force he would long since have cleared the peninsula.

The Emperor of the French, vast as his means are, must have given his attention at home, when assailed by these troops, joined by the Spanish nation. He could not have reposed confidence in his people; for he governs them but by the terror of military authority. The Emperor of Russia might have remained quietly at peace, with honour, or repressed insults, with a certainty of success, while England, exalted upon a throne of just confidence in her people, and supported by morality and virtue, might have dealt out liberty and comparative happiness to all mankind; might have been regarded with reverence, as the arbitress of the fate of the world; might long since have given mankind the blessings of peace, and thus have promoted the purposes of its God. But all this is prevented by a simple want of confidence in the people, which is as absurd as it is pernicious. For what, or for whom, let me ask, do we fight? Is it for the sake of the happiness which may accrue to the soil that we defend it? or is it, that we may enjoy its produce and its blessings? Can it be for our rulers we are called upon to shed

our blood? There has not been, for years, many public men who, at once, have commanded my reverence and esteem by their talents and integrity. To say I am to fight for such people, is to tell me I am to commit murder; it is neither the soil then, nor our rulers, for whom we contend, but it is for our people; and it is evidently their interest to defend themselves; is it not, then, as absurd as it is pernicious to suppose men will not attend to their own interest?

To return to our naval subject; no man should be permitted to enter for less than three years or more than seven; as some little time is necessary to learn men their duties, they cannot be taken for less than three years, neither would it do for foreign stations.

There is a hopelessness attends mankind when they look forward to a long period, without a prospect of change, that impedes exertion; and this is very strong at sea, for our attention is not occupied by a thousand little daily improvements, and daily wants, which people on shore have, and can gratify; therefore I would not permit a longer period than seven years at one time. Bounties, as at present, should be given to all men at their first entrance into the service. If experience should prove that they were wanted, to induce men a second time to enter the service, they should again be given; but I think, with the increased pay not to be proposed, bounties at the second entering would not be wanted. It may, perhaps, be said, that our country cannot afford greater pecuniary rewards for the seamen; those who support such an opinion are interested men. When they, satisfied with the pleasure possessing power gives, shall serve their country for nothing, instead of taking many thousands to themselves and bequeathing them in reversion to their descendants, I shall think they have a right to compel the lower classes of the people to labour for nothing; to fight for and defend their country, and be satisfied with their food.

The principal employment of sailors is common labour, it requires little abilities and no knowledge but what the most common people possess. Therefore the wages of labour in other parts of our society should be the criterion for paying seamen. These are good when they permit a labourer to bring up a family, have the necessaries of life and some few of its luxuries. No man who knows how abject poverty debases mankind, who loves his country, would wish that they should ever have less. In estimating how seamen are to be paid, it is to be remembered, that food and lodging, those principal necessaries of life, are provided for them. Their present pay provides a single man comfortable clothes, and some even of the luxuries of life. But as it is evidently for the good of society that our labouring people should, with economy, be enabled to rear a small family, a sailor's situation as they belong to the labouring class of people, should also be made able to do it. They want something of this kind to attach them to their country and make them citizens as well as sailors. I should therefore say that the pay is enough for the first seven years, they might serve their country; after being twenty years of age, the next seven it should be increased one-half; after serving fourteen it should be doubled, and not farther augmented. The seaman's pay is now about eighteen pounds a year. Then after serving his country fourteen years it would amount to thirty-six pounds, not a very great sum, but sufficient, with an industrious wife, to rear a small family.

As a farther encouragement for men to volunteer for the service, those *situations* they now look up to as rewards should be made better. The time necessarily occupied by the seamen in labour must prevent their acquiring that knowledge I deem so indispensable to make a man a good captain; this is a situation therefore that should not be open to the sailor's ambition: * but those that are should be improved and filled with no persons but them. No disappointed midshipmen should receive warrant officers' *situations*, they should wholly be filled with men from before the mast.

Warrant officers are men raised from amongst workmen to direct their efforts, and they have a large portion of responsibility: as they cannot fill these situations till they have arrived at mature years, I think they should have sufficient pay to enable them to rear decently a small family, and as they have much responsibility their pay ought to be increased at least one-half in every rate of what they now receive.

