

MARYLAND GAZETTE

T H U R S D A Y, S E P T E M B E R 1 8, 1 8 0 0.

For the MARYLAND GAZETTE.
To my Fellow Voters of the Fifth District.

FEELING, in common with you all, a great concern for the welfare of my native country, on whose well-being and prosperity every thing I have in the world depends, for I know not to what corner of the earth I could fly with a wife, and family of little children, was any great calamity to happen to this land, I take up my pen, although but very moderately qualified for it, and but little used to it, to offer you my humble thoughts on a matter which seems at present to employ a great deal of our time and attention.

Those who are used to read fine writings, should they think it worth while to cast an eye over these lines, I hope will easily excuse my way of delivering my thoughts, when they are told, that I am but a plain farmer, yet by the indulgence of a kind father, have had the good luck to have more school knowledge than commonly falls to the share of one in my condition of life. To those of my own class I need make no apology, well knowing, that they only wish to see the interest of themselves and their fellow-citizens plainly pointed out to them, caring very little what kind it comes from, and they know very well too, without the help of much book learning that their real good is best brought about and secured by the quiet, and prosperous condition of our common country.

The matter I mean is the election of the president and vice-president of the United States. If there was nothing else, the great party work, and noise made about the election of the president, are enough to satisfy our minds, that he is a man of very great consequence in our government, therefore it behoves us, one and all, to be well upon our guard, how we dispose of our votes.

I own myself to be but an indifferent judge of things that merely belong to government. But I have all along strove to keep myself out of party, more especially on this present occasion, for I have clearly seen that not one in twenty of those, even of those who talk the most, and the loudest, and seem the most confident, know any thing at all about the matter.

As the plainest understanding is capable of forming a middling good judgment when facts are brought before it, I have made it my constant endeavour to satisfy my mind in this way. And this way, I am very sure, will seldom fail a man, if so be he will set himself down coolly to work. I have done so myself in this famous dispute about Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson. All the information I could scrape together from news-papers, and other publications, that fell in my way, and by every other means in my reach, I have considered as well as I was able to do, but never could find any thing in one, or all of them, to make me alter the opinion I have ever had of Mr. Adams.

When we are told that he is a corrupt man, that he wants to make this country a colony to England again, or to make himself a king, and things of that kind, I look for facts of some kind or other, to make good these hard charges; and what do I find? nothing in the world but the writers own notions, and these chiefly too about certain laws, whether they are constitutional or no, or whether they are good or bad ones. For instance, whether or no people ought to be punished for sowing sedition against the government, or whether people from foreign parts should come into this land, and try to set one part of the natives against the other by their plots and their practices, and the like. And not one single fact, or any thing like one, to shew that Mr. Adams ever had such thoughts in his head, as those laid to his charge.

On the contrary, I called to mind Mr. Adams's conduct from the very beginning of the revolution in our government, for I am old enough to remember it myself. How that he, his brother and Mr. Hancock, were the first to step forth to oppose the tyranny of the British king and parliament. How on all occasions he was one among the foremost that stood up firm in the cause of American freedom, and how we used, at all our public meetings, to hurra for Adams and Hancock. There are a great many of you, my fellow voters, who remember all this as well as I do. And perhaps there is not one of you, who do remember it, but has pulled off his hat, and made many a hurra for this same man, this same Adams. But alas! how times have changed. This very man, after a very long hard service, with the fairest character, is now at last forsooth found out to be an enemy to his country. And what seems to me to be more wonderful than all the rest is, that he has taken such an unaccountable liking to the British, that he wants to put us under their government again. I believe from my heart if a man was to say such a thing in the city of London, he would be laughed at, and thought little better than an idiot. However, it seems there

are some of us, Americans who say they believe it. Surely I may venture to say they are not Americans of the old stamp.

Now my fellow voters I will put you a case, and a plain one too. Suppose that one of you had employed a man for a great many years, to do any kind of work for you. Suppose he had behaved himself well in his calling, and had always been true to his trust, would you turn him out of your employ, merely because another man started up, who wanted his place, and he and his friends spread reports about the neighbourhood, that he was a bad, unfaithful servant, at the same time advising you to turn him out of doors, and take the one in, who was seeking after his place? But I will put the case a little closer yet. Suppose it was yourself, that was served so. Would you not think your case a very hard one, after a faithful service of many a long year, to be discharged upon the bare reports of those, who wished you ill, and sought your ruin? I say would you not think your case a very hard one? especially when you could shew more than an hundred proofs of your honesty, and industry, and not one true act to the contrary could be hunted up against you.

Now this is exactly the case of Mr. Adams. He has served his country at least twenty-five years, and at the last all that they have got to say against him, for they can shew nothing else, is that he approved of two or three laws passed by the two houses of congress. Even supposing for a single moment, he was wrong in his opinion about those laws, surely there is no great crime in that, when we see that a majority of the representatives of the people themselves thought the very same way.

As to the laws, about which Mr. Adams has been so much blamed by a great many folks, I shall be thought a vain sort of a man, if I offer to make my remarks upon them, and mayhap I may richly deserve to be thought so. Yet I don't know but that something may be said, even by a farmer, in answer to many things that have been said against them.

There are none of us so stupid, I trust, but that when we read a thing, we can form some notion of the sense and meaning of it, and can tolerably well guess, whether it has any thing very good, or very bad in it. Now as these self-same laws, called the sedition law, and the alien law, made such a stir amongst us, and were painted in such black colours, as almost to frighten one, I made it my business to borrow them from a lawyer, whom I sometimes employ, and to read them, and do declare to you, I had a strong prejudice against them from what I had heard.

