

**AMERICAN NAVIGATION, WITH
SOME ACCOUNT OF THE CAUSES
OF ITS RECENT DECAY, AND OF
THE MEANS BY WHICH ITS
PROSPERITY MAY BY RESTORED**

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American Navigation, with Some Account of the Causes of Its Recent Decay, and of the Means by Which Its Prosperity May be Restored by Henry Hall

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AMERICAN NAVIGATION,

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF

*THE CAUSES OF ITS RECENT DECAY, AND
OF THE MEANS BY WHICH ITS PROS-
PERITY MAY BE RESTORED.*

BY
HENRY HALL.

"I am for ruling America for the benefit, first, of Americans, and the rest of mankind afterward."—Mr. MORRILL, of Vermont.

REVISED AND ENLARGED.

NEW YORK:
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PREFACE.

THE object of this pamphlet is to set forth the causes of the decline of American shipping, and the arguments pro and con on the subject of free ships, subsidies, and the propriety of maintaining the Navigation Laws of the United States. A first edition of this dissertation, printed last winter, was received with some encouragement. The author ventures to put the pamphlet forth again, in a revised and enlarged form, in the hope that it may assist those who wish for information on this interesting current topic, to form an opinion on the merits of the questions at issue.

The original purpose was to show why American ships are not employed to a large extent in the immense foreign trade of this country, and to indicate what might be done to effect a change for the better. Two or three years ago, the topic which most engaged attention was the causes which had led almost to the extinction of the great fleet of beautiful clipper ships and swift ocean-steamers, which, in 1857, had become the pride of our country and the admiration of the whole maritime world. The public were then first beginning to be painfully aware of the growing ascendancy of foreign shipping in the trade of all our harbors, and of the fact that the export trade in American manufactures was shackled by the lack of American steamers plying direct to certain coasts with which the United States ought to have a large commerce. The first question which arose in all minds was, naturally, how did this decay of American shipping in the ocean commerce come about. There were almost as many opinions on the point as there were men to utter them. Views differed according to the interests of the several authorities and the amount of pains each one took to investigate

the subject. The first edition of this pamphlet was printed as a contribution to that discussion; and, as it was intended not so much for ship-owners and ship-builders as for practical business men, merchants, manufacturers, farmers, and others, whose welfare is linked with the welfare of the merchant marine, but who seldom pay any attention to the causes affecting maritime activity, some of the more elemental facts involved in the subject were set forth for their information.

The scope of the discussion has latterly been extended somewhat. It is now seriously proposed in Congress to repeal the Navigation Laws of the United States, and to bring down upon vessel-owners in the Mississippi river valley, on the northern lakes, and in the coasting trade, the fury of competition with a multitude of hungry foreign vessels, now out of employment, and eager to get admittance to our rivers, lakes, and coasts, as well as to subject our builders from Maine to Alaska to the competition of foreign builders. "Free ships" is the cry. Concurrently, the policy of establishing American steamship lines to foreign countries by mail contracts is more vigorously opposed than ever, while, on the other hand, the friends of American shipping are now advocating a general government policy in favor of mail contracts to all the lines which it may be expedient to establish. In view of the enlarged scope of the discussion, a chapter has been added to this edition, presenting the arguments on the question of Free Ships and Subsidies.

The whole subject of the state of our shipping interest is discussed here in the light of foreign policy. No correct explanation of our former prosperity or recent decay can be given except by so doing. No intelligent action can be taken for the future benefit of our navigation except by understanding what other nations have done and are willing to do in competition with us. There has been too much indifference for the last thirty years in regard to foreign policy. We have suffered from it, but paid no attention to it. The time has come for a change. We need now to study foreign policy attentively, and must do so before even undertaking to decide what policy we shall adopt for ourselves.

This pamphlet advocates a protective policy in regard to our

shipping. It claims that the United States has reached a point in its history when the opportunity is placed before it to embark in the navigation of the Atlantic and Pacific on a large scale, and that the Government should actively aid the people by mail contracts to steamship lines and otherwise, to take advantage of the situation. Prompt action is needed, lest a great opportunity may be lost. It also proposes that there shall be a general investigation of the whole subject of American navigation, trade, and manufacture, in order to place before Congress the facts upon which an intelligent and aggressive policy can alone be founded.

In the words of General Key, in a recent speech in the West, "The time has come when our farmers and business men must take interest in these questions, if the fountains of our prosperity are not to be dried up."

HENRY HALL.

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AMERICAN NAVIGATION.

I.

THE SITUATION.

THE United States now makes to the ocean-carrying trade of the world its most valuable contribution. No other nation gives to commerce so many tons of bulky commodities which have to be carried such long distances across the sea. The extent of our commerce, in tons of articles carried (2,240 pounds to the ton), is as follows: ¹

EXPORTS.