The boatswains' mates when not made the instruments of punishment, will be petty officers highly respected, and their situations will be much desired; they should have a small pecuniary increase, and should look up to the situation of a warrant officer as their reward, which captains coxwains, (alias their extra servant) should no longer be allowed to fill. These are the men whom I should say ought to have the greater part of the duty to do, which is now the portion of the lieutenant. For to me it appears absurd to take men into the service, educate them as and associate them with gentlemen, and then give them the duties of upper workmen to do.

The consequence is that the gentleman requires as much as four of these upper workmen, and the service is made more expensive without being so efficient; and what now is received with dissatisfaction by gentlemen sent into the service by the influence of property, would amply satisfy not only these upper workmen, but the warrant officers.

When the number of lieutenants were reduced, their duties should comprise all that requires education; they should attend to signals, to the ship's navigation; they should arrange all the stations of the men, and perform many duties too minute to need enumeration. The boatswains mates should not be deprived of their places by their captain, as that would be a power of punishment; but such a mark of disgrace might with propriety be ordered by the legislature to be inflicted, should they be guilty of any of the second class of offences. But in all vacancies captains should fill them from their own people, uncontroled by any authority in their appointments; but never permitted to give these situations to any man but one who had served his country at least three years. The other petty officers should have their pay increased like the men's, in proportion to their service.

Besides making men petty officers the captain has another way of rewarding people.

As the same distinction of landsmen, able, and ordinary seamen would exist then as now, he might make men from one to the other, which would be a much greater incitement to them diligently to learn their duties than all the terror that can be employed. The captain will not trespass too much on this power of rewarding, as, should he make too many, he would be liable to lose a part of his best seamen. Instead

of the captain being then, as he now is, the source of terror, he would be the fountain of honour; and as the hope of good is more powerful than the fear of evil, he would be as much more respected.

As a still farther encouragement for men to serve in the fleet, and not a very expensive one, all fathers who might be obliged to receive support from their parish, and who had lost in their country's service a son, who might probably have rescued his old age from painful or dishonourable dependance, should have a right to receive, at his own option, the in or out pension of Greenwich. All wives, whose husbands had perished in the service, should in like manner receive a pension from Greenwich. All children, who had lost their fathers in the service, should have a positive right to national assistance. I know they already can receive parish support, and the charity of my country has provided other funds for them, but the first of those is deservedly dishonourable, the other is dependant, and their support should be neither. There may be many people who will say it is impossible to do these things, they will be liable to a multitude of impositions. To them I can answer, if there was a certainty of their fears being realised, it cannot make the practice of justice on the part of my country less necessary, or less a virtue to punish those who impose upon you, but on that account do not unjustly punish all.

With these encouragements to voluntary service should our people be negligent in coming forward, the first departure from liberty should be to abridge the luxury of few, not take every blessing of existence from many.

The legislature should forbid any man, except for agricultural or manufactural purposes to keep more than two men servants; and they should prevent any man able to work from receiving parish support. From these things an abundance of men would be in idleness, who, rather than commit crimes or starve, would voluntarily serve their country. If after this, men were still wanted, pressing applied indiscriminately to every man in the nation might be just; till then, I shall never cease to think it alike unjust and unnecessary, as alike destructive of morality and freedom.

To the system of limited service, it will be objected, that our ships from changing their men will never be disciplined; and that we shall never have any good seamen; they will always be in the merchant service.

The first objection now frequently exists. By desertion and other causes ships have often been known to have nearly changed their whole companies in a twelve month; yet these ships have not been found undisciplined when the officers have been disposed to attend to their duties.

