THE

HISTORY,

CIVIL AND COMMERCIAL,

OF THE

BRITISH COLONIES

IN THE

WEST INDIES.

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FOURTH EDITION,

WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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AN

HISTORICAL SURVEY

OF THE

FRENCH COLONY

IN THE

ISLAND OF ST. DOMINGO:

COMPREHENDING AN ACCOUNT OF

THE REVOLT OF THE NEGROES

IN THE YEAR 1791,

AND

A DETAIL OF THE MILITARY TRANSACTIONS OF THE

BRITISH ARMY IN THAT ISLAND,

IN THE YEARS 1793 & 1794.

VOL. III.
Soom after I had published the History of the British Colonies in the West Indies, I conceived the design of compiling a general account of the settlements made by all the nations of Europe in that part of the New Hemisphere, but more particularly the French, whose possessions were undoubtedly the most valuable and productive of the whole Archipelago. This idea suggested itself to me on surveying the materials I had collected with regard to their principal colony in St. Domingo; not doubting, as the fortune of war had placed under the British dominion all or most of the other French islands, that I should easily procure such particulars of the condition, population, and culture of each, as would enable me to complete my design, with credit to myself, and satisfaction to the public. I am sorry to observe, that in this expectation I have hitherto found myself disappointed. The present publication therefore,
therefore, is confined wholly to St. Domingo; concerning which, having personally visited that unhappy country soon, after the revolt of the negroes in 1791, and formed connexions there, which have supplied me with regular communications ever since, I possess a mass of evidence, and important documents. My motives for going thither, are of little consequence to the public; but the circumstances which occasioned the voyage, the reception I met with, and the situation in which I found the wretched Inhabitants, cannot fail of being interesting to the reader; and I flatter myself that a short account of those particulars, while it confers some degree of authenticity on my labours, will not be thought an improper Introduction to my Book.

In the month of September 1791, when I was at Spanish Town in Jamaica, two French Gentlemen were introduced to me, who were just arrived from St. Domingo, with information that the negro slaves belonging to the French part of that island, to the number, as was believed, of 100,000 and upwards, had revolted, and were spreading death and desolation over the whole of the northern province. They reported that the governor-general, considering the situation of the colony as a common cause among the white inhabitants of all nations in the West Indies, had dispatched commissioners to the neighbouring islands, as well as to the States of North America, to request immediate assistance of troops, arms, ammunition, and provisions; and that themselves were deputed
deputed on the same errand to the Government at Jamaica: I was accordingly desired to present them to the Earl of Effingham, the commander in chief. Although the dispatches with which these gentlemen were furnished, were certainly a very sufficient introduction to his lordship, I did not hesitate to comply with their request; and it is scarcely necessary to observe, that the liberal and enlarged mind which animated every part of Lord Effingham's conduct, needed no solicitation, in a case of beneficence and humanity. Superior to national prejudice, he felt, as a man and a christian ought to feel, for the calamities of fellowmen; and he saw, in its full extent, the danger to which every island in the West Indies would be exposed from such an example, if the triumph of savage anarchy over all order and government should be complete. He therefore, without hesitation, assured the commissioners that they might depend on receiving from the government of Jamaica, every assistance and succour which it was in his power to give. Troops he could not offer, for he had them not; but he said he would furnish arms, ammunition, and provisions, and he promised to consult with the distinguished Officer commanding in the naval department, concerning the propriety of sending up one or more of his Majesty's ships; the commissioners having suggested that the appearance in their harbours of a few vessels of war might serve to intimidate the insurgents, and keep them at a distance, while the necessary defences and intrenchments were
were making to preserve the city of Cape François from an attack.