I think I may say that I love my liberty as much as any man on the face of the earth, be he who he may. So that when I was told that one of these laws tied up my right hand, and put a padlock upon my mouth, my passion was so great, that I almost cursed the government, the congress and the president, all put together.

Thinking it however but fair play to give them a hearing, I did so, by borrowing the law, as before said, and immediately set myself down to read it, expecting at every line to meet with something terrible. In this manner I read it quite through, and through again, and thought after each line, it would come in the next; but to my great surprize, after getting to the bottom, nothing could I discover to give me the least uneasiness. Nay, so far from wishing to defame the government, the congress and the president, it is, in my poor way of thinking, my duty as a good citizen to support their good fame. Of this I am very sure, we can have no confidence in law makers and rulers that are infamous. And these men we must have. Now if every body is allowed, who may take a fancy to it, to make them out infamous, by foul speeches and writing, what is to become of us sons of the clod, should they gain their ends? our government may lose its character. The congress may lose their's. The president his. If this should be the fate of the matter, I repeat it, what is to become of us, fellow-citizens? this is a serious question. Ponder well on it.

I wonder whether there was ever a government in this world that tamely set down, and suffered itself to be abused, and called by the grossest names that could come from the mouth of man, or that would suffer its head officer, whom not only its own people; but all foreign nations, look up to, to be slandered in the vilest terms that could be raked together. A public robber, a traitor to his country, in a word, every thing that is vile and infamous. Nay, I wonder if ever there was a people on earth, who would stand by coolly, and see all this done, and done too perhaps by a man who was obliged to fly from his own country and seek out for another home, which he found here.

For my own part, I feel a pride in calling myself a citizen of the United States. For I feel myself a free man. My opinions, such as they are, about public men, and public matters, I will freely speak, but

at the same time with decency, as becomes every man, from the top to the bottom of us.

This is the way I reason fellow-citizens. Here am I a citizen of a free government. Every thing I have, myself, my family, and my property, are under its care and protection. I feel myself happy and safe, therefore see it is my interest to do every thing to support that government, that I may continue to be so. Every thing that will injure, or weaken it, shall meet with my steady opposition, heart and hand, for any harm done to that, is a harm done to me, inasmuch as it thereby becomes less able to take care of me, and mine, and to give me its protection, and my children after me.

Now evil minded men may do harm in a great many ways. They may plot against the government, they may be concerned in riots, and insurrections, or they may help them on by spreading about false, scandalous, and malicious reports, the like I have mentioned above, which may throw us all into confusion, and disturbances, (enough of which, God knows, we have already had,) and brought about in this very way. You have, many of you, no doubt, read that famous letter of the French minister, (I am but a bad hand at remembering foreign peoples names,) I mean him who brought Mr. Randolph into trouble, and the writings of the others of them. Did not your hearts broil at every line of them? I am sure mine did. To see our government abused, to see that great, and worthy man, who, alas for poor America, is dead and gone; to see him slandered, and treated like a common pickpocket. I say did not your hearts broil in your bosoms, at all this?

This then is the sum of this famous sedition law. I will now ask you, fellow-citizen, a few questions. Do any of you want to take a part in plots against the government? in riots and insurrections? or do you wish to spread about false, scandalous, and malicious reports about the government, the congress or the president? No I know you do not. I know you would scorn to do such a thing, even about the meanest man alive. What then have you to fear from this law? for my own part, I cannot see, for my life, any thing to give you a morsel of trouble about it.

In regard of the alien law, it did not, I own, give me so much concern as the one I have been discoursing of, although full as much clamour was raised about it, no doubt, by reason it did not come so near home as I fancied the other one did, before reading it. However, as there was a great deal of hard talk about it, I read that also, and was, to the full, as much disappointed. This law, I have been told, was made chiefly on account of the French people here, who were night and day caballing against our government, although aliens of all nations were as liable to it as the French, if they fell into the same practices. One thing, I remember, looked very odd to me at that time, that is, that there should be so much fuss made about the French here, viz. how much they were oppressed, how hardly they were dealt by, and so forth; when, if any of us Americans had gone over to France, and the least grain of suspicion had fallen upon us about plotting or caballing against their government, I fancy, if by a miracle we ever returned again to our own country, every mother's son of us would have been found by his friends, shorter by a head than when he left it.

Being somewhat acquainted with a gentleman who lives about a mile and an half from my house, and who passes a good part of his time in reading, I took the liberty to ask him, if he had ever come across any thing in his history books, about the way they treat alien people in countries that were at variance, and that expected every moment to come to an open quarrel. He told me he had, and that they were very strict in every country he had ever read about. So far as to taking them up, putting them in prison houses, turning them out of the country, nay, often hanging them for traitors and spies. Now I have too much regard for the life of a man, let him be a foreigner, or whatever, as to make a sport of it. I am for justice and mercy too. But if a foreign man comes into a country, and uses all his arts and craft to put it into an uproar and combustion, will any man say he ought not to be punished for it in some way or other?

But what does our alien law do? why it only tries to prevent him from doing the mischief he is about, and perhaps was sent on purpose to do, by ordering him out of the country for a limited time, without taking a farthing of his property from him, (although he may have made thousands amongst us,) if the president shall be well satisfied in his mind, that he is plotting against our peace and safety. Why now, my dear fellow-citizens, where is the hardship of all this? would it not be a plaguy hardship upon you, and me, if he was suffered to stay? (all his plots were ripe to blow us up all into a flame?) perhaps relations against relations, father against son, and son against father, as I have been well informed was the case in this