This objection will have less force when applied to limited and voluntary service, and one system of regulations throughout the fleet, than it has at present. But if we consider what discipline is intended to produce, it can have no force at all. The end of discipline is to conquer the enemies of our country. The will to do this, and the courage that can do it, already exists on the part of the people; and the only thing they want effectually to do it is simultaneous exertion, without which ships cannot be properly managed. This, (in opposition to a general opinion in the navy,) I say may be

learnt complete in six months. If a man is at liberty to think, and placed in situations requiring the exercise of this thought, and instructed by the example of others, he may be an excellent sailor in six months. With one system of regulations, a willing Briton will, with attention and direction on the part of his superiors, learn all the duties of a man of war's sailor, more perfectly to produce simultaneous exertion than they now do in that time. At present, men going on board ship, sulky and ignorant as possible (from the manner in which they are forced), if they are not far advanced in life, acquire all the knowledge that is wanted for an active sailor in that time. The principal things wanted in sailors are a will to work, a zeal that prompts to exertion, (it should be remembered that zeal is the legitimate offspring of hope alone), and a command of mind in a moment of danger; the two first will be the produce of a voluntary service and encouragement, the last will be most speedily acquired by thinking and practice; and a young mind soon acquired it: besides from the mode of suffering all seamen to be gradually discharged, from the encouragement we have mentioned for their remaining, there will always be a sufficiency of old seamen to encourage the young ones by their example to daily, as well as extraordinary duties. Officers, in judging of men's capabilities of learning these duties, will form their opinions from the existing character of the seamen, now when exposed to slavery, not what they will be, under a voluntary service and rational laws, when ardent hope shall bear down every difficulty before them.

Like what has been called the occult sciences, like any branch of knowledge confined to a particular set of men, our profession has been veiled in a cloud, and said to be difficult of acquisition; but when did the comprehensive minds exist, that planned, or taught the seamen their duties; they never have, there never was a branch of knowledge where less mind has been employed than at sea; and the difficulties of learning a sailor's duty cannot be many. We see, that in the present day, landmen are capable of contending for and acquiring victory at sea; our navy is at this time more than half manned with men who never went to sea in their youth, and they have not sacrificed the honour of their country. The French ship *Rivoli* contended five hours against (in point of quality) one of the best manned ships in our service, while her people were the most wretched heterogeneous collection of men ever met in a ship. Clear proofs, I apprehend, that landmen are capable of contending for victory, and in our service, of gaining it at sea; consequently though we permit our sailors to enter for a limited time, discipline will be in existence, and its ends be always accomplished. The first objection has, therefore, no force; and since these clever seamen, as they are called, are not so particularly wanted, and may be made in a few months, the second objection will not avail the advocates of injustice much.

In my opinion, the increase of pay, after years of service; the certainty of honourable provision in old age or misfortune; the liberty of leaving the service at the end of their time; the chance of prize money, and the love of praise, will be inducements enough for English seamen to prefer their country's, to the merchant service. There is great curiosity in every young man's bosom, which would have prompted many to go to sea in the merchants' service, had pressing never existed. That being abolished, many will go; a free competition being opened, merchants will naturally give the least possible quantity of money for which they can get sailors; and in the end, the wages of merchant ships will, I should expect, not exceed the wages in men of war. Therefore

neither of these objections ought to make us hesitate a moment to allow our seamen voluntary and limited service.

