

FROM THE BOSTON GAZETTE OF MARCH 22.
THE ROAD TO PEACE,
COMMERCE, WEALTH, AND HAPPINESS.
BY AN OLD FARMER.

I am both feeble, and old, and as you will perceive, without my telling you, not much gifted with the powers of fine writing. I can only express my opinions in a plain, simple way, such as may suit a farmer's, fisherman's or mechanic's taste, and I do not expect, or wish, that the five educated gentlemen should either read, or admire my writings.

It may be asked, why then I write at all on subjects beyond my reach? I answer, my sufferings and my fears will not permit me to be silent, and as to going beyond my depth, I shall take care to say only what I know, and to reason only upon what I fully understand. Even an old farmer may sometimes give good advice, which much more learned men would do well to follow; and as to a farmer's honesty, as he has no interest in the misfortunes of his country, but both his farm and his labour must rise, stand, and fall with the prosperity of the nation, he is a much more fit counsellor in times of peril and adversity, than soldiers, or other military men; than contractors, public officers, and the thousand other leeches, who feed upon the blood of the nation, when it is once set flowing by war.

I always found, that I recollected more of the sermon of the minister of my parish, by taking down the heads of his discourse. And I therefore conclude, that it is a good thing to divide, what one has to say into distinct heads; so that a man's mind may take in and comprehend fully, one thing at a time.

Before I do this, I would observe, that every man who is a warm, obstinate, passionate partizan, whether Federalist, or Democrat, or Republican—every man who chooses to be idle, and to drink grog rather than to work—every man, who wants an office more than he wants peace and prosperity, had better lay aside my book—he will find nothing to please him. I write only to the moderate and honest of all parties. I write to the sober and the industrious. I write to those only who are contented with being well governed and who do not wish to be governors themselves, and who are not constantly hankering after the people's money.

The subjects I shall say something upon, are:

1. Why are we at war?
2. What has the war cost, and what will it cost?
3. What have been its fruits, and what will be its fruits?
4. Who dances, and who pays the piper?
5. How much Massachusetts will pay towards the war, and how much will fall on such a farmer as me?
6. Whether the war has borne, and whether it is likely to bear equally on all the states?
7. What may be the effect upon us of the late disasters of the French in Russia?
8. What is the best course for an honest farmer to take to contribute his mite towards a peace?

Lastly, I shall compare the characters of old Gov. Strong and of old Deacon Phillips, merely as Friends to Peace, with those of Major General Varnum and Brigadier General King, merely as Friends to War, and as expecting to make their fortunes out of it.

Under the last head, I shall consider (not so much on my account, for I am too old and sick to be drafted from the militia, but on account of my only son,) whether if Governor Strong should be our Governor next year my son would not be likely to stay at home, but if the two Generals are elected, whether I must not prepare his coffin, for if he goes he certainly will perish either under the care of the army doctors, or by the bullets of the enemy.

1st. Why are we at war?

This is a question which I am often asked in our town, and they think because I have been a representative to Boston four or five years, I must know. Now I have no objection to letting any body hear or see what I do know about it, and though it may not be new to many, it may to some.

I always think it a bad sign of a man's honesty, when I find him shifting his ground of argument or complaint against his neighbour. Before the war began, after the settlement of that old affair of the Chesapeake, I never used to hear of any thing but the British Orders in Council as the grand cause of complaint.—I remember well, when Mr. Madison made a settlement with the British minister Erskine, there was not a word said about any complaint but the Orders in Council; and I recollect still later than that, Mr. Munroe, our Secretary, told Mr. Foster, the very last British minister who was here, that if Great Britain would repeal her Orders in Council, she should have as full and free a trade as she ever had.

Now, my brother farmers, why should we change our language? It is now said we are at war on account of the Impressionment of our seamen.

The British repealed their Orders in Council nine months ago. I ask, whether this practice of impressing British seamen out of our vessels, is not as old as the French war? I am told—yes. I ask again, were not as many mistakes committed twenty years ago in taking some few Americans instead of Englishmen, as there have been of late? I have been told, many more.