Admiral Affleck (as from his known worth and general character might have been expected) very cheerfully co-operated on this occasion with Lord Effingham; and immediately issued orders to the captains of the Blonde and Daphne frigates to proceed, in company with a sloop of war, forthwith to Cape François. The Centurion was soon afterwards ordered to Port au Prince. The Blonde being commanded by my amiable and lamented friend, Captain William Affleck, who kindly undertook to convey the French commissioners back to St. Domingo, I was easily persuaded to accompany them thither; and some other gentlemen of Jamaica joined the party.

We arrived in the harbour of Cape François in the evening of the 26th of September, and the first object which arrested our attention as we approached, was a dreadful scene of devastation by fire. The noble plain adjoining the Cape was covered with ashes, and the surrounding hills, as far as the eye could reach, everywhere presented to us ruins still smoking, and houses and plantations at that moment in flames. It was a sight more terrible than the mind of any man, unaccustomed to such a scene, can easily conceive.—The inhabitants of the town being assembled on the beach, directed all their attention towards us, and we landed amidst a crowd of spectators who, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, gave welcome
to their deliverers (for such they considered us) and acclamations of "vivez les Anglotes resounded from every quarter.

The governor of St. Domingo, at that time, was the unfortunate General Blanchelandé; a "marchal de camp" in the French service, who has since perished on the scaffold. He did us the honour to receive us on the quay. A committee of the colonial assembly, accompanied by the governor's only son, an amiable and accomplished youth*, had before attended us on board the Blonde, and we were immediately conducted to the place of their meeting. The scene was striking and solemn. The hall was splendidly illuminated, and all the members appeared in mourning. Chairs were placed for us within the bar, and the Governor having taken his seat on the right hand of the President, the latter addressed us in an eloquent and affecting oration, of which the following is as literal a translation, as the idiom of the two languages will admit:

"We were not mistaken, Gentlemen, when we placed our confidence in your generosity; but we could hardly entertain the hope, that, besides sending us succours, you would come in person to give us consolation. You have quitted, with out reluctance, the peaceful enjoyment of happiness at home, to come and participate in the misfortunes of strangers, and blend your tears

* This young gentleman likewise perished by the guillotine under the tyranny of Robespierre. He was massacred at Paris, on the 20th July 1794, in the twentieth year of his age.

"with
with ours. Scenes of misery (the contemplation
of which, to those who are unaccustomed to
misfortune, is commonly disgusting) have not
suppressed your feelings. You have been wil-
ing to ascertain the full extent of our distresses,
and to pour into our wounds the salutary balm
of your sensibility and compassion.

The picture which has been drawn of our ca-
lamities, you will find has fallen short of the rea-
ality. That verdure with which our fields were
lately arrayed, is no longer visible; discoloured
by the flames, and laid waste by the devastations
of war, our coasts exhibit no prospect but that
of desolation. The emblems which we wear on
our persons, are the tokens of our grief for the
loss of our brethren, who were surprized, and
 cruelly assassinated, by the revolters.

It is by the glare of the conflagrations that
every way surround us, that we now deliberate:
we are compelled to sit armed and watchful
through the night, to keep the enemy from our
sanctuary. For a long time past our bosoms
have been depressed by sorrow; they experience
this day, for the first time, the sweet emotions of
pleasure, in beholding you amongst us.

Generous islanders! humanity has operated
powerfully on your hearts;—you have yielded to
the first emotion of your generosity, in the hopes
of snatching us from death; for it is already too
late to save us from misery. What a contrast be-
tween your conduct, and that of other nations!
We will avail ourselves of your benevolence;

but
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"but the days you preserve to us, will not be suffi-
cient to manifest our gratitude: our children
shall keep it in remembrance.

"Regenerated France, unapprized that such
calamities might befall us, has taken no measures
to protect us against their effects: with what
admiration will she learn, that, without your
assistance, we should no longer exist as a de-
pendency to any nation.

"The Commissioners deputed by us to the
island of Jamaica, have informed us of your ex-
terions to serve us.—Receive the assurance of
our attachment and sensibility.