It has also been objected against the system of voluntary service, that the slow progress of enlistment could never man our fleets so rapidly as the fleets of our neighbours might be manned by that despotic power the governors of every other European country possess. That consequently our country might be exposed to danger, before we had power to defend ourselves; and that at the breaking out of a war suddenly commenced, our country would be certain to receive injury even unto *ruin*. To this objection, I reply, that there is no event in modern history which gives the slightest reason to suppose, that a war can be first thought of, and commenced in a day, by any power however despotic. To save appearances, negotiation is necessary, and preparations are essentially requisite. Our country and our commerce, unassailable but by sea, can only be attacked by ships. To fit fleets time is necessary; they cannot be made ready in a day or a week, and our rulers must be more ignorant or more negligent than I suppose them, if they are unacquainted, during a peace, with any naval preparations in any of the ports of Europe. It has been a custom constantly among the European nations, to remonstrate against any increased warlike preparations, and to enquire for what they are intended. Therefore the most despotic power could not assail us (to injure us) under the lapse of some weeks from the beginning of their preparations. Now with our existing naval superiority, we, at present, possess (of one kind or other) more men of war than the whole of the rest of Europe united. It will be a dreadful dereliction from public duty, for our governors ever to let this relative superiority decrease. Now from the extension of our commerce, we have also more merchant ships and more seamen than the whole of the remainder of the European world. I must grant, that from the barbarous injustice, the wretched policy, our country has adopted, two-thirds of the men who man our merchant ships are foreigners, solely because the existing cruelty of our naval laws prevents Englishmen becoming sailors; these men prevent the growth of so many Englishmen, and of course take from our country that exact same number of subjects bound to us by habit and the ties of affection, and their place is supplied by these men, who from habit and education are our enemies, who are tied to other soils by different affections. Yet after a peace of any continuance, supposing our commerce to preserve its present relative superiority, which I see no reason to doubt; these foreigners will be in their own country, and our ships will be manned with our countrymen. With this relative superiority of numbers, both in ships and men, let our rulers but come to the people with a just cause for war in their hands, let the government of our country but sanction a larger force being equipped, by providing the means of paying and provisioning them, let the proposed increase of pay take place, let our navy be rationally governed, let the same glory as now attach to its service, let our seamen be informed, that in a just cause, our country has need of their services, and there will be no want of an embargo to be ordered by the government to prevent our merchant vessels proceeding to sea, they would be universally forsaken. The lively energies of freedom and the love of fame will, in our ports, equip a fleet in half the time that any power in Europe could send one to sea. At the breaking out of war, there is the additional inducement of a chance of much prize money, and there is a vast deal of increased danger of being taken prisoner, by going to sea in a merchant vessel, that so far from wanting men at its commencement, (though we should entirely trust to the

slow progress of enlistment) we should see the plough forsook, the loom laid aside, and the merchant ships lying idle in our ports; for our people would crowd to defend that liberty of which they are so deservedly proud, to share the praise of society, and to grasp at the honours of war.

But what can be the amount of the evil stated in the objection, granting that an enemy's force might partly destroy our commerce before we were ready to defend it, that they might make an attempt and succeed in capturing some of our islands; and that they might even land in our country, and make partial depredations and commit some few atrocities; these, I apprehend, are the worst possible evils that can happen to trusting to our feelings, unassailed by force to man our ships. What is their amount?—A few deaths, a loss of a little money, while it must be balanced by national feelings smarting under injustice and eagerly asking vengeance, who would not wish such a frame of mind to commence a war with, for that will speedily conclude it? Can these evils be balanced against the existing miseries of pressing and coercion, the destruction of a wish to serve their country in our population, and the debasement of mankind, which is consequent upon terror being employed to compel men to do as their rulers wish them? They are but as feathers weighed against lead; but pressing will not remedy the evil imagined; it only makes men skulk, hide themselves away, and submit to every species of privation rather than serve their country; it would prevent, more than procure, men for the service, even at the commencement of a war.— But what is the objection that is made more than the vain speculations of an idle fear, the imagination of evils that can never arrive, but like all our bantlings, it gives pleasure as our own produce; we give more force to the suggestions of a vain imagination, than to the records of experience. When a nation can be pointed out to me, who when called upon by their governors, have refused promptly to support them in a just war, I may believe there may be a possibility of our people requiring to be pressed to defend their homes. Many instances can be produced of nations contending for slavery the most vile, simply because they had been long in the habit of submitting to it, and the blessings of freedom will have as much more power to incite us to defend it, as here is superior enjoyment in it.

But granting that this objection was real, and that pressing might temporarily remove it; I say, that pressing ought not to be adopted, for it is acknowledgedly unjust, it breaks through a principle that ought always to be held sacred, that no evil should be done, in expectation of good to come of it. For man may implicitly rely, from the known attributes of the Deity, from the well known laws of nature, good never ultimately came of committing evil, injustice never was of benefit to a country.

