Maryland Journal, 3 July 1787

Copy of two letters from a gentleman at the Falls of the Ohio, to his friend in New-England.

"*Louisville, Falls of the Ohio, 4th December*, 1786.

"DEAR SIR, Politics, which a few months ago were scarcely thought of, are now sounded aloud in this part of the world, and discussed by almost every person. The late commercial treaty with Spain, in shutting up (as it is said) the navigation of the Missisippi River for the term of twenty-five years, has given this western country an universal shock, and struck its inhabitants with amazement.—Our foundation is affected—it is, therefore, necessary that every individual exert himself to apply a remedy. To sell us and make us vassals to the merciless Spaniards, is a grievance not to be borne.—The parliamentary act which occasioned our revolt from Great-Britain, was not so barefaced and intolerable.—To give us a liberty of transporting our effects down the river to New-Orleans, and then be subject to the Spanish laws and impositions, is an insult upon our understanding. We know, by woful experience, that it is in their power, when once there, to take our produce at any price they please.—Large quantities of flour, meat, &c. have been taken there the summer past, and mostly confiscated. Those who had permits from their governor, were obliged to sell at a price he was pleased to state, or subject themselves to lose the whole. Men of large property are already ruined by their policy.—What benefit can you on the Atlantic shores receive from this act? The Spaniards, from the amazing resources of this river, can supply all their own markets, as also foreign markets, at a much lower price than you possibly can.—Though this country has been settling but about six years, and that in the midst of an inveterate enemy, and most of the first adventurers fallen a prey to the merciless savages, and although the emigration to this country is so very rapid, that the internal market is very great, yet the quantities of produce they now have on hand, are immense.—Flour and pork are now selling here at 12s. per Cwt. beef in proportion; and any quantity of Indian corn may be had at 9d. per bushel. Three times the quantity of tobacco and corn can be raised on an acre here, than can be within the settlements on the east side of the mountains, and with less cultivation—it is, therefore, rational to suppose, that, in a very few years, the vast bodies of water in those rivers will labour under the immense weight of the produce of this rich and fertile country, and the Spanish ships be unable to carry it to market. Do you think to prevent the emigration from a barren country, loaded with taxes and impoverished with debt, to the most luxuriant and fertile soil in the world?—Vain is the thought, and presumptuous the supposition!—You may as well endeavour to prevent the fishes from gathering on a bank in the sea, which affords them plenty of nourishment!—Shall the best and largest part of the United States be uncultivated, a nest for savages and beasts of

prey?—Certainly not; Providence has designed it for some nobler purposes.—This is convincing to every one who beholds the many advantages and pleasing prospects of this country.—Here is a soil richer, to appearance, than can be possibly made by art!—Large plains and meadows, without the labour of hands, sufficient to support millions of cattle, summer and winter!—Cane, which is also good nourishment for stock, without bounds!—The spontaneous production of this country surpasses your imagination—consequently I see nothing to prevent our herds being as numerous here, in time, as they are in the kingdom of Mexico.—Our lands north of the Ohio, for the produce of wheat, &c. I think will vie with the Island of Sicily.—Shall all this country now be cultivated entirely for the use of the Spaniards?—Shall we be their bondmen, as the Children of Israel were to the Egyptians?—Shall one part of the United States be slaves, while the other is free?—Human nature shudders at the thought, and despises those who would be so mean as to even contemplate on so vile a subject. Our situation is as bad as it possibly can be; therefore, every exertion to retrieve our circumstances, must be manly, eligible and just.—We can raise twenty thousand troops this side of the Allegany and Apalachian mountains, and the annual increase of them, by emigration from other parts, is from two to four thousand.

"We have taken all the goods belonging to the Spanish merchants at Post St. Vincent [Vincennes] and the Illinois, and are determined that they shall not trade up the river, provided they will not let us trade down it.

"Preparations are now making here (if necessary) to drive the Spaniards from the settlements at the mouth of the Missisippi.

"In case we are not countenanced and succoured by the United States (if we need it) our allegiance will be thrown off, and some other power applied to. Great-Britain stands ready, with open arms, to receive and support us.—They have already offered to open their resources for our supplies.—When once re-united to them, 'farewell—a long farewell to all your boasted greatness'—The province of Canada and the inhabitants of these waters, of themselves, in time, will be able to conquer you.—You are as ignorant of this country as Great-Britain was of America.

"These hints, if rightly improved, may be of some service; if not, blame yourselves for the neglect."

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