

France; but this article, for reasons of state, was kept secret until 1803, when, to the great joy of the colonists, who had never relinquished their attachment to the parent-country, it was made public. But the United States, having a far deeper interest at stake than either of the foreign powers which thus transferred the province from hand to hand, lost no time in opening negotiations with the French government for its cession to their own jurisdiction. Napoleon, aware of the difficulty (considering the inferiority of the French marine to the English,) in retaining this distant territory, was not unwilling to see it transferred into the hands of a friendly, or at least neutral power, rather than be exposed to capture by the enemy. Accordingly, on the 30th of April, 1803, a treaty was signed, by which the United States were to acquire the whole of Louisiana, paying the inconsiderable sum of fifteen millions of dollars, and admitting the vessels of France and Spain, duty free, for twelve years, into the ports of that province. An article of this instrument, drawn up by the hand of the First Consul himself, assured the inhabitants of full equality with all other citizens of the Union, and provided for their speedy incorporation into the confederacy. In delivering the document, he remarked, "Make it known to the people of Louisiana that we regret to part with them; that we have stipulated for all the advantages they could desire; and that France, in giving them up, has ensured to them the greatest of all. They could never have prospered under any European government as they will when they become independent. But, while they enjoy the privileges of liberty, let them remember that they are French, and preserve for their mother-country that affection which a common origin inspires."

On the 30th of November, 1803, the Spanish commissioners gave formal possession of the country to the French prefect, Laussat, presenting him with the keys of the capital. For thirty-four years it had been under possession of the Spaniards, but had in no degree lost its nationality or affection for the parent-country. For twenty days the tri-coloured flag, displayed with a melancholy pleasure, waved over the recovered city, the last of those splendid possessions once held by the French in North America. At the end of that time (December 20th) it was lowered, and replaced by the stripes and stars, and quiet possession of the territory was taken by the United States' authorities.