By a limited service, the strength of the only cause I can discover for the vices imputed to seamen, that arise solely from going to sea, will be considerably diminished. The prospect a young man may have then of again returning to his native spot with whatever he may save, will teach him economy, frugality, and care. The same prospect will prevent many early marriages, and send many young men to sea, whom the hopelessness of unlimited service, the injustice of pressing, and the cruelty in existence, precipitates into an early marriage, to have a stronger hold on those about him for protection. Limited service would spread the knowledge of ships through every part of the community, and the necessity there is for our national

preservation and national glory that we should have ships, would make us a nation of sailors.

The reasonable prospect sailors might then entertain of comfortably providing for a wife and family, and certain, under misfortunes, of leaving them to the care of a grateful nation, would entwine the love of their country with the strongest affections of their hearts; it would make them better citizens and excellent men: then in their old days telling the tales of their youth to their children or neighbours, they would inspire them to defend, as they had done, the honour and glory of old England. Alas! how different is it now. From the very sufferings they have themselves undergone, the cruelties they have been subject to, they must persuade all their connections, all their friends from ever entering the service; they must tell them to defend their country is bitterly painful, and they must feel, by their stripes, it is *dishonourable*. Here again, by the operation of this present system, the growth of a virtue essentially necessary to the well being of the state is effectually checked, if not entirely smothered; there can exist no greater evil.

The commencement of a peace in our country, has been generally marked by numerous crimes and atrocious murders; and nothing but a recapitulation of such things widely extended, can be anticipated at the commencement of another. From the character of our seamen being so much degraded by a mixture of foreigners and felons, from their every manly sentiment, indeed from their every thought being destroyed by the long continuance of existing injustice, the dreaded evils of a peace are truly alarming. Unhappiness, miseries, and crimes alone, can be expected to ensue from turning loose upon the community so large a body of men as our seamen, unprovided with the means of an immediate subsistence, and unconnected with society by any one affection, whose passions are undirected by any principles of morality, and who are suddenly deprived of that terror of their immediate superiors, which has long been their only motive for action. Were the evils that have always taken place at a peace, the pure result of long protracted war, were they the result of any other laws of nature, but those which expressly say no injustice of man shall pass without its merited reward; so miserable would be the lot of our country, that war, for ever continued, would be better than the justly dreaded evils of a peace, that would at once disband our seamen. As the injustice that is done, then, is the main cause of this destruction of their affections and degradation of their characters — the justice of a limited and voluntary service, can alone preserve the one and exalt the other. With a voluntary service, naval laws approximating to the institutions of our country, the sailors will become habituated to the same motives for action as the remainder of our people, they will be connected with society by their best and dearest interests, and they will learn to live on shore in peace and good order; then, and not till then, will a peace promote either the happiness or security of our country.

With a limited and voluntary service, we shall no more hear of men amputating their own limbs to avoid defending their country; we shall no more witness them jumping overboard and preferring death to the slavery and misery of the navy. Naval officers will no longer be annoyed with men totally deaf without a cause; with others whose rheumatisms incapacitate them from exertions; and with impostures too numerous to

describe, too disgusting to think about; and if to be happy is the legitimate end of all our exertions, they are not enough criminal to deserve censure.

Perhaps, no more ready and efficacious mode of spreading knowledge among the lowest classes of the Irish could be adopted than to permit the sailors and soldiers of that part of the community again to reside in their native spots. With a limited service and a just discipline, they would learn to imbibe our ideas as well as share our glory, to which they have so materially contributed.

They certainly have much to learn of us yet, and, encouraged to learn by the hope of benefit, instead of being repelled by terror, they would spread a love of the other parts of the community, which they could not fail to imbibe from intimately mixing with them; we should then, much sooner than there is now a prospect of, become one people, from a consolidation of opinions, an equality of rights, and a greater similarity of manners.

With a limited and voluntary service, as there would be no fear of desertion, a certain portion of the men, not less than one-eighth, should daily be permitted to go on shore; and the sanction of so great an authority as a captain's, whom the sailors should, at all times, be accustomed to respect, if not to revere, should not, by permitting so great a vice as promiscuous intercourse, which religion teaches us to avoid, be set up in opposition to the early principles of instruction. We may, with propriety, deplore the depravity of opinion that leads to its commission; and though we cannot subdue it by penal enactments, it is surely highly wrong to encourage it with the countenance of authority.

