

A DISPASSIONATE INQUIRY

Into the reasons alleged by Mr. Madison for declaring an offensive and ruinous War against Great-Britain; together with some suggestions as to a peaceable and constitutional mode of averting that dreadful calamity.

BY A NEW-ENGLAND FARMER.

I have been in my early days honored by my fellow citizens with the office of a representative in the legislature of my native State, a State dear to me by early associations, by having been the place of my nativity, by containing the ashes of my revered ancestors through six successive generations, by possessing within its bosom all the fruits of my own and their industry, and upon the prosperity of which State my children, yet in their infancy, depend for their hopes of future success. These solemn considerations have created an attachment to it, which neither the frowns of men in power, nor the temporary, and I hope remediable misfortunes, into which our rulers are about to plunge it, can essentially weaken or impair. The oath administered to me in my capacity of a legislator, was, "that the State of Massachusetts is, and of right ought to be, a free, sovereign, and independent State"—and this solemn oath, taken before an assembled people, and in the presence of the Supreme Being, I consider a sacred pledge that I will defend, uphold, and maintain the rights and interests of this State against all hostile attempts whatsoever. To me, it is a matter of indifference, whether the attack upon these rights proceeds directly and openly from the great usurper and common enemy of all civilized States, or whether the same be made through the partiality or the mistakes of the men whom a majority of our citizens have unfortunately elevated to ill-deserved power.

It is my object in the following remarks to shew, that whether the influence of France directly or indirectly applied, or whether the mistaken policy of our administration, without such influence, has occasioned our difficulties, the measures lately adopted by a small majority of our national rulers are not only without reasonable justification, and destructive of our best interests and dearest rights, but are a misapplication of the powers entrusted to them; and therefore it belongs to us, the people, to decide whether such measures deserve our approbation and support, or whether they will justify us in a temperate but firm and decided opposition—Whether, in short, the evils, which are certain and inevitable from a support of the present policy, are not infinitely greater in extent than any which we could possibly incur by a constitutional and resolute resistance. Let not the timid be alarmed at the outset, by the idea of open resistance, of insurrection, of unjustifiable opposition. I contemplate no such measures. I have in view only those constitutional principles which the usages of our ancestors, both in Great-Britain and in this country, and their successful example, have sanctioned. I ask only for the application of the principles of Mr. Locke, and for the imitation of the example of those great men who have gone before us, in cases of smaller pressure, and of less importance to the vital interests of their country.

Having made these general observations, I shall state the particular order of my remarks which will be,

First, a candid examination of Mr. Madison's manifesto to Congress, which impelled that body reluctantly to the declaration of an offensive war against Great-Britain.

Under this head, I shall consider the various allegations of Mr. Madison against Great-Britain, and I shall shew, that the charges are greatly exaggerated, and that they might all of them, without exception, have been healed and adjusted, if the administration of our country had been disposed so to do—that these causes of complaint have not only been suffered to fester and spread, but that they have been irritated in compliance or at least in conformity with the expectations and wishes of France.

Secondly, I shall consider the expediency of the war, both upon the supposition of its being successful and unsuccessful.

Thirdly, I shall contend, that if the administration have contemplated a war against Great-Britain, for several months past, (and no new cause of irritation exists against her which has not existed for five years) it was their solemn duty to have made preparations for it, by providing an adequate marine force in order to protect our commerce now exposed without relief to the depredations of our powerful enemy—by permitting the return, and facilitating by every means the restoration to our country of all the property of our citizens abroad,—by warning the merchants of the intentions of the government, and thus preventing the enormous sacrifices which will inevitably be made in consequence of their ignorance of such secret hostile intentions and purposes.

Fourthly, I shall shew that in a war, offensively and unjustly undertaken, the subject is not only not bound to engage, but that it is his duty to abstain from taking a part in it.

Lastly, I shall point out the legal and constitutional remedy to which the citizens may and ought to resort in this calamitous case of misconduct in a small majority of their rulers.

