

Mr John Fenno

# NORTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE.

VOL. XI.]

SATURDAY, JULY 2, 1796.

[No. 546.]

## LIBERTY. EQUALITY. In the name of the French Republic, A PROCLAMATION.

Leger Felicite Sonthonax, Julien Raimond, Mark Antoine, Alexis Giraud, Pierre G. Lehiere, and Philippe Rose Roume, Commissioners delegated by the French government to the windward Islands.

To all the citizens of the Colony, and to all those who compose the land and sea forces, destined to its defence.

### CITIZENS,

AFTER so many storms and critical emergencies, inseparable concomitants of a revolution, France enjoys at last a constitution worthy of a people who knows how to value liberty.

Already, under a truly republican government, the French people begin to rest from their long and arduous toil, and to enjoy the happy effects of the liberty which they have attained. Already the government directs its sollicitudes towards those objects, which are to preserve the rights, and encrease the happiness of the people.

Firmly resolved to cause the constitution to be executed, the executive directory is constantly occupied in searching out means to have it established in all parts of the republic.

That constitution states, article 156, That the legislative body can authorize the directory to send into all the french colonies, as the emergency of the case may require, one or more particular agents, whom it will appoint for a particular time.

Those agents are to exercise the same functions as the directory, and be under its orders.

The 6th article of the constitution states, that the French colonies at inseparable parts of the republic, and submitted to the same constitutional law.

It is particularly for the execution of that article, that we have received from the government the honorable mission intrusted to us; and, at the same time, to let you know all the means you ought to employ to preserve Liberty and Equality, which are the fundamental law of that constitution.

You will, undoubtedly, believe your old and sincere friends: undoubtedly you will listen to philanthropists, who have spontaneously devoted themselves to almost certain death in order to vindicate your rights. Bound by the same principles, they propose to themselves only one end, that of leading you to the true happiness, in preserving among you Liberty and Equality.

Citizens! rally then at the voice of the delegates of the Republic, since it is in her name, and for your dearest interests, that they are going to address you.

The ancient government of the colonies had distinguished three different classes: the whites, the coloured people, and the slaves. To those different classes, now united and honored with the name of French citizens, we are going to speak alternately. We shall first address that portion of the people of the colony, which has most suffered under the tyrannic order which has been abolished, and we shall say to them—"By the republican constitution which the French nation has just adopted, you have recovered your primitive rights; but you must know the proper means to preserve them without interruption to your remotest posterity.—Those ships, the warriors whom they bring to you; all those formidable preparations are designed against the English, who are the most cruel enemies of your liberty! They dare to indulge the hope of framing new chains for you. See whose blood thirsty tygers, bending still your brethren under their homicidal whips.—We cannot suffer any longer so dismal an object; join the forces which France sends to you, expel from the territory of the French Republic, these tyrants of mankind: pursue

them even to their haunts, and destroy the last of them!—What! is it not incumbent upon you to revenge your brethren whom they keep fettered in the surrounding islands? Yes, Citizens! every thing ought to impress you with an implacable hatred for those tyrants, whose most lucrative trade is of reducing you to slavery, misery, and death. What can withhold your vengeance? Rush on that imperious race; make it disappear from that sacred spot, which, too long, has been the theatre of its crimes and depredations.

The republic has not only provided you with means to destroy your most cruel enemies, but has farther testified her parental sollicitude, in indicating and facilitating to you such means as can only consolidate your reconquered liberty.—Those means, Citizens, you shall find in labour and instruction, and in the practice of moral and civil virtues.

Labour and instruction, Citizens, are necessary to the preservation of the people, and the constitution imposes them as a duty upon all citizens. The 15th article of the second title contains these words; "Young men cannot be inscribed in the civic register, if they do not prove that they can read, write, and follow a mechanical branch of business." That clause, Citizens, can and ought to take place only agreeably to the constitution, after the first day of the twelfth year of the republic.

The manual operations of agriculture belong to the mechanic arts.