It is curious to observe to what despotism is obliged to have recourse, even when aided by all its terrors, to keep up obedience. The injustice of tearing men away from their homes, and constantly confining them on board ship, has made it necessary to flatter them into obedience, by encouraging their vices; hence the permission given to drunkenness; hence the sanction of promiscuous intercourse. Surely, no man who reasons can approve these things, but, like the other evils of the system, they have resulted from unmanly fear.

With a voluntary service, we shall not go to war with America about pressing seamen; we shall have so many, that we may, without a sentiment of regret, resign every thing like the right of search for them; indeed, from the high reputation of our fleet, it wants but a rational system of government to seduce, if we pleased to accept, the services of all the seamen of the civilized world.

Another effect of the voluntary service will be preventing wars. Public opinion of their necessity must always precede their being entered into; and, I trust, we shall never again be plunged in all their calamities from an imaginary right of a few merchants, the birth of avarice, or from a suppositious possession of a spot of ground not worth a day's labour of the meanest workman. Respected in peace, from being known to possess the dreadful energies of liberty in war, if our country gets through the present arduous contest, she will long remain the rallying point for every thing that is virtuous and honourable among men, till the value of liberty being stamped

upon every man's bosom, opinion shall triumph over fear, and mankind no longer submit to the terror of a military despotism.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

CHAP. XIII.

Conclusion.

That the foregoing alterations may be completely efficacious, it is absolutely necessary they should be known to the people, not simply by chance from the newspapers, but told them from authority; not whispered in alleys and corners, but declared in the public markets and the squares. We are ready enough at making executions public, why not also recompenses; why repress from vice by terror, and not stimulate to virtue by hope? Pressing has long been forced upon the attention of the people; let them now be told of voluntary service; they have long known of the cruelties and flogging that exist in the navy, let them now be made acquainted with its honours; let them be clearly informed that there are such places as Greenwich, and such things as a patriotic fund; let the wages of the seamen, and the rewards which may await them, be explicitly shewn to them, and they will want no stimulus from terror, no dragging by force, to man our ships.

And, to make all these things known to the people, what place more frequented than the church, what authority so sacred as religion; it has often been prostituted to party purposes, has often excited animosity, and prevented the spirit of toleration, let it now be applied to a national object; let it encourage so useful a virtue as voluntarily to defend our country. Of what use is our enormous church establishment, if it cannot be made subservient to the best interests of the state; if it cannot induce so moral a duty in the people, and one to which they are so prone, as to fight in our country's just cause? To recruit, by the eloquence of our clergy, our army and navy cannot be disgraceful; for it is but encouraging to practice a holy duty. The time certainly has been when it might have been doubtful, whether fighting in what was called our country's cause was a moral duty or not, since the effects of victory were but to ensure a continuance of oppression. The nature of the present contest brings the truth home to every man; it is not whether our flag, or the flag of another nation, shall fly on this or that useless, and, till now, unheard of spot of land; it is not whether the avarice of a few of our merchants shall be gratified or not; it is whether we shall any longer exist as a nation; whether our altars shall be polluted; our wives, sisters, and children, dishonoured; or whether they shall remain pure, to bless us with the smiles of chastity and love; it is whether it is right to resist the unlimited ambition of a man, who, possessing greater means than the world ever before saw at one person's implicit command, seeks, in our destruction, for ever to put an end to that morality and virtue which reproach him with his crimes, and for ever to cover the world with the gloom of military despotism.

If to defend our country is not a moral duty, why have our rulers so long had a power to compel its performance?

But there cannot be any doubt that it is a moral duty of primary importance from its effects, and may, therefore, be very properly made an object of tuition, by the

ministers of that religion, whose end is to fit us for a better life, by teaching us our duties here.

This duty is not the dogma of a sect or a party; it is not a division of syllables, that can set man in array against his brother; or a dispute upon a doubtful point, beyond the cognizance of men's senses. With one exception, its importance is allowed by all, and all would make it an object of their instruction. The willingness of the ministers of the Catholic religion to exhort their congregations to defend their country might be a just test of what confidence may be reposed in them; and I should think, there is scarcely one of them who would not be as willing to encourage his flock to serve in the army or navy, as to exhort them to their regular attendance at mass.