"The Governor-general of this island, whose
sentiments perfectly accord with our own, par-
ticipates equally in the joy we feel at your pre-
sence, and in our gratitude for the assistance
you have brought us."

At this juncture, the French colonists in St.
Domingo, however they might have been divided in
political sentiments on former occasions, seemed to
be softened, by the sense of common suffering, into
perfect unanimity. All descriptions of persons
joined in one general outcry against the National
Assembly, to whose proceedings were imputed
all their disasters. This opinion was indeed so
widely disseminated, and so deeply rooted, as to
create a very strong disposition in the white in-
habitants of Cape François, to renounce their al-
legiance to the mother country. The black
cockade was universally substituted in place of
the
the tri-coloured one, and very earnest wishes were avowed in all companies, without scruple or restraint, that the British administration would send an armament to conquer the island, or rather to receive its voluntary surrender from the inhabitants. What they wished might happen, they persuaded themselves to believe was actually in contemplation; and this idea soon became so prevalent, as to place the author of this work in an awkward situation. The sanguine disposition observable in the French character, has been noticed by all who have visited them; but in this case their credulity grew to a height that was extravagant and even ridiculous. By the kindness of the Earl of Effingham, I was favoured with a letter of introduction to the Governor-general; and my reception, both by M. Blanchelande and the colonial assembly, was such as not only to excite the publick attention, but also to induce a very general belief that no common motive had brought me thither. The suggestions of individuals to this purpose, became perplexing and troublesome. Assurances on my part, that I had no views beyond the gratification of curiosity, had no other effect than to call forth commendations on my prudence. It was settled, that I was an agent of the English ministry, sent purposely to sound the inclinations of the Colonists towards the Government of Great Britain, preparatory to an invasion of the country by a British armament; and their wishes and inclinations co-operating with this idea, gave rise to many strange applications which were made to me; some
some of them of so ludicrous a nature, as no powers of face could easily withstand.

This circumstance is not recorded from the vain ambition of shewing my own importance. The reader of the following pages will discover its application; and, perhaps, it may induce him to make some allowance for that confident expectation of sure and speedy success, which afterwards led to attempts, by the British arms, against this ill-fated country, with means that must otherwise have been thought at the time,—as in the sequel they have unhappily proved,—altogether inadequate to the object in view.

The ravages of the rebellion, during the time that I remained at Cape François, extended in all directions. The whole of the plain of the Cape, with the exception of one plantation which adjoined the town, was in ruins; as were likewise the Parish of Limonade, and most of the settlements in the mountains adjacent. The Parish of Limbé was everywhere on fire; and before my departure, the rebels had obtained possession of the bay and forts at l'Acul, as well as the districts of Fort Dauphin, Dondon, and La Grande Rivière.

Destruction everywhere where marked their progress, and resistance seemed to be considered by the whites, not only as unavailing in the present conjuncture, but as hopeless in future. To fill up the measure of their calamities, their Spanish neighbours in the same island, with a spirit of bigotry and hatred which is, I believe, without an example
example in the world, refused to lend any assistance towards suppressing a revolt, in the issue of which common reason should have informed them, that their own preservation was implicated equally with that of the French. They were even accused not only of supplying the rebels with arms and provisions; but also of delivering up to them to be murdered, many unhappy French planters who had fled for refuge to the Spanish territories, and receiving money from the rebels as the price of their blood. Of these latter charges, however, no proof was, I believe, ever produced; and, for the honour of human nature, I am unwilling to believe that they are true.

To myself, the case appeared altogether desperate from the beginning; and many of the most respectable and best informed persons in Cape François (some of them in high stations) assured me, in confidence, that they concurred in this opinion. The merchants and importers of European manufactures, apprehending every hour the destruction of the town, as much from incendiaries within, as from the rebels without, offered their goods for ready money at half the usual prices; and applications were made to Captain Affleck, by persons of all descriptions, for permission to embark in the Blonde for Jamaica. The interposition of the colonial government obliged him to reject their solicitations; but means were contrived to send on board consignments of money to a great amount; and I know that other conveyances were found, by which effects to a considerable
derable value were exported both to Jamaica, and the states of North America.