When I first read the manifesto of the President against Great-Britain, I confess that it was difficult for me to decide which feeling was most predominant in my mind, mortification or indignation. Mortification, that our nation should be disgraced in the eyes of the whole world and of posterity by such a tissue of exaggerations—and indignation, that artifices of this sort should be resorted to in order to deceive and irritate the people, and to drive them into a ruinous war of an

offensive nature, and (what is still more to be feared) into an alliance with France, which is more dreadful than a century of war. I was astonished at Mr. Madison's boldness and his contempt of the understandings and information of the people, in thus daring to make a discolored and extravagant representation of events and circumstances which have so recently passed under the eyes of the whole nation. I was indeed prepared to expect almost any thing from this author of the crusade against England—his proclamation, declaring to the people that the French Berlin and Milan decrees were revoked on the 1st of November, 1810, when he knew that France had never even promised to revoke them until we should "cause our rights to be respected," that is, as Mr. Madison has since construed it, declare war against Great-Britain, had opened my eyes in some measure as to his character—I had lost much of my respect for his political veracity, and of my confidence in his public assertions—His message with respect to the pretended discovery of Henry confirmed my suspicions.

Instead of honorably acquitting the citizens of Boston, as he ought to have done, of any participation in Henry's views or designs, he boldly asserts, that "Henry was employed in intrigues with disaffected citizens in the United States, having for their object a subversion of our Government, and a dismemberment of the Union."

Now he well knew at the time he penned that sentence, (and he has since repeated the same sentence in the manifesto) that Henry expressly declared that he never opened the subject of his mission to any citizen of the United States.

A man capable of so insidious and unfounded an aspersion on the citizens of his own country, on men who will not yield to him in patriotism or spirit, might well be expected to be little scrupulous about the terms he might use towards a foreign nation, especially when those terms of reproach fall in with the passions of the ignorant part of his supporters, whom it has been the business of their leaders to inflame and to deceive.

The partiality displayed in this manifesto—the black and bloody representation which is therein made of the conduct of Great-Britain, precisely adapted to gratify the malice of her deadly enemy and the enemy of all free states—and the brief, mild, and apologetic style with respect to the wrongs of France, bring to my recollection many events in the history of Mr. Madison's public conduct, which combine to produce a strong apprehension in my mind that he habitually inclines to the views and interests of France more than becomes the magistrate of a free and independent state. I shall hereafter shew, that his last act of plunging us into the present war, is altogether for the benefit of France in fact, though it may not be in intention—that we can in no possible event be gainers by it, but that it is a sacrifice of our commerce, our agriculture, our money, and our lives, for no other good than to make a diversion of the British forces favorable to France, (and perhaps some men look farther, to the subjugation of their own country) and in that light it ought to be considered one of the most alarming attempts ever yet made against whatever little there is left of liberty, virtue, and religion in the world.

If I succeed in shewing this, if I satisfy every reasonable man that this war of Mr. Madison is in effect a French war, and not an American one, that it is undertaken for French interests, and in conformity with repeated French orders, and at the sacrifice of our own best interests, and probably of our liberties, we shall have no very great difficulty in condemning it. I shall state nothing but what I have learned from unquestionable authority, nothing which I cannot support by indisputable proof.

Mr. Madison early in life became a member of the revolutionary Congress. That body was then divided into two parties—the French party, of which Mr. Madison was a leading man, who were in favor of bending all the efforts and energies of the country to promote the views of the French cabinet, which the French government in 1793 declared to have been "the fruit of a base speculation, and that our glory at that time offended the ambitious designs of France." The other party was truly American, seeking only the establishment of our national independence and prosperity; at the head of this American party were the members from New-England. Mr. Madison was one of the party who proposed and carried the instructions to our ministers abroad not to make any peace without the consent and concurrence of France. He was also one of those who opposed the treaty of peace made by Mr. Jay and Mr. Adams, and who, in compliance with the wishes of France, attempted a censure upon those ministers for having dared to negotiate a most advantageous and honorable treaty without the concurrence or consent of the French cabinet. Such were Mr. Madison's early predilections; such was the promise which he presented for his future policy. After the establishment of the present constitution, Mr. Madison again came into the councils of our nation. We there again find him true to his first opinions, and resolutely bent to promote the measures which favored the views and interests of France. In 1794, he was one of those who strenuously opposed General Washington's pacific mission to Great-Britain; he was in favor, as he is now, of direct hostility with that kingdom, in favor of the sequestration of British property, and opposed to every measure which could heal the breach between the two countries.