From the increased liberty and additional security these alterations would give the people, the dissenting ministers would be as equally willing to make them an occasional object of their discourses; for theirs is peculiarly the religion which teaches mankind the love of civil liberty; that, in the sacred temple of the Almighty, places every Christian on an equality, and permits no nonsensical ceremonies to interpose as agents between man and his Maker, but brings him immediately and intimately acquainted with Him, and teaches him His laws as rules for his actions.

If these dissenting ministers were requested, in a manner that bespoke confidence in them, to communicate these alterations to their respective congregations, they would do it cheerfully and willingly. The ministers of the established church might have it suggested to their attention in a like manner; and there appears no other way more readily to communicate, with a proper authority, every sort of information to the people. Thus to influence their opinions, and through them compel their actions, and while nothing but justice was wanted, or nothing but morality supported; while truth alone was made an object of their discourses, I do not see what possible objection can be made to this mode of disseminating a knowledge of every institution of our country.

Justice to the character of our countrymen at large (materially injured by the long continuance of the system of pressing and coercion) and to the insulted seamen in particular, imperiously requires, that, in making these alterations public, a public disavowal should also be made of those principles that have hitherto been employed to make us defend our country.

The legislature should stigmatize, as unjust, those abuses of authority that have been made use of to produce virtues in us that are the natural growth of our soil and our hearts—that we learnt in infancy from our mothers, and from which the name of a Briton cannot be separated. An acknowledgment of better principles, of the confidence our rulers ought to place in us, and that we, as a nation, so righteously deserve, will teach us to think well of ourselves, and infallibly produce every wanted virtue. And now is the time for the alterations and improvements, when a man, educated like myself, in all the prejudices of naval discipline, can discover so many of its manifold imperfections; now is the time, when knowledge, by its universal diffusion among our countrymen, has taught them the value and necessity of a limited obedience, and the morality there is in a proper and just resistance to principles and

powers which tend to destroy the liberty, the happiness, and the moral agency of man, whether these powers are in the possession of a Bonaparte, or a superior in our own country; now is the time when our navy, exalted to pre-eminence on the ruins of every other, by the superiority of our national character, may be safely trusted to its future guidance for continual victory; now too, when habits of obedience and cleanliness are established; when that order that promotes health and gives unity of action, which is most perfectly promoted by unity of opinion, is known by every individual, whether sailor or not, to be essential to success, now should be the time for doing justice, when experience is clearly proving to every individual of common reflection, that despotism is alike destructive of the strength that can wield arms, and of the intelligent mind that can direct them.

When the present awful history of the world is forcibly elucidating the opinion, that the political injustice of its governors is as sure to meet with its appropriate reward as the moral injustice of individuals; now, when the professed object of all our endeavours is to repress the injustice of others, should be the time for doing justice at home; now, when the very knowledge of our contending against the most barbarous injuries has made every Briton more fervently aspirate,—a wish to defend his country; when the righteousness of our cause has given birth to an enthusiastic love for their country in all ranks; when it has produced a moral feeling in the nation, whose effects were clearly displayed at Corunna, at Barrosa, and at Salamanca, is the time for doing justice to our seamen.

Never had a nation, since the defence of Greece against the Persians, such a cause as ours; and since it has had its proper effect upon the minds of a free people, never was so fit an occasion for our governors to repose in us unlimited confidence.

There is a thing, miscalled an axiom, which, possessing all the authority of long established opinion, has become a guide to the actions of men without an enquiry into its truth or falsehood. It is told us at school; it is in every old woman's mouth; it is applied to every drunken sailor that is seen in the streets, and before we are men it is more firmly believed than the existence of a Deity. This thing will be conjured up, with other authorities, to oppose giving a rational system of law and justice to seamen.