Under these circumstances, it very naturally occurred to me to direct my enquiries towards the state of the colony previous to the revolt, and collect authentick information on the spot, concerning the primary cause, and subsequent progress, of the widely extended ruin before me. Strongly impressed with the gloomy idea, that the only memorial of this once flourishing colony would soon be found in the records of history, I was desirous that my own country and fellow-colonists, in lamenting its catastrophe, might at the same time profit by so terrible an example. My means of information were too valuable to be neglected, and I determined to avail myself of them. The Governor-general furnished me with copies of all the papers and details of office that I solicited, with a politeness that augmented the favour. The fate of this unhappy gentleman, two years afterwards, gave me infinite concern. Like his royal master, he was unfortunately called to a station to which his abilities were not competent; and in times when perhaps no abilities would have availed him.

The President of the colonial assembly, at the time of my arrival, was M. de Caducsh, who some time afterwards took up his residence, and held an important office, in Jamaica. He was a man of very distinguished talents, and withal strongly and sincerely attached to the British government, of which, if it were proper, I could furnish unquestionable
tionable proof.* This gentlemen drew up, at my request, a short account of the origin and progress of the rebellion; and after my return to England, favoured me with his correspondence. Many important facts, which are given in this work, are given on his authority.

To M. Delaire, a very considerable and respectable merchant in the town of the Cape, who has since removed to the state of South Carolina, I was indebted for a similar narrative, drawn up by himself in the English language, of which he is a very competent master. It is brief, but much to the purpose; displays an intimate knowledge of the concerns of the colony, and traces, with great acuteness, its disasters to their source.

But the friend from whose superior knowledge I have derived my chief information in all respects, is the gentleman alluded to in the marginal note to p. 120 of the following sheets; and I sincerely regret, that ill fortune has so pursued him as to render it improper in this work to express to him, by name, the obligations I owe to his kindness. After a narrow escape from the vengeance of those merciless men, Santhonax and Polverel, he was induced to return to St. Domingo, to look after his property; and, I grieve to say, that he is again fallen into the hands of his enemies. He found

* He afterwards accompanied General Williamson back to St. Domingo, and was killed (or, as I have heard, basely murdered) in a duel at Port au Prince, by one of his countrymen.
means, however, previous to his present confinement, to convey to me many valuable papers; and, among others, a copy of that most curious and important document, the dying deposition or testament of Oggè, mentioned in the fourth chapter, and printed at large among the additional notes and illustrations at the end of my work. Of this paper (the communication of which, in proper time, would have prevented the dreadful scenes that followed) although I had frequently heard, I had long doubted the existence. Its suppression by the persons to whom it was delivered by the wretched sufferer, appeared to be an act of such monstrous and unexampled wickedness, that, until I saw the paper itself, I could not credit the charge. Whether M. Blanchelande was a party concerned in this atrocious proceeding, as my friend asserts, I know not. If he was guilty, he has justly paid the forfeit of his crime; and although, believing him innocent, I mourned over his untimely fate, I scruple not to avow my opinion, that if he had possessed a thousand lives, the loss of them all had not been a sufficient atonement, in so enormous a case, to violated justice!

