A Price on His Head
or
What Happens When You Test
A Governor's Patience

(Taken from the Niles Register, November, 1813)

(By Authority)
By Wm. C. C. Claiborne
Governor of the state of Louisiana & Commander in chief of the militia thereof.

A PROCLAMATION

Whereas, the nefarious practice of running in contraband goods, which has hitherto prevailed in different parts of this state, to the great injury of the fair trader, and the diminution of the revenue of the United States, has of late much increased; and whereas the violators of the law, emboldened by the impunity of past trespasses, no longer conceal themselves from the view of the honest part of the community, but setting the government at defiance, in broad daylight, openly carry on their infamous traffic; and whereas it has officially been made known to me that on the fourteenth of the last month a quantity of contraband goods seized by Walker Gilbert, an officer of the revenue of the United States, were forcibly taken from him in open day, at no great distance from New Orleans, by a party of armed men, under the orders of a certain John Lafitte, who fired upon, and grievously wounded one of the assistants of the said Walker Gilbert; and although process has issued for the apprehension of him the said John Lafitte; yet such is the countenance and protection afforded him or the terror excited by the threats of himself and his associates, that the same remains unexecuted.

And whereas the apathy of the good people of this state, in checking practices so opposed to morality, and to the laws and interest of the United States, may impair the fair character which Louisiana maintains, and ought to preserve as a member of the American Union:

I have thought proper to issue this my proclamation, hereby strictly charging and commanding all officers of the state, civil and military, in their respective departments, to be vigilant and active in preventing the violation of the laws in the premises, and in apprehending and securing all persons offending therein; and I do solemnly caution all and singular the citizens of this state against giving any kind of succour, support or countenance to the said John Lafitte and his associates, but to be aiding and abetting in arresting him and them, and all others in like manner offending; and I do furthermore in the name of the state, offer a reward of Five Hundred Dollars which will be paid out of the public treasury to any person delivering the said John Lafitte to the sheriff of the parish of New Orleans, or to any other sheriff in the state, so that he the said John Lafitte may be brought to justice.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto caused the seal of the state to be affixed. Given at New Orleans on the 24th day of November, 1813, and of the Independence of the United States the thirty eighth.

EPLOGUE

Laffite, of course, was prepared with an answer for this proclamation; shortly after it appeared in print, he penned a parody of it in which he offered $5,000 to anyone who would deliver Gov. Claiborne to him at the Isle au Chat near Bayou Lafourche.

Neither got any takers on their offers.