AN

APPEAL

IN FAVOR OF THAT CLASS

OF

AMERICANS CALLED AFRICANS.

BY MRS. CHILD,
AUTHOR OF THE MOTHER'S BOOK, THE GIRL'S OWN BOOK,
THE FRUGAL HOUSEWIFE, ETC.

"We have offended, Oh! my countrymen!
We have offended very grievously,
And been most tyrannous. From east to west
A groan of accusation pierces Heaven!
The wretched plead against us; multitudes,
Countless and vehement, the sons of God,
Our brethren!"

COLE RIDGE.

BOSTON:
ALLEN AND TICKNOR.
1833.
ed it. There is genuine wisdom in the following remark, extracted from the petition of Cambridge University to the Parliament of England, on the subject of slavery: "A firm belief in the Providence of a benevolent Creator assures us that no system, founded on the oppression of one part of mankind, can be beneficial to another."

But the tolerator of slavery will say, "No doubt the system is an evil; but we are not to blame for it; we received it from our English ancestors. It is a lamentable necessity;—we cannot do it away if we would;—insurrections would be the inevitable result of any attempt to remove it"—and having quieted their consciences by the use of the word lamentable, they think no more upon the subject.

These assertions have been so often, and so dogmatically repeated, that many truly kind-hearted people have believed there was some truth in them. I myself, (may God forgive me for it!) have often, in thoughtless ignorance, made the same remarks.

An impartial and careful examination has led me to the conviction that slavery causes insurrections, while emancipation prevents them.

The grand argument of the slave holder is that sudden freedom occasioned the horrible massacres of St Domingo. — If a word is said in favor of abolition, he shakes his head, and points a warning finger to St Domingo! But it is a remarkable fact that this same vilified island furnishes a strong argument against the lamentable necessity of slavery. In the first place, there was a bloody civil war there before the act of emancipation was passed; in the second place enfranchisement produced the most blessed effects; in the third place, no difficulties whatever arose, until Bonaparte made his atrocious attempt to restore slavery in the island.

Colonel Malenfant, a slave proprietor, resident in St Domingo at the time, thus describes the effect of sudden enfranchisement, in his Historical and Political Memoir of the Colonies:

"After this public act of emancipation, the negroes remained quiet both in the south and in the west, and they continued to work upon all the plantations. There were
estates which had neither owners nor managers resident upon them, yet upon these estates, though abandoned, the negroes continued their labors where there were any, even inferior agents, to guide them; and on those estates where no white men where left to direct them, they be-took themselves to the planting of provisions; but upon all the plantations where the whites resided, the blacks continued to labor as quietly as before." Colonel Mal-enfant says, that when many of his neighbors, proprietors or managers, were in prison, the negroes of their plantations came to him to beg him to direct them in their work.

He adds, "If you will take care not to talk to them of the restoration of slavery, but to talk to them of freedom, you may with this word chain them down to their labor. How did Toussaint succeed?—How did I succeed before his time in the plain of the Culde-Sae on the plantation Gouraud, during more than eight months after liberty had been granted to the slaves? Let those who knew me at that time, let the blacks themselves, be asked: they will all reply that not a single negro upon that plantation, consisting of more than four hundred and fifty laborers, refused to work: and yet this plantation was thought to be under the worst discipline and the slaves the most idle of any in the plain. I inspired the same activity into three other plantations of which I had the management. If all the negroes had come from Africa within six months, if they had the love of independence that the Indians have, I should own that force must be employed; but ninetynine out of a hundred of the blacks are aware that without labor they cannot procure the things that are necessary for them; that there is no other method of satisfying their wants and their tastes. They know that they must work, they wish to do so, and they will do so."

Such was the conduct of the negroes for the first nine months after their liberation, or up to the middle of 1794. In the latter part of 1796, Malenfant says, "the colony was flourishing under Toussaint, the whites lived happily and in peace upon their estates, and the negroes con-
continued to work for them." General Lecroix who published his "Memoirs for a History of St Domingo" in 1819, says, that in 1797 the most wonderful progress had been made in agriculture. "The Colony," says he, "marched as by enchantment towards its ancient splendor: cultivation prospered; every day produced perceptible proof of its progress." General Vincent,* who was a general of brigade of artillery in St Domingo and a proprietor of estates in the island, was sent by Toussaint to Paris in 1801 to lay before the Directory the new constitution which had been agreed upon in St Domingo. He arrived in France just at the moment of the peace of Amiens, and found that Bonaparte was preparing an armament for the purpose of restoring slavery in St Domingo. He remonstrated against the expedition; he stated that it was totally unnecessary and therefore criminal, for everything was going on well in St Domingo. The proprietors were in peaceable possession of their estates; cultivation was making rapid progress; the blacks were industrious and beyond example happy. He conjured him, therefore, not to reverse this beautiful state of things; but his efforts were ineffectual, and the expedition arrived upon the shores of St Domingo. At length, however the French were driven from the island. Till that time the planters had retained their property, and then it was, and not till then, that they lost their all. In 1804, Dessalines was proclaimed Emperor; in process of time a great part of the black troops were disbanded, and returned to cultivation again. From that time to this, there has been no want of subordination or industry among them."

The following account of Hayti at a later period is quoted from Mr Harvey's sketches of that island, during the latter part of the reign of Christophé:

"Those who by their exertions and economy were enabled to procure small spots of land of their own or to hold the smaller plantations at an annual rent, were diligently engaged in cultivating coffee, sugar, and other articles, which they disposed of to the inhabitants of the

* Clarkson's Thoughts, p. 2.
adjacent towns and villages. It was an interesting sight to behold this class of the Haytians, now in possession of their freedom, coming in groups to the market nearest which they resided, bringing the produce of their industry for sale; and afterwards returning, carrying back the necessary articles of living which the disposal of their commodities had enabled them to purchase; all evidently cheerful and happy. Nor could it fail to occur to the mind that their present condition furnished the most satisfactory answer to that objection to the general emancipation of slaves, founded on their alleged unfitness to value and improve the benefits of liberty.

"Though of the same race and possessing the same general traits of character as the negroes of the other West India islands, they are already distinguished from them by habits of industry and activity, such as slaves are seldom known to exhibit. As they would not suffer, so they do not require, the attendance of one acting in the capacity of a driver with the instrument of punishment in his hand."

"In Guadaloupe, the conduct of the freed negroes was equally satisfactory. The perfect subordination which was established and the industry which prevailed there, are proved by the official Reports of the Governor of Guadaloupe, to the French government. In 1793 liberty was proclaimed universally to the slaves in that island, and during their ten years of freedom, their governors bore testimony to their regular industry and uninterrupted submission to the laws."

"During the first American war, a number of slaves ran away from their North American masters and joined the British army. When peace came, it was determined to give them their liberty, and to settle them in Nova Scotia, upon grants of land, as British subjects and as free men. Their number, comprehending men, women and children, was two thousand and upwards. Some of them worked upon little portions of land as their own; others worked as carpenters; others became fishermen; and others worked for hire in various ways. In time, having embraced Christianity, they raised places of worship of their own, and had ministers of their own.