

Mr. J. L. Coster.
20th July, 1882.

57. Are they before the mast?—They do before the mast work, but they are berthed in a place by themselves. They are under the special supervision of the officers, and are never allowed in the fore-castle.

58. Do you remember the number of boys on the vessel in the Clyde?—There were about 300. Small boys up to good-sized.

59. What was the nature of the instruction?—There was school and the boys were taught navigation. There was also boat exercise. As I have already stated, the boys were taught practical seamanship, and cruise about in a schooner attached to the training-ship.

60. What is the number of seamen in the employ of your company altogether?—I should think there would be about 600, but I speak roughly.

61. *Mr. W. J. Hurst.*] You have spoken about apprentices, and you say that your books are full of applications of that description?—We have many applications. We call the lads apprentices.

62. Do you ever receive premiums with these lads?—No.

63. Some firms ask for premiums I know. You take these lads to teach them the business of seafaring?—Yes; we commenced by charging a premium, and it was a fair thing to do, no doubt, on account of the heavy expense the Company was put to. Among the applicants, however, were so many parents who could not afford to pay a premium, that we decided to charge none at all rather than make fish of one and fowl of another.

64. We propose to teach the boys navigation and the art of seafaring so far as it can be done. Suppose we had a hundred of these boys. You say the difficulty lies in your having to ship your crews in England. Do you not frequently lose hands here that you would be thankful to replace?—We often have to ship five or six hands here.

65. Will it not be an advantage to you to have a trained class here?—Distinctly so. Under those circumstances our masters would prefer to take these hands rather than be compelled to pick up what they were able to find. If it came to that we might direct them to ship these young men.

66. Would you possibly conceive it to be your interest to ship hands here instead of at home if you could get a good supply?—We might, but the whole difficulty arises here, not only with regard to the responsibility, but owing to the long time vessels lie at London.

67. I do not want to saddle you with any responsibility at Home, but will it not be desirable to have a class of lads of this kind living on board the vessels?—No; we clear all hands out of our vessels at London.

68. You would have them paid off here if this class were employed?—Ships sometimes have to lay a long time at London. It would not pay us to keep a crew on wages for three or four months.

69. How many vessels does the Company own?—Seventeen.

70. What is the average number of the crew?—About thirty or forty on the average, that is exclusive of the apprentices to whom I have already referred, of course I am speaking roughly. A good many of these vessels are passenger ships under the Act, and have to carry a stronger crew.

71. *Mr. Daniel.*] Do you not consider a young man of eighteen competent to go as an able seaman?—I do not as an A.B., but as an O.S., yes.

72. Do you think a young man trained on one of these vessels, and who has never been to sea, is competent to ship as an ordinary seaman?—I do not, think such a training would be so satisfactory or perfect as if the man had been to sea cruising about and helping to work a vessel. Hauling ropes on board a hulk in still water, is very different from working a vessel at sea.

73. Will it not be an advantage to the captain of a ship to have lads trained up under his own care, even if he has to look after them in London?—I have already explained that we carry four apprentices in each of our vessels, and have a special home for them when they arrive at London.

74. As regards cadets. Do not those who have shares in the Company send their sons on board as apprentices without payment?—We have payment from no one.

75. I was given to understand that this was not the case?—That is not a fact, as I think Mr. Macandrew can tell you.

76. *Mr. Macandrew.*] Mr. Coster was good enough to ship a lad on my recommendation without any premium. Directly there was an opening for Captain Stevens' son, one was given to him.

77. *Mr. Daniel.*] I am told that a lad could not go on board one of the Company's vessels unless he paid a premium?—Nothing of the kind. As I have already explained, that was done at first, but as there were so many parents who were unable to pay the premium, it was decided to do away with it.

78. Have you considered that if you take these young men with homes in New Zealand you need not be so frightened of their running away as if you had taken them from other parts of the world. In London you will have to take all kinds. Some will ship there merely to get to the colony. You will sometimes scarcely find a man in one of your ships who is not a foreigner?—I think there will be large employment for the youths you refer to on the coast of New Zealand, where there is a very large mercantile marine growing up.

79. *Mr. Macandrew.*] I think we have all put a great many irrelevant questions to the witness. I think, however, that we can gather this much. There is an opening for the extensive employment of seamen if we can provide them?—There is a very large field, as there are so many colonial vessels.

80. *Mr. Swanson.*] Are these boys of eighteen supposed to be competent. Suppose the master went over the side, what experience would one of these lads have?—I think I have already expressed an opinion that I do not think training of a simple kind on board a ship moored in a harbor would properly qualify a lad for the sea. I am of opinion that he should cruise about as well.

81. Suppose a vessel were going ashore. Would one of these young men know what to do?—In such cases we look to the officers to direct the men.

82. They would be useful men, but would have to be told?—Yes.

83. If a vessel were losing its rudder at sea, what would one of these lads brought up on a training ship know about it except what was told him?—No doubt a real seaman's training is a great gain at sea.

84. Suppose the case of the topsail and mainsail being blown out of the bolt ropes, would one of