Such were the motives that induced me to undertake this Historical Survey of the French part of St. Domingo, and such are the authorities from whence I have derived my information concerning those calamitous events which have brought it to ruin. Yet I will frankly confess, that, if I have any credit with the publick as an author, I am not sure this work will add to my reputation. Every writer
writer must rise or sink, in some degree, with the nature of his subject; and on this occasion, the picture which I shall exhibit, has nothing in it to delight the fancy, or to gladden the heart. The prospects before us are all dark and dismal. Here is no room for tracing the beauties of unsullied nature. Those groves of perennial verdure; those magnificent and romantick landscapes, which, in tropical regions, every where invite the eye, and oftentimes detain it, until wonder is exalted to devotion, must now give place to the miseries of war, and the horrors of pestilence; to scenes of anarchy, desolation, and carnage. We have to contemplate the human mind in its utmost deformity: to behold savage man, let loose from restraint, exercising cruelties, of which the bare recital makes the heart recoil, and committing crimes which are hitherto unheard of in history; teeming
defect. On the sober and considerate, on those who are open to conviction, this assemblage of horrors will have its effect. It will expose the lamentable ignorance of some, and the monstrous wickedness of others, among the reformers of the present day, who, urging onwards schemes of perfection, and projects of amendment in the condition of human
human life, faster than nature allows, are light-
ing up a consuming fire between the different
classes of mankind, which nothing but human
blood can extinguish. To tell such men that great
and beneficial modifications in the established or-
ders of society, can only be effected by a pro-
gressive improvement in the situation of the lower
ranks of the people, is to preach to the winds.
In their hands reformation, with a scythe the more
destructive than that of Time, mows down every-
thing, and plants nothing. Moderation and cau-
tion they consider as rank cowardice. Force and
violence are the ready, and, in their opinion, the
only proper application for the cure of early and
habitual prejudice. Their practice, like that of
other mountebanks, is bold and compendious;
their motto is, *cure or kill.*

These reflections naturally arise from the cir-
cumstance which is incontrovertibly proved in the
following pages, namely, that the rebellion of the
negroes in St. Domingo, and the insurrection of
the mulattoes, to whom Ogé was sent as am-
bassador, had one and the same origin. It was
not the strong and irresistible impulse of human
nature, groaning under oppression, that excited
either of those classes to plunge their daggers into
the bosoms of unoffending women and helpless in-
fants. They were driven into those excesses—re-
luctantly driven—by the vile machinations of men
calling themselves philosophers (the proselytes
and imitators in France, of the Old Jewry asso-
ciates in London) whose pretences to philanthropy

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were as gross a mockery of human reason, as their conduct was an outrage on all the feelings of our nature, and the ties which hold society together!

It is indeed true, that negro-rebellions have heretofore arisen in this and other islands of the West Indies, to which no such exciting causes contributed:—but it is equally certain, that those rebellions always originated among the newly-imported negroes only; many of whom had probably lived in a state of freedom in Africa, and had been fraudulently, or forcibly, sold into slavery by their chiefs. That cases of this kind do sometimes occur in the slave-trade, I dare not dispute, and I admit that revolt and insurrection are their natural consequences.

But, in St. Domingo, a very considerable part of the insurgents were— not Africans, but—Creoles, or natives. Some of the leaders were favoured domesticks among the white inhabitants, born and brought up in their families. A few of them had even received those advantages, the perversion of which, under their philosophical preceptors, served only to render them pre-eminent in mischief; for having been taught to read, they were led to imbibe, and enabled to promulgate, those principles and doctrines which led, and always will lead, to the subversion of all government and order.

Let me not be understood, however, as affirming that nothing is to be attributed on this occasion to the slave-trade. I scorn to have recourse to concealment or falsehood. Unquestionably, the vast annual importations of enslaved Africans into St.
St. Domingo, for many years previous to 1791, had created a black population in the French part of that island, which was, beyond all measure, disproportionate to the white;—the relative numbers of the two classes being as sixteen to one. Of this circumstance the leaders of the rebels could not be unobservant, and they doubtless derived encouragement and confidence from it. Here too, I admit, is a warning and an admonition to ourselves. The inference has not escaped me:—it constitutes my parting words with the reader, and I hope they are not urged in vain.

Having thus pointed out the motives which induced me to write the following narrative, the sources from whence my materials are derived, and the purposes which I hope will be answered by the publication; nothing farther remains but to submit the work itself to the judgment of my readers, which I do with a respectful solicitude.