Yes, labour, and agriculture particularly, is absolutely necessary to him who wishes to preserve his rights, and enjoy his liberty. Through labour we procure the necessary things to our existence and enjoyment; through labour only, we can preserve our liberty. Woe to the people who neglect labour;—such people cannot fail becoming slaves to an active nation.—Never forget, that the English, your neighbours, are very active, and that they may rivet your chains once more, should you ever forsake labour—Ah! has not a dreadful and too long experience taught you that truth? Had your ancestors, the inhabitants of Africa, devoted themselves to the culture of their fruitful lands, they most assuredly would not have debased themselves by reciprocal bloody wars, of which greedy Europeans have availed themselves to reduce them to the most intolerable and degrading slavery.—What remains for you to do, in order to avoid all misfortunes which are inseparable concomitants of idleness?—Nothing but to devote yourselves to the culture of the rich productions of the colony you inhabit! Many of you have been to France;—they will tell you, that the people are there constantly occupied at useful labours, and agriculture in particular. Imitate that active people who adopts you as their brethren, and will establish by that means, a trade of exchange with them, which cement and strengthen your brotherly relations.

Instruction is as useful to you as labour; by it you will learn how to fulfil the duties of good citizens: finally, by instruction you will attain that degree of morality which distinguishes the civilized from the savage man, the honest from the perverse citizen.

The government will omit nothing to attain an object so interesting and so worthy of its sollicitude. Public schools will be established throughout all the colonies; your children shall there receive instruction, imbibe a taste for labour and morals, which are to accomplish their full regeneration.—The Republic will extend farther her cares for your children; for she wishes that a certain number of those who shall have produced a greater disposition and zeal for instruction, be sent to France, with the consent of

parents, there to study in a more perfect degree those sciences or arts to which they may have shewn a more decided inclination.

The same resources are likewise deferred to the children of the whites and of the coloured people; for the primary schools, which will be established, will be open to all individuals born in the colony of whatever colour they may be.

### ALL MEN ARE EQUAL IN RIGHTS.

An irreproachable probity is considered by the constitution as so useful to citizens, that when they are punished by law, they lose for a while their political rights. It is therefore necessary that the man who wishes to preserve his liberty without interruption, should to labour and instruction, and morals, which are absolutely necessary to the preservation of a social state. From what you have just now read, you will no more doubt of the intention of the government to maintain you in the inalienable rights of your liberty.

To you, citizens, whom a barbarous custom had made formerly proprietors of slaves, we shall observe, that in consequence only of the most strange subversion of what is known under the name of justice and humanity the most sacred rights of man had been forsaken in the former order of things which allowed men to be reduced to the most insufferable and abject slavery; we shall tell you that a state so contrary to nature, though apparently favourable to your interests, was of too violent a nature to last long.—How could the master shake off the thought of the dangers with which he was incessantly threatened? Does not the experience of ages and nations, transmitted by history, inform us, that tyranny has always fallen a victim to its own crimes? Undoubtedly, six hundred thousand slaves unjustly and cruelly tortured, in almost every instant of their lives, could not afford a great degree of security to the small number of their masters. Surrounded with foes, tormented with mistrust and fear, what could be the enjoyments of masters! They were most assuredly disturbed by the most cruel enormities. Add to this the continual fear they laboured under to see themselves utterly ruined by that morality which is the inevitable consequence of the manner in which the blacks were treated in the colonies.

Instead of that violent state in which lingered the late proprietors of slaves liberty and equality which flow from the constitution offer to them nothing but true enjoyments, and perfect security to their lives and fortunes. Surrounded with free and peaceable husbandmen who will cultivate the lands for a just salary, the owner will dread no more the fury of the revolted slave; he will live among those men as among his children; he will assist their activity with his knowledge. Their posterity will no more decline, but rather increase in proportion to the fostering cares paid to them; and that increase of population, as it will give more hands to agriculture will improve more and more the estate of the owner, and procure him enjoyments more sweet, and gratifications more real as they will not be acquired at the expense of the happiness, as they will not be the shameful price of the tears and the blood of their equals. As, by the new system, the proprietor of lands will dread no more those sudden changes of fortune, he will be able to encrease still more his enjoyments, and give a greater salubrity to his possessions, by those rural ornaments which have made France so delicious a spot. The landholder in the colonies will also enjoy all that advantage over the inhabitants of France, which are to be derived from a beautiful climate, and the high price of the natural productions of the country.

The Republic, therefore, has a right to expect that the misfortunes which have attended the revolution will have the happy