It being then settled, that this war is continued, and all its evils sustained merely because Great Britain insists upon taking her own seamen out of our merchant vessels, when they run away and get into our service, and because a very few instances of mistakes or abuse in exercising this right have occurred, I then sat down, after looking as deep as a plain farmer could do into the question, and gave my neighbours the reasons, why I was opposed to shedding one drop of blood, or even one million of dollars in such a cause.—My reasons were,

1. I never could see, why nations ought not to be as

honest towards one another, as men in their private dealings. Now if my neighbour's son, or bound apprentice runs away, the law allows him to enter my enclosure and even my house, and to take him away, if he takes shelter there. I never could see any reason, why Britain should not take her own subjects, out of our merchant ships. I am confirmed in this opinion, by the declaration of our late Lieut. Governor, William Gray, in his letter published by the House of Representatives of our state, in which he states, that if Great Britain will give up the right of searching our public ships, we ought to be content.

She has long since done this—and Mr. Gray adds, that he hopes we shall never be mad enough to engage in war with either of the great European nations. This authority has greater weight with me, since I learn, that this Mr. Gray is entirely devoted to the politics of Mr. Madison.

2. My second reason against continuing the war for the question of Impressionment of British sailors is, that I find that Great Britain, six years ago, offered to place this question on such a footing as appeared to our two ministers, Mr. Munroe and Mr. Pinkney, to be both honorable and advantageous to the United States. I learn that one of these men is now our Secretary of State, and the other our Attorney General, and I cannot perceive why the people should not be satisfied with what was considered so advantageous and honorable to two great and learned men of Mr. Madison's party.

I cannot see that there can be any justice in continuing a war, when such honorable and advantageous offers have been made, and may now be obtained.

3. I have been also very much staggered, and indeed altered in my opinions on this subject, by the able arguments of the Rev. Mr. Taggart, representative from Hampshire county in this state, to Congress, who has proved, that we have scarcely any seamen under impressionment at this time, and that the evil, if there ever has been any, has been much exaggerated by designing men.

4. Our own legislature made an enquiry into this subject, and I think the committee are entitled to thanks for their labor and accuracy. From this report it appears, that out of 21,000 seamen employed by a great number of merchants of this state, of all political opinions, only 35 seamen had been impressed for nearly fifteen years; and of those only 12 were Americans, and of these all but ONE had been discharged. Gov. Gray, whom I mentioned above, has been forty-five years in business, and he never had, as he swears, but two seamen impressed by the British, and three by the French. I cannot look upon this, therefore, as a great national grievance.

5. When I look into my own town, I find though the war has lasted twenty years, we never had a man impressed. I invite all honest farmers to make a like enquiry in their own towns and neighbourhood. If they find few or no cases of impressionment, they will conclude with me that there has been "much cry but little wool." They will also recollect that in many cases where the men are said to be impressed, it turns out in evidence, that they entered voluntarily, or were impressed on board of British merchant ships, into which they entered voluntarily.

6. It is important here to inquire whether we shall not lose more than we shall gain, if Great Britain should agree that our ships shall protect HER seamen against HER search and impressionment.

This will be a certain loss to her, and no gain to us; because in proportion to the number of British seamen we employ, will be the diminution of our own, or the reduction of their wages; now we ought not to fight for that which if obtained, will injure those for whom the war is pretended to be prosecuted.

7. This war is carried on to relieve our own seamen, and by the report of our committee it appears, that not more than one in sixteen hundred has suffered for fifteen years—Now if the war has caused more than two thousand of our seamen to go into foreign prisons and probably will send all the rest there, it may be called a war for any thing else, but not a war for the protection and relief of seamen.

Lastly, We have only to consider finally, whether we shall in any way attain the objects of the war.—Great Britain has anew declared, that she will forever maintain for herself the same rights which we maintain for ourselves, and which France maintains and exercises against all the world—now this may be impudent in Great Britain to be sure to pretend that she has as much right to her own seamen as we and France have to ours; but still I ask, whether she will be likely to yield this point, until our three great frigates and six small ones shall have taken her 250 ships of the line, and three hundred frigates.

If people think we shall succeed, I should like to have them begin by raising the blockade of the Chesapeake, for as I understand it, all our great and small frigates are in port but two, and yet our President cannot go a fishing from the seat of government, without asking leave of the British Admiral. I thought this national humiliation required a fast, rather than feasting. This to my mind does not look like forcing Great Britain to give up her claim to her own seamen.

On the whole therefore, I conclude, that we are at war for the right to employ British seamen—for the right to employ our neighbour's apprentices and minors, and that we have very little chance of success in the object, and that if we had full success it would do us more harm than good.

I am therefore against a war of which this is the sole object.

2. What has the war cost, and what will it cost?

The government though a Republican one, and though we were told that Republics should have no secrets, has neglected to lay before the people the actual expenses of the last nine months of war.