YEARS ENDING JUNE 30th.	Ag. Produce.	Oils.	Provisions.	Manufactures.	Metals, etc.	Total.
1869	1,403,442	455,357	104,794	193,005	313,253	2,469,171
1870	2,199,077	588,491	116,525	178,200	962,581	3,074,774
1871	2,554,065	651,289	130,961	204,419	477,960	3,038,332
1872	2,652,118	565,499	247,715	277,589	627,298	4,569,400
1873	3,012,267	504,687	434,030	291,849	723,562	5,045,715
1874	3,859,854	1,114,521	411,600	259,779	926,846	7,272,480
1875	3,691,202	989,000	368,511	268,406	707,505	5,925,622
1876	4,407,007	1,038,159	371,039	304,247	751,259	6,918,264
1877	4,852,849	1,206,628	533,959	322,500	904,769	7,721,700
1878	6,003,156	1,549,390	699,150	317,900	758,620	9,618,540
1879	7,992,380	1,604,600	669,430	190,600	747,500	11,149,160

IMPORTS.

YEARS ENDING JUNE 30th.	Ag. Produce.	Manufactures.	Metals and Minerals.	Chemicals.	Miscellaneous.	Total.
1869	1,232,126	617,598	1,000,000	170,736	65,427	3,452,126
1870	1,929,670	738,961	1,200,161	161,910	64,088	3,452,460
1871	1,302,217	692,773	1,000,465	175,968	149,645	4,020,463
1872	1,537,050	660,260	1,000,000	138,599	190,000	4,425,809
1873	1,818,006	906,429	1,000,000	240,297	112,791	4,608,968
1874	1,729,410	759,917	1,000,000	217,751	64,096	4,018,014
1875	1,735,467	635,969	1,000,000	216,228	65,759	3,703,297
1876	1,777,170	605,429	1,000,000	183,768	181,467	3,543,201
1877	1,735,066	602,154	1,000,000	202,433	127,046	3,663,204
1878	1,756,860	567,800	1,000,000	220,880	261,900	3,792,500
1879	1,944,900	574,770	1,000,000	252,080	111,500	3,782,550

¹ These figures, if not exact, are at least a very close approximation, obtained by a condensation from the tables of the Bureau of Statistics.

These goods are exchanged with continents and lands lying from 3,000 to 5,000 miles distant and farther. Our commerce is, therefore, carried on by means of the long voyages which in every age have been eagerly coveted by a maritime people, and which are productive of employment to the greatest tonnage of shipping. The value of the goods entering into our commerce by sea amounted in 1877 to \$1,173,000,000, of which \$694,000,000 were exports and \$479,000,000 were imports. Twenty-five years ago this commerce amounted to less than \$500,000,000.

Twenty-five years ago American shipping was almost supreme in our commerce. In 1851 \$316,000,000 of the exports and imports were carried by vessels belonging to this country and built upon its shores, against \$117,000,000 carried under foreign flags. The most valuable freights were secured by American ships; and they got better pay for their services in competition with foreign vessels. To-day American ships actually carry less than they did in 1851, or in any year thereafter until the war broke out, 1852 alone excepted. Yet commerce by sea has more than doubled. In 1877 American ships carried \$315,000,000 of the imports and exports by sea. Foreign ships carried \$858,000,000, over seven times as much as in 1851.

If the larger proportion of this commerce consisted in the importation of articles of foreign growth and manufacture, it would not be strange to find foreign ships enjoying the larger share of the business. The ships of other lands would naturally have the preference in their own ports for the exportation of goods to the United States. The remarkable fact is, that the larger proportion of the goods go from our own shores. This is shown both by the above table and by the record of the custom-houses along the coast. Of the 17,000 ships which enter and clear at our ocean-ports every year, 4,600 enter port empty, seeking a cargo, and only 2,000 sail from port without a cargo.

In New York Harbor 800 vessels and more constantly lie at the piers or at anchor in the bay, taking on or discharging cargo. There are one hundred departures a week for foreign lands. Yet it often happens that a fortnight passes without a single ship with an American flag at the peak clearing from the port for the British Isles, with which the largest commerce of New York is transacted. At the same time an average of twenty-five foreign vessels clear from the same port every week in that trade.

For the last fifteen years a sum of money has been paid by the United States to foreign ship-owners for the transportation of mails, passengers, and goods, which cannot in any one year have been less than \$20,000,000. It now amounts to \$50,000,000 a year. Practical shipping-men have estimated it as high as \$75,000,000 a year. It is \$50,000,000 at least. As far as freight is concerned, this refers to the