

Documents from the Paris National Archives relating to Stephen Grellet.

The National Archives in Paris furnish material for supplementing *Le Livre Noir*.

The documents respecting the emigration of the Grellet family are to be found in F⁷ 5780. Gabriel Grellet, a merchant of Limoges, had four sons and three daughters; three of the sons were abroad in 1792, and were scheduled under the head "refugees." The father, who was himself at one time imprisoned, made repeated efforts, and presented many petitions with a view of obtaining the removal of their names from the list of refugees; he obtained a provisional removal on the 6th of Floréal, III^d year,¹ but some influence, arising from local animosities, delayed the actual removal, and in 1798 Gabriel was at work again. It was a question with him of preventing the sale of property which, under the partition ordered by the law of the 9th of Floréal, III^d year,² had been allotted to his sons, and confiscated as the property of refugees.

Every effort of Grellet, the father, tends to prove that his sons went away for purposes of business. He denies that any one of them was with the army of the Princes.³ After spending five years at Lyons his three sons "worked for about a year in the establishment of their brother-in-law at Brive." Then they left for Frankfurt, and whilst the oldest, Pierre, went off to Amsterdam, Joseph and Etienne, after gaining sufficient knowledge of German, betook themselves *incognito*, as workmen, to the forges of Styria, in order "to discover the secret of the manufacture of scythes, a secret known only in this distant part of Germany."

Although, according to one of the petitions of the father, they had set out at the end of September, 1791,

¹ Third year of the Republican Calendar, *viz.*, 25th of April, 1795.

² 28th of April, 1795.

³ Stephen Grellet enters it : see his *Memoirs*, 1862, vol. i., pp. 9, 10.

the leave of absence given to Etienne by the captain in command of the *Garde Nationale* of Limoges, bears the date of the 2nd of January, 1792. Either Grellet put the date of his sons' departure earlier in order the better to get rid of the idea of a political reason for it, or he obtained the permission after they had gone. The leave is granted "to Mr. Etienne Grellet, merchant and manufacturer, aged 19 years, height 5 feet, 2 inches, 6 lines."

Our documents assert that on the 13th of December Etienne is with Joseph in Hamburg, where he is engaged in selling the model of a porcelain kiln, but there is no mention of Hamburg in Grellet's *Memoirs*. The letters upon which the father relies to certify the fact must have been forged by his sons in agreement with him.

Certificates dated from Amsterdam, 24th of December, 1792, vouch for the embarkation of Etienne and Joseph for Demerara (Guiana).

Pierre remained in Holland; one of his letters to their father (Amsterdam) gives information about Etienne's position⁴ :—

13th of March, 1794.

You will find herewith a letter that my brothers have written to me; it appears that they are well. Etienne, who had left M. Jourdan and had gone to M. Tausch whilst waiting for another situation, does not tell me that he has found one, but in the letter which he writes to Messrs. St. Martin he says, "M. Tausch has written to us," so that it appears that he is no longer with him, and that he has a place. You will see how ill founded is their hope as to the purchase of a plantation, at least until peace is made. Messrs. St. Martin, who are much attached to them, are to send them a small stock [of goods] by the next ship. You will see that they ask for some barrels of nails. I will write to M. Speder on the subject.

Etienne himself relates his adventures in a letter dated from Demerara (6th of August, 1793), of which I merely give an extract⁵ :—

. . . As to the place we occupy here, and which the Dutchmen call head-servant, it is next to nothing, and even that of manager, to which we might attain in a year, would not make us richer than we are after twenty years' work, unless by stealing, an infamous means, and those who make use of it are found out sooner or later. Here we are, my brother and I, in almost the same position as we were on our arrival here, except for the knowledge that we have gained. I was with

⁴ F7 5780.

⁵ F7 5780.

