

MARYLAND GAZETTE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1804.

From the Philadelphia Gazette.

POSSESSION OF LOUISIANA.

WE publish the following minute account of the ceremonial of taking possession of Louisiana by the American government, not because it possesses any particular merit or novelty, but on account of the interest which the circumstances derive from the importance of the event which they accompanied. It is translated from the *Moniteur de la Louisiane* of January 2, 1804.

NEW-ORLEANS, January 2.

The grand work is done at last! Louisiana has undergone its last change of dominion, and the flag of the United States has, every where in this city, taken the place of the French republic.

We have to give an account of the three last days in order to complete the detail of events which will form one of those epochs destined to be the most memorable in the annals of America.

On Sunday last, the 13th inst. it appears that the colonial prefect, commissary of the French government, had been invited to be once more present at the holy prayers, in order to signalize with splendour the last signs of a worship which in those countries is going to cease being a national one, from the nature of the government by which they were on the eve of being governed. The ceremonies were celebrated with the utmost pomp; the colonial prefect, with the municipal body, some French officers, those of the militia and a great number of other persons of rank, entered the church through two rows of grenadiers, and at mass, and the exposition of the consecrated host, received the first honours, such as were due to the representative of the French republic.

The verse,
Domine, Salvam fac Rempublicam;
Domine, Salvos fac Consules;
which had been regularly sung from the first day of the taking of possession by France, were then sung once more in a grand chorus.

At two o'clock in the afternoon Messrs. Claiborne and Wilkinson, commissaries of the United States, dressed on the bank along the river, preceded by an handsome detachment of the Mississippi volunteers on horse-back. They went to the house of citizen L'Aussat, commissary of the French government, where their arrival was announced by nineteen drums.

Citizen L'Aussat received them in his parlour amidst a numerous circle, and soon after took them to his closet, where they remained with him above an hour. They no sooner came out than it was publicly known that Louisiana was to be delivered up to the United States the day following, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon.

However, the American commissaries returned to their camp at half past three, and from that time nothing was thought of but preparations for their taking possession of Louisiana.

On Monday at noon the inhabitants were agreeably surprised at the sight of an handsome body of cavalry passing through the city to go to the camp; it was citizen L'Aussat himself going on horse-back to pay a visit to the commissaries of the United States. He was preceded by the major and aid-major of the militia in French uniform, next to him was the commander of the place, the colonel of the militia; an aide-camp and the secretary of the commission, among whom citizen L'Aussat was easily distinguished by his ceremonial dress, his beautiful horse and the brilliancy of the blue velvet and silver embroidered uniform. His retinue was composed of young officers of the militia in uniform, some French officers and inhabitants of the city, who about sixty in number, presented a spectacle equally brilliant.

The whole municipality went in carriages half an hour after, and the populace joined in the procession. The reception was made at the camp in military style, and with all honours. As soon as citizen L'Aussat and his retinue stepped into the tent of the commissaries, the guns were fired to salute the French commissary. The music played the most flattering to the French, particularly Bonaparte's march. The colonial prefect presented the American commissaries, the members of the municipal body, and afterwards the officers and chief persons of his retinue; he discoursed with them, and went round the camp, and half an hour after retired in the same order he had arrived.

Additional precautions in guards, patrols and pickets were taken in the night; the colonial prefect, on account of reports which a wise vigilance ought to disregard, nor give an implicit belief to, went himself to reconnoitre the posts, and rode pretty late on horse-back through the town.

At last the day appeared which was to be the first new era for the people of Mississippi. Citizen L'Aussat, commissary of the French republic, went

on foot to the city hotel, at the head of the municipality, the officers of his mission, and a great number of militia officers, followed by the notables of the city and its environs, and citizens of his nation. He was saluted on his passage by the republican brig, L'Argo. The weather was fair, and as mild as in April. The troops of the United States came at about one o'clock, were militarily recognized at the gates of the city, and introduced, when the orders of the colonial prefect were received. They pursued their way to the square, headed by the American commissaries, under the command of gen. Wilkinson. He ranged them in battle array, facing the city hotel. The militia and the French company, captain Bourgard, were placed on the opposite side, and facing the river.

The American commissaries, going up to the city hotel, were met on the first step of the great staircase by the first joint commissioner of the mayor, the chief of battalion, and the commander of the place, the first aid-major of the militia, and the secretary of the commission; the commissary of the French republic, with the municipality went to meet them in the hall of sittings. He sat in an elevated arm chair, Mr. Claiborne on his right hand, on an arm chair, and gen. Wilkinson on his left. The secretary of the French commission, Dagerot, standing upon the right, and the secretary of the commission of the U. States, Wadsworth, on the left. The American commissaries presented their full powers to the French commissary, which were read by the secretary of commission, Wadsworth, and repeated by the secretary of commission Dagerot.

Citizen L'Aussat expressed in a few words spoken in the French language, its object, and by his order citizen Dagerot immediately read the treaty of the cession of Louisiana, and the power with which the first consul Buonaparte had invested citizen L'Aussat, in the name of the French people, for the execution of that treaty on the place, and at last the process verbal of the exchange of ratifications that were to precede this execution. When these readings were over, citizen L'Aussat pronounced that he placed from this very moment the commissaries of the United States into the possession of the countries, and dependencies of Louisiana, conformably to the 1st, 2d, 4th and 5th articles of the treaty, and to both conventions of Floreal 10, year 11, (the 30th of April last) in order that, agreeably to that treaty, the sovereignty and property of Louisiana should be ceded to the United States under the same conditions with which they were ceded by Spain to the French republic by the treaty concluded at St. Ildefonso, Vendemair 9, year 9, (Oct. 1, 1800,) which was previously executed by the French republic, having in effect re-entered into the possession of that colony.