In the same year he brought forward his famous resolutions against Great-Britain, the whole scope and object of which were to make a warfare on British commerce, and to please the revolutionary rulers of France. They were in their character precisely like Bonaparte's system, and like the corresponding, co-operating measures of embargo and non-intercourse, so

ineffectually yet so ruinously attempted by Mr. Jefferson and himself in later periods of our history. It was Mr. Madison who wrote the pamphlet against the author of "War in Disguise," in which he arraigned with great severity the British doctrine as to the colonial trade. Yet we have seen this same man, within three years after, apologize for the French decrees as merely municipal regulations, of which the United States, he says, have no right to complain, although these decrees cut up by the roots that very colonial trade, for which, while Great-Britain was concerned, he had been so strenuous and warm an advocate. This gentleman, so scrimonious against Great-Britain for modifying the manner in which we should carry the produce of French colonies to the parent country, who represented it as of vital importance to the United States—at a subsequent period when France not only saw fit to cut off all this carrying trade to her own country, but to march her armies into Holland, Italy, Hamburg, Denmark, Prussia, Spain and Portugal, for the purpose of destroying our legitimate trade with these friendly and neutral States, not only was pleased to acquiesce in this injustice, but has publicly defended the conduct of France, as a legitimate exercise of unquestionable sovereignty.

What! Shall a neutral State not only feel indifferent to the successive oppressions and conquests of all other States situated like herself, but shall she admit that the lawless victor has a right to interdict her own trade with those oppressed and neutral States? Shall she go farther, and condemn, as Mr. Madison has done, Great-Britain for prohibiting a trade with her open enemy, and yet apologize for France, who has by force of arms cut us off from the trade of neutral and friendly States who would, if left free, court and solicit our commerce with them?

Yet such is the picture of Mr. Madison's conduct in relation to the two belligerents, before he had the boldness to come out and declare himself on the side of France, before he dared to tell this people (as by his measures he has done) that their fortunes must be hereafter inseparably attached to those of Bonaparte, and that we must be tied to the chariot wheels of this conqueror in his triumphal entry into his capital.

I shall omit Mr. Madison's declaration to Mr. Randolph, that "France wants money and must have it," and a thousand other incidents of the same character tending to shew, that his opinions and his policy are too much connected with those of his new ally, Bonaparte.

I have said enough for those who are open to conviction, and those who are not will nevertheless be shaken when they come to the measures which he has lately adopted to produce a war with Great-Britain.

I now proceed to the consideration of his manifesto of war.

The first point in Mr. Madison's manifesto, and which forms the most prominent part of it, relates to the British doctrine and practice of taking their own seamen out of our merchant ships. He has collected under this head, all the virulent remarks which the obscure writers of his party have used for many years past. Before I consider his assertions on this point, it may be useful to trace the history of this pretension and practice on the part of Great-Britain. All the nations of Europe maintain without any exception this doctrine, "that their subjects have no right to expatriate themselves, and that the nation has a right to the services of all its citizens, especially in time of war."

This doctrine is not only maintained and enforced by all sovereign states, but it is explicitly laid down by writers on general law, as most unquestionable.

Grotius, Vattel, Puffendorf, and all other public writers, concur in maintaining this right. France has a special code on the subject, and every citizen is enrolled from the time he is capable of bearing arms, and is recalled by special proclamation as soon as war breaks out, from the service of foreign countries.

Denmark, on entering into the present war, issued a similar proclamation. There is no civilized country on the globe which does not claim the right to the service of all its citizens in time of war.

When the war broke out between Great-Britain and France in 1793, a new case arose—a case unexampled in the History of nations. America, once a part of the British empire, speaking the same language, having the same habits, occupied in the same pursuits, remained at peace. The profits of neutrality enabled us to pay greater wages to our seamen than Britain could possibly afford. The British seamen who had never before been tempted to desert the standard of their country, because the language, habits, and usages of the continental nations were so diverse and disagreeable to them, flocked by thousands into the American mercantile service, and produced a serious and distressing injury to Great-Britain. It is the opinion of well-informed merchants, that thirty or forty thousand British seamen sought employment in American ships. Great-Britain found this evil intolerable, and she adopted the expedient of reclaiming her own seamen found in our merchant service, disclaiming however, most explicitly, the right to take them from our public armed ships.

This practice she commenced under the administration of Washington, and has continued it from that day to the present. She has, however always disclaimed the pretensions of taking "American" seamen, and if the case has sometimes and unfrequently occurred, she has always expressed her regret, and has restored the men so taken, on due and proper proof of their citizenship.

The evil, however, has been of very limited extent, and the bona fide American citizens have been the least disposed to complain. The Northern States who employ for the most part native seamen have suffered very little, and I have known several merchants in ex-