If any of us had leased a farm on half profits, we should be very much dissatisfied with our tenant who only demanded a large sum to carry on the farm for the next year, and yet refused to let us know how much money it cost the last.

But we have some rule by which to judge. The Government borrowed sixteen millions last year, including the new paper money, which instead of new emission, they choose to call treasury notes.

This was over and above the ordinary revenue. The war has then cost for nine months, sixteen millions; and yet we hear of soldiers and sailors, and contractors and furnishers unpaid—I am afraid we shall find a great debt yet behind.

As to future expenses, Mr. Cheever, chairman of the committee of ways and means in Congress, states the annual expenses of the war at forty millions—at this rate the war will cost us in five years 200 millions, which is 70 millions more than it cost us to achieve or procure our Independence—a pretty heavy debt for the privilege of protecting British seamen from their own sovereigns!!!

My brother farmers, you do not yet see any of this new paper money, because it is circulated only among the merchants, but you will have to redeem it at last. It is the land which finally pays all the public burdens.

3. What have been the fruits of this war, and what will be its fruits?

A farmer naturally inquires about the crops—If he finds his land always producing bad crops, he calls it bad. If he finds a mode of cultivation always injurious and unproductive, he changes it for another.

Shall we act in an opposite principle in our political concerns?

We were told that we should conquer Canada in three months; we were only to move and they would retire; we were to take possession of it as we would reap a crop of rye or oats. For my part, I was one of those who did not see, even if we did reap it as with a sickle, that it would produce any thing but tares, and chaff, and straw.

I could not see, that burning the houses of some poor Frenchmen in Canada, who can but just subsist, and who can pay no taxes to Great Britain, would tend to relieve our seamen (if there are any) who are impressed.

But still I did think, Mr. Madison knew what he could do. I supposed when General Hull told the Canadians that he had an overwhelming force, that would look down all opposition, that he would take the country as easily as he wrote his proclamation.

But what has been my surprize and mortification to find, that we have had three successive armies cut off, have lost a thousand men by the sword, and four thousand by capture; that we have not gained one inch of ground, but have lost a whole province, the Michigan Territory?

I am not over superstitious, but when I consider the invasion of Russia and Canada, by the allied powers of France and America; I am constrained to believe in the justice and overruling providence of God, who has declared that he will "break the rod of the oppressor and scatter the nations which delight in war."

As to what will be the fruits of this war, the event is only known to God. But when we see our Generals alarmed for the safety of our own posts, instead of boastingly carrying their arms into the peaceful territories of an unoffending neighbour; when we see the mighty state of Virginia forced to distrust the power of the Union, and raising a standing army of her own, to defend the trembling and terrified inhabitants of her sea-coast, I can predict as little for the future as for the past.

Some weak men there may be who may presage a happy issue from the partial success at sea. We have indeed gallantly achieved three naval victories, but such was the acknowledged superiority of our enemy in numbers on the ocean, that two out of the three ships captured were wisely and prudently destroyed, because it was dangerous to attempt to bring them into port.

These partial successes are a cause of as much confidence, and no more, than if we had captured three videttes of the enemy in single combat. This would have proved the superior courage of our own videttes or guards. But what cause of exultation does it afford, when we know that Great Britain has 250 such ships, and that, learning wisdom from experience, she will send them out in such numbers as will defy the valour and defeat the exertions of our gallant seamen?

We have three greater, and five smaller frigates; if the whole force was now combined, they could not, without rashness and certain destruction, enter the Chesapeake.

The capital of our nation is now blockaded and that blockade never can, and never will be raised by any force we now possess, or can create during the war.

Discouraging and desperate as are our prospects on land, they are more so on the ocean. On neither element has our adversary yet shewn his force. On neither I fear shall we eventually be successful, for the God of battles cannot be with us in this warfare.

4thly. Who dances, and who pays the piper?

The President dances, for he has his 25,000 dollars a year, whether the country thrives or is impoverished and ruined; he has the patronage of ten thousand appointments created by the war.

General Dearborn dances, for he receives an enormous salary, and rations, and perquisites.

General Varnum dances, for he has two or three sons in public offices.

General King dances, for he is employed in raising troops, and perhaps he has so much a head, as we sell cattle for selling men to the government, to spill their blood in a disastrous war.

All the contractors, military officers, commissaries and other dependants in the army dance, and make their fortunes at the public expense.