After these words, the French commissary took the keys of the forts of New-Orleans, and presented them to Mr. Claiborne, and then pronounced: "I declare in virtue of the powers with which I am invested, and of the mission the first consul has confided to me, that all citizens and inhabitants of Louisiana who wish to remain under the dominion of the United States are no longer, from this moment, bound by their oath of allegiance towards the French republic." Citizen L'Aussat immediately exchanged seats with Mr. Claiborne. The secretaries of commissions read the process verbal of this ceremony, one in the French and the other in the English language: both were signed and sealed on both sides, reciprocally exchanged and the sitting broken up.

The commissaries went on the grand balcony of the city hotel; immediately after the flag of the French republic was lowered and in the same time the flag of the United States hoisted up; when they were at an equal height, they remained so, till, at the signal of a gun on the square, the forts began volleys that were repeated by all the batteries. Then the American flag was run up, and the French flag lowered down by Dusseuil, an ensign of the navy, was received between the arms of the sergeant-major of the company of French citizens, Legrand, who wrapped it around his body like a scarf, and having two officers on each side of him with swords in their hands, re-entered the centre of the company.

In the mean while, citizen L'Aussat came down from the city hotel, with Messrs. Claiborne and Wilkinson. Being arrived with them in front of the militia, citizen L'Aussat said: "Militia Men of New-Orleans and of Louisiana, you have given proofs of a great zeal and filial devotion towards the French flag, during the short time it was flying on your shores: I shall inform France and its government of it, and I return you thanks in her name. Here are the commissaries of the United States; obey them hereafter, as the representatives of your lawful sovereign." After this short speech, citizen L'Aussat placed himself by the flag of the republic; immediately the company of French citizens moved on at the beating of the drums.

The weather was very favourable to this ceremony, there was a great concourse of people, and the square was every where very much crowded; at the windows and balconies were seen the most handsome women of Louisiana; the plumes of the French, Spanish and American officers, appeared here and there in the thronged square.

If this news-paper is allowed to preserve its renown of truth, we will give an account of the impression which was shewn, when the change of flags took place.

A considerable body of Americans assembled a few paces from the city hotel, ushered the cry of huzza, by agitating their hats in the air, but the inhabitants remained motionless and silent. Many persons observed that, at the disappearance of the French flag grief and sensibility were on their countenances, and that a great number of them shed tears.

This sensibility was still more striking when that company of French citizens carried away piously, and at a slow march, that beloved sign of the national rallying point.

The spectators will never forget that interesting scene; fifty French citizens driven on these shores by different delinies, chances and roads, unknown to one another, uniting together at the call and colours of their country, being like brothers, and uniting their hearts to pay it, by a spontaneous will, a respectful and tender homage.

Whilst the company filed off in front of the American troops, they presented arms at the beating of the drums. They were returned the salute by the American colours, at the firing of guns, and as long as they could be seen; the moved spectators had their eyes on them.

They went to deposit into the hands and in the house of the French commissary, the flag they were intrusted with. Citizen L'Aussat leaving the ranks to receive it, addressed them in these words: "French Citizens, I shall mention to our government the patriotic sentiments with which you have to-day, at a distance of 2500 leagues, performed a religious duty towards their flag.—I request your commander to give me your names, I shall send them to the minister of the navy and of the colonies; you may rest assured they will be presented to the first consul."

Scarcely had the French commissary entered his house, when the municipal officers came and said to him, "We wish to pay to you, and the French republic, which you represent, this new homage, while we yet wear, (showing their cockades,) this mark of friendship that united us together."—This scene was very affecting.

They sat at table at 3 o'clock, in the house of the colonial prefect. He gave the commissaries of the United States a dinner, and in the evening a ball, in the highest style.—The entertainment was splendid: Ninety guests were at dinner, and between 4 and 500 at supper. At the large table sixty were sitting; others at small tables laid under the out galleries, the communication of which was shut up from without, and around which were seen flying the American, Spanish, and French standards, of which the brilliant colours and long folds afforded a beautiful sight. The decorations of the main table consisted of wooden plateaux, skilfully wrought; embellished with temples, and pavilions supported by round pillars.—These were different at supper.—The polite attention, and emblematic allusion of having hoisted above these decorations, only the flag of the United States, did not escape the notice of the spectators.

It was likewise observed that almost all the American families of the city were invited.—Civil and military officers who arrived with the commissaries of the United States were seen there in great number. The Spanish civil and military officers were placed round the commissaries of his Catholic majesty; the others were French, and most of them Louisianians.

The toasts of the dinner began immediately, and lasted till the repast was over, and were accompanied with the firing of guns. They were drank in the following order:

With Madeira wine—*The United States and Jefferson.*

With Malaga and Canary wines—*Charles the 11th and Spain.*

With red and white Champagne—*The French Republic and Buonaparte.*

They were re-echoed at a great distance by 63 guns, 21 from the fort, 21 from the French battery before the prefecture, and 21 from the French republican brig L'Argo.

With these toasts given by citizen L'Aussat, the Spanish and American commissaries mingled some in honour of the French commissary and his family; the French commissary complimented them immediately with this—*The indissoluble friendship and union of the three powers whose commissaries are assembled here.*—Other firing of guns were then heard, which