M. Jourdan, doctor and planter ; he has just told me that having decided to give up his medical practice, which involved almost continual absence from his plantation, my work with him would cease, as he wishes to perform it himself. So here I was disappointed in what I had hoped for, in the event of his going to Europe. I returned to M. Tausch, to whom Messrs. St. Martin gave us a special recommendation. I am waiting impatiently for another place to turn up. I only spent five months with M. Jourdan, but they have been to me more than a year anywhere else, owing to the opportunities for gaining knowledge. The plantation on which my brother is has just been sold, so he is also without a place. If you send us any goods, I beg Grellet [his eldest brother] to send them to care of M. J. G. Tausch. Rest assured, dear Father, that by circumspection in all our actions or dealings, and by our conduct, we shall deserve the approbation of those who know us. If we cannot force fortune to come our way, we will, at any rate, force honest men to esteem us. To set up an establishment [to marry], or do any thing in this country is a difficult matter. Interest alone moves people's hearts. If a man is poor there is nothing to hope, but with some small beginning of a fortune, if only in appearance even, advantageous posts can be obtained. Some unscrupulous persons, by thinking only of marrying for money, sometimes make fortunes, but your children will never make you blush by an alliance with mulattos or half-castes, etc., never ; the idea would not even enter our heads. We are poor in this country in which we only have our hands to depend upon ; we are filling a place usually only occupied by sailors or soldiers, and one humiliating through the name attached to it, but I think it is not the place that degrades a man, but so long as it is filled by an honest man, it becomes honourable. . . .

The profligacy of the planters and their cruelty to the slaves were especially revolting to their sense of honour. We find in a letter signed by the brothers (Demerara, the 10th of February, 1794)⁶:—

. . . It may be said that no religion is professed here⁷ ; there are neither temples, churches, nor ministers ; there was a minister sent by the Government, who has gone back again ; his duties were confined to baptism and marriage. The places for the administration of justice only exist for those who profess the dominant religion of Holland. There is no school of any kind ; consequently the greater part of the whites who have been brought up here betray their want of education. As they are continually with slaves, accustomed to see their every wish carried out, or to see chastisement inhumanly dealt out to any refusing to obey, their hearts are naturally hardened. What I say in this respect refers to both sexes. From this bad upbringing springs the barbarity that we sometimes see inflicted upon the negroes. . . . If many persons do not long survive in the colonies, it must not so much be attributed to the bad character of the climate as to intemperance and other excesses.

⁶ F7 5780.

⁷ See *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 12.

We rarely have epidemic diseases here, and when they occur, it is principally during the drought; the best remedy that can be employed against them is to drink plenty of water and abstain from meat. The heat of the sun, to which we are continually exposed, is sometimes a source of very great danger, especially to persons carrying too much or too little flesh.

The 27th of Nivose, year 8,⁸ Joseph and Etienne, who are not yet definitely removed from the list of refugees, are placed under the surveillance of the municipal authority of Liancourt (Oise). We must, no doubt, understand that residence had been assigned them at this place, in the event of their return.

On this date a petition in their favour states that they have established a commercial house in New York.

At this time also, the great philanthropist, La Rochefoucauld Liancourt, intervenes on their behalf; his letter is as follows⁹:—

It will not appear extraordinary for an unhappy man just recalled from banishment to intercede on behalf of citizens as unjustly treated as himself.

I can certify that I am personally acquainted with the three brothers Grellet, that two of them, whom I have seen in America, and who have joined the Society of Quakers, continue to deserve the esteem of all honest men, and to show themselves good Frenchmen. I have seen them in union and association with the most benevolent and philanthropic Quakers, sharing with them the care and labour of the good that they were doing.

I knew Pierre Grellet also at Amsterdam, a partner in the firm of Wiltz, and giving evidence of the feelings of an honourable man and a very good Frenchman.

It is not poverty which makes them wish to see the soil of their fatherland again, since they are attached to flourishing commercial houses, but the desire to see their fatherland and family—a more imperious call than that of fortune. And I can from experience bear witness that there is nothing surprising in this feeling.

LA ROCHEFOUCAULD LIANCOURT.

The 22nd Nivose, year 8.¹⁰

GUSTAV LANSON.

To be continued.

⁸ 17th of January, 1800.

⁹ F7 5780.

¹⁰ 12th of January, 1800.