It is that "licentiousness is the alloy of liberty;" but does experience prove this; are the British more immoral than the Turks; are they more so than the Spaniards, the Portuguese, and the French, yet they are infinitely more free than them all; were the Greeks not the most virtuous of ancient nations, and were they not the most free? This is one of those principles that has come down to us, encircled by eloquence that has so much pleased, that we have failed to examine it; it has been received as implicitly true, and, on all occasions, swayed our opinions, while the sublime morality of the gospel, from being couched in humbler language, has been subjected to a thousand cavils and disputes, (which has fortunately only the more convinced us of its value,) and been rejected with scorn as a guide for the actions of great men.

It is forgotten, that, in the present time, when a man is set free from the restraint of human laws, whose effects are transient, whose objects are local, whose principles, at best, can be calculated but for one generation, and are often contradictory, uncertain,

and absurd, that he has the two principles of fearing God and loving his neighbour to guide and influence every action; and their effects are eternal, immutable, and clear; their punishments are greater and more certain; and their rewards more enticing than any human laws or human beings can bestow; and to these two principles, taught in early life, and supported afterwards by praise, might mankind be safely entrusted to become every thing an enlightened ruler could wish.

These two principles would teach our rulers the morality and rewards of justice; and experience will teach them, that if the end of policy is the good of the country, justice is as political as it is moral. I think, to those who believe in a moral energy of character as a supreme national good, I have clearly proved, that to do justice to seamen will be the most enlightened policy, and the return to its paths cannot be too speedy; for a continuance of error and oppression does not bring forth quiet appeals to reason, but tumultuary demands of fear; does not occasion peaceable reformation, but lawless revolution.

That our rulers may turn to the history of mankind, and be convinced of this truth from experience; that our people, while they quietly practise lawful obedience, may never cease legally to resist oppression, is what I shall ever earnestly pray for, and ever try to effect.

the end.

[?]The number of men is stated from memory, as not thinking, at that time, it would ever become a duty to state it, and reason upon it to the public; and not being a spy upon any man's actions, I made no notes of the affair, however I might think it cruel; neither do I remember the amount of the lashes, but I am certain they were not less than one dozen each man.

[*]I beg leave to be understood as not alluding to any particular board of admiralty, but that it is a general effect of interest on every conscience.

[*]I believe some people may be found who will support the system of terror by saying, that an officer always good natured, who bestows his smiles on all occasions, will have no stimulus to rouse men to exertions when required. I do not envy such a calculator, but he should remember, no kind of stimulus is wanted for the ordinary occasions of life; and to prostitute it at such times, whether praise or anything else is bestowing, the rewards of exertion upon indifference.

[*]This occurred to Captain Conway Shipley (while commanding the Hippomenes). In his early death the country and his friends suffered a severe loss: he was a man who only wanted to be known, to be loved, admired, and imitated; as genuinely pious as he was brave; he was as honourable and humane as he was ardently courageous. From such principles, with a mind highly informed, every action was noble; combining all the manly improvements of modern times, with the gallantry of ancient chivalry, it may truly be said of him, that, like the Chevalier Bayard, "he was a captain without fear and without reproach." To weep for him now would be fruitless; to follow his example meritorious.

[*]The foreigners sent in the prize of the Diana and Semiramis, who in 1811 murdered their officers; a boat's crew of foreigners who did the same at Cadiz about the same time; and the late instance of the ship Adventure, may serve as examples.

[*]Upon the appointment of Captain Corbett to the Africaine, and prior to her going abroad, the ship's company wrote to the admiralty requesting to have their captain changed, so well established was his reputation; offering, if Captain Raggett was returned to the ship, their services in any climate, or to serve a twelvemonth without pay. So great was their love for their country; so great was their hatred of tyranny.

[*]It is not meant that the country should not, in a public manner, reward signal services in the seamen by this promotion; indeed, I think they should, but when they do it, they should tell it officially to all the nation. There now exists a custom in the navy of captains and admirals promoting favourite quarter-masters and coxwains to the rank of midshipmen and lieutenants; it is this which should be utterly forbid, as the reward is not bestowed for services that benefit the country, but some that have gratified the individual; neither are these rewards made public, they consequently excite no diligence nor produce any emulation.