

James Callender's Reports



1. *Richmond Recorder*, 1 SEPTEMBER 1802 (EXCERPT) THE PRESIDENT, AGAIN

It is well known that the man, whom it *delighteth* the people to honor, keeps, and for many years past has kept, as his concubine, one of his own slaves. Her name is SALLY. The name of her eldest son is TOM. His features are said to bear a striking although sable resemblance to those of the president himself. The boy is ten or twelve years of age. His mother went to France in the same vessel with Mr. Jefferson and his two daughters. The delicacy of this arrangement must strike every person of common sensibility. What a sublime pattern for an American ambassador to son of common sensibility. What a sublime pattern for an American ambassador to place before the eyes of two young ladies!

If the reader does not feel himself disposed to pause we beg leave to proceed. Some years ago, this story had once or twice been hinted at in *Kind's Federalist*. At that time, we believed the surmise to be an absolute calumny. One reason for thinking so was this. A vast body of people wished to debar Mr. Jefferson from the presidency. The establishment of this SINGLE FACT would have rendered his election impossible. We reasoned thus; that if the allegation had been true, it was sure to have been ascertained and advertised by his enemies; in every corner of the continent. The suppression of so decisive an enquiry serves to shew that the common sense of the federal party was overruled by divine providence. It was the predestination of the supreme being that they should be turned out; that they should be expelled from office by the popularity of a character, which, at that instant, was lying fettered and gagged, consumed and extinguished at their feet!

... By this wench Sally, our president has had several children. There is not an individual in the neighbourhood of Charlottesville who does not believe the story; and not a few who know it. . . Behold the favorite, the first born of republicanism! the pinnacle of all that is good and great in the open consumption of an act which tends to subvert the policy, the happiness, and even the existence of this country!

"It is supposed that, at the time when Mr. Jefferson wrote so smartly concerning

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negroes, when he endeavoured much to belittle the African race, he had no expectation that the chief magistrate of the United States was to be the ringleader in shewing that his opinion was erroneous; or, that he should chuse an African stock whereupon he was to ingraft his own descendants. . . .

If the friends of Mr. Jefferson are convinced of his innocence, they will make an appeal of the same sort [that Callender had successfully made for public testimonials which he rebutted charges against him in connection with his putative role in the Alexander Hamilton-Maria Reynolds scandal]. If they rest in silence, or if they content themselves with resting upon a general denial, they cannot hope for credit. The allegation is of a nature too black to be suffered to remain in suspense. We should be glad to hear of its refutation. We give it to the world under the firmest belief that such a refutation never can be made. The AFRICAN VENUS is said to officiate, as housekeeper at Monticello. When Mr. Jefferson has read this article, he will find leisure to estimate how much has been lost or gained by so many unprovoked attacks upon

J. T. CALLENDER.

2. *Richmond Recorder*, 20 OCTOBER 1802

We are surprised at the petulance of some eastern editors in still affecting to doubt the truth of Sally's story. In this state, at least as far as we can learn, every body believes it. On the second day after the first publication, when the demos were denying the whole, a gentleman came into the district court, and offered to bet a suit of cloaths, or any sum of money, with any man present, that the charge was correct. He specified a small exception, which we have since noticed. Sally did not go to France in the same ship with our French ambassador. She went afterwards, and the gentleman said something about the black wench and the captain, which we do not think it necessary to repeat. Nobody would venture to take up this gentleman. He was known to be capable of paying a debt; and to have the best access to family information. If we had been mad enough to publish a tale of such enormous, of such inexpressible ignominy without a solid foundation, the Recorder, and its editors must have been ruined. All decent men would have struck out their names. We have lost but five or six in Richmond. One of these is a young man, whose own father-in-law hath since actually subscribed. Some of those who gave up their papers have been since harassing their acquaintances to lend them the Recorder. "Why did you not keep the paper, when you had it?" said a gentleman to one of those borrowers. Twelve days after the publication of Sally's affair, Mr. Ralph Wormely, a gentleman whose wealth is as great as his probity, sits down, writes and subscribes a defence of the Recorder. He thanks us, in particular, for telling so much truth of political characters. Do you conceive, that a person of Mr. Wormely's standing would hazard the strong encomiums which he has bestowed, unless after the most serious premeditation? Since the publication of Sally, we have had at least an hundred and fifty new subscribers. Many of them are among the most respectable citizens of Virginia. Strange! If all these people subscribe with the previous certainty that the editors of this paper could have propagated a base calumny, Mr. Coleman of New York, and our corps of subscribers in that city, our

friends in Philadelphia, about fifty subscribers in Baltimore, and sixty in New Jersey, may all rest assured that, upon Sally's business, as upon every other quarter, the reputation of our veracity is invulnerable.

SOURCE NOTE

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