

**A LETTER ADDRESSED TO SIR JOHN BARROW,
BART. ON THE SYSTEM OF WAR AND PEACE
COMPLEMENTS IN HER MAJESTY'S
SHIPS. A CHARM AGAINST CHARTISM IN
WHICH THE TITLE OF THE OPERATIVE IS SET
FORTH, AND HIS ESTATE ASCERTAINED**

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A letter addressed to sir John Barrow, Bart. on the system of war and peace complements in her majesty's ships. A charm against chartism in which the title of the operative is set forth, and his estate ascertained by M. F. F. Berkeley & R. B. de Bary

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M. F. F. BERKELEY & R. B. DE BARY

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A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

SIR JOHN BARROW, BART.

ON THE SYSTEM OF

WAR AND PEACE COMPLEMENTS

IN

HER MAJESTY'S SHIPS.

BY THE HON. CAPT. BERKELEY, R.N.

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1839.

633.



LETTER

TO

SIR JOHN BARROW, BART.

MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

I HAVE read with much satisfaction the Supplement to your newly published Life of Lord Anson, excepting that portion which treats of war and peace complements, and the *ancient* system of sending ships to sea with reduced complements. At a late political meeting in the city of Bristol, I had occasion to allude to the state of our Navy, and the recent attacks that have been made on the Naval Administration of Lord Minto; and I cannot but be gratified to find, that without any communication with you on the subject, I had uttered sentiments and opinions with regard to the statements contained in the pamphlet addressed to the Duke of Wellington, signed, "A FLAG OFFICER OF HER MAJESTY'S FLEET," and the general state of the Navy, which coincided with the views you were at that very moment taking in the Supplement I have alluded to.

As an old servant of more than thirty years in the department, having served under eleven different Naval Administrations, I believe, of very different political opinions from those of the present Board, your defence of the present Naval Administration will naturally have great weight with the public. If I did not think that such would be the case, I should not address this letter to you. Having, like yourself, no object but the truth, and the benefit of the Service, I shall fearlessly state where and why I differ from you on the subject of "Manning the Navy, and the system of Peace Establishments."

With respect to the peace establishment, you state, "We are now, however, clamorously called upon to change the long-established system, to increase indefinitely our fleet, and to keep it full manned on a war* establishment. We had much better at once be at war—a result to which such a measure as that recommended would be likely enough to lead."

I avow myself the leader of this clamour—I say leader, merely from the situation I hold, as one of the Board of Admiralty—and thoroughly am I convinced, that my opinions have the sup-

* In future call it *proper* complement, and abolish the term war complement.

port of a very large majority, of the very best practical men of every grade in the service. I admit there are some of very high character and station who differ from me, and I publish this letter in the hope that a distinct assent or dissent will be given by each and all of them, that those most interested may have a voice in deciding the question on which we are at issue, and which I conceive to be of the most vital consequence to the service.

You defend the peace establishment on the score of ancient custom. Yet you recommend a *change* in the equally ancient system of promotion to the rank of admiral, "because in these days of innovation that would not seem to be a valid objection."

In neither one case nor the other do I admit it to be a valid objection. I do not call upon you "indefinitely to increase your fleet." I do not agree with you that we had much better be at once at war, or that the system I advocate of fully manning your ships is likely to lead to that result. It would not necessarily increase the number of your men. Employ fewer or smaller classes of ships, so that those you do employ are thoroughly efficient. It must be a matter of perfect indifference to other powers.

Some months since I wrote the following re-

marks on the system ; and although I had them printed they were never published, and probably never would have been published, but for the Supplement to Lord Anson's Life. I cannot, however, see a system, which, in my humble opinion, is fraught with the most dangerous evils to the service, advocated by the second Secretary of the Board of which I am a member, without entering my protest, as publicly, against the continuance of that system.

Yours, very sincerely,

M. F. F. BERKELEY.

OBJECTIONS

TO THE

PRESENT SYSTEM OF THE NAVAL PEACE ESTABLISHMENT.

THAT there is a scarcity of seamen, and a difficulty to procure men for our peace established ships, no one who has been employed afloat since the war, or who has *really* inquired into the subject, will deny.

I shall first attempt to account for this scarcity, and to give a reason why the difficulty exists, and then I shall endeavour to point out the remedy for both.

It is very evident that the nursery for seamen has been greatly injured and broken up by the introduction of steam navigation. Instance the port of Dover alone: there is not now one sailing vessel out of that port. The packets, with very few exceptions, are all steamers. Look to Portsmouth and Plymouth. The numerous sailing craft between the Isle of Wight and the main land no longer

exist. The wherries and watermen at both places do not muster ten where formerly they mustered ten times ten. On the Thames the Waterman's Company, in former days, found a given number of volunteers for the Fleet, that the company might be clear of impressment. They are almost annihilated by the steamers, and that resource is completely cut off.

Before docks were built at our large mercantile ports, ships in harbour, as well as those at sea, employed and *made* seamen in unrigging and re-rigging the ship for another voyage. Now, the moment they are within the dock-gates, the crew are dismissed. The ships are unrigged and refitted by old hands—Greenwich pensioners—men unfit to go to sea, and the crew are not entered till the vessel is ready to take her departure. This is unavoidable; but it is a great blow to the nursery and to the *making* of seamen. Nautical men will, I am sure, understand my meaning as to the *making* of seamen.

Where are the numerous Leith smacks, whose men were proverbially "thorough seamen" in every sense of the word? What I have stated will, in some measure, account for the scarcity.

As to the difficulty, I feel convinced that it arises, in a great measure, from our ships being