THE

PRESENT STATE OF HAYTI,

(SAINT DOMINGO,)

WITH REMARKS

ON ITS

AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, LAWS, RELIGION,
FINANCES, AND POPULATION,
ETC. ETC.

BY JAMES FRANKLIN.

LONDON:
CHAPTER III.

First revolt of the slaves in 1791.—Their ravages.—
Decree of the national assembly 4th of April 1792.—
Santhonax and Polverel.—Their secret agency.—Encouragement of the slaves.—Their declaration of freedom to
the slaves.—Consequences arising from it.—Character
of the slaves.—Disabilities of the coloured people.

In the preceding chapter I have sought to discover
if the first cause of the revolt of the slaves in Hayti
proceeded from any hatred towards their proprietors,
or if it were excited by the intrigues of the contending
parties, who were each attempting to gain over
that class in favour of their cause; and I find that
the result of my investigation of the subject is in
favour of the latter supposition. From facts that
appear to me undeniable I have come to the conclu-
sion, that unless the national assembly of France
had made an attempt to destroy that principle of
governing the colony which had previously been
adopted, and which before the Revolution had been
sanctioned by every person connected with it, the
slave population would have remained until this day
peaceable and tranquil observers of passing events,
unmindful of their being in bondage, because under
that bondage they had no wants, and in that state,
whatever may be the opinion of mankind, they had no care beyond that of their daily labour, to which they felt it was no hardship to submit; for there does not appear an instance in which it exceeded the ordinary work of any labourer within the tropics.

The revolt of the slaves, therefore, I take leave to say, did not proceed from any severity or great oppression on the part of their proprietors, but from the proceedings of the parties who at different periods were striving for a preponderating power in the colony:—of the whites who aimed at the preservation of their privileges, and resisted all innovation; and of the people of colour, who made every possible effort to be admitted into the same sphere, and to the enjoyment of those rights which Gregoire and his revolutionary colleagues were willing to concede to them. To these causes, and to these alone, as it will appear to every unbiased reader, are to be attributed all those lamentable scenes which subsequently ensued, and to which the human mind cannot turn its attention without experiencing those painful sensations which are excited by the ravages of civil warfare and rebellion.

The first act of open rebellion among the slaves appears to have occurred in the vicinity of the Cape on or about the 23d of August 1791, on the plantation Noé, situated in the parish of Acub. The principal ringleaders murdered the white inhabitants, whilst the other slaves finished the work of de-
vastation, by demolishing the works and setting fire to the dwellings, huts, and other places contiguous to them.

They were joined by the negroes from other estates in the neighbourhood, upon all of which similar tragedies were performed, and desolation seemed likely to spread through the whole plains of the north. The barbarity which marked their progress exceeded description; an indiscriminate slaughter of the whites ensued, except in instances where some of the females were reserved for a more wretched doom, being made to submit to the brutal lusts of the most sanguinary wretches that ever disgraced humanity. Cases are upon record, where the most amiable of the female sex were first brought forth to see their parents inhumanly butchered, and were afterwards compelled to submit to the embraces of the very villain who acted as their executioner. The distinction of age had no effect on these ruthless savages, for even girls of twelve and fourteen years were made the objects of satiating their lust and revenge. Nothing could exceed the consternation of the white people; and the lamentations of the unhappy women struck every one with horror. Such a scene of massacre has scarcely been heard of, as that which accompanied the commencement of the rebellion in the north.

Some opposition was made to their progress by a few militia and troops of the line, which M. De
Tonson collected for the purpose; not indeed, with the expectation of effectually dispersing them, but of enabling the inhabitants of the city of Cape François to put themselves in such a state of defence as might save them from that destruction which seemed to await them. The citizens flew to arms, and the national guards, with the seamen from the ships, were mustered, and ready to receive the rebels should they make an attempt upon the city.

There was in the city at the time, a large body of free mulattoes, on whom the lower order of whites looked with a suspicious eye, as being in some way the authors or fomenters of the revolt; these were also enrolled in the militia, the governor and the colonial assembly confiding in them, and relying on their fidelity. The report of the revolt was soon known throughout the whole colony, but more particularly in the northern districts, the white inhabitants of which, being speedily collected together, established two strong posts at Grand Rivière and at Dondon, for the purpose of checking the advance of the revolters, until such time as a force could be concentrated, sufficiently powerful to disperse them; but in this they were disappointed, for the negroes had increased their own numbers by the revolt of the slaves on many other estates, and they had also been joined by a large body of mulattoes. With this united force, they successfully attacked the two positions which were occupied by the whites, who
were completely routed. Success put the rebels in possession of the extensive plain with all its surrounding mountains, abounding with every production of which they stood in need for their sustenance.

The defeat of the whites was followed by a scene of cruelties and butcheries which exceeds imagination; almost every individual who fell into the hands of the revolters met with a wretched end, tortures of the most shocking description being resorted to by these blood-thirsty savages: blacks and mulattoes seemed eager to rival each other in the extent of their enormities.

The union of the mulattoes with the revolted slaves, was not an event unlooked for; as I have before remarked, they were strongly suspected of being the instigators of the rebellion. This junction caused serious apprehensions, that those mulattoes who had joined the whites in the city, and had marched for the purpose of cooperating with the inhabitants of the plains, would desert their posts and go over to the revolters; and it is probable that such an event might have ensued, had not the governor, before he permitted them to be enrolled, and before he could implicitly confide in them, demanded from them their wives and children, as hostages for their adherence to the cause which they had engaged to support.

In this northern insurrection, the destruction of
the white inhabitants, it is said, was considerable, exceeding, of all ages, two thousand; besides the demolition of the buildings of a great many plantations, and the total ruin of many families, who from a condition of ease and affluence were reduced to the lowest state of misery and despair, being driven to the melancholy necessity of supplicating charity, to relieve the heart-rending calls of their hungry and naked offspring. The loss of the insurgents was however infinitely greater; being ignorant of the effects of cannon they were consequent-ly cut down in masses, while the sword was also effectually used. It appears that upwards of 10,000 of these sanguinary wretches fell in the field, besides a very large number who perished by famine, and by the hands of the executioner; a very just retribution for their savage and inhuman proceedings. There is every reason to believe that the loss sus-tained by them in all their engagements must have been immense, as they seemed to have imbibed a most extraordinary idea of the effect of artillery: it is said of them by a writer of repute, that "The blacks suffered greatly in the beginning of the rev-olution by their ignorance of the dreadful effects of the guns, and by a superstitious belief, very ge-nerally prevailing at that time, that by a few mys-terious words, they could prevent the cannon doing them any harm, which belief induced them to face the most imminent dangers."
Whilst these ravages were going on in the north, the western district was menaced by a body of men of colour, who had collected at Mirebalais, sanguinely expecting to be joined by a large party of slaves from the surrounding parishes. Their aim was the possession of Port au Prince and the whole plain of Cul de Sac; but being joined by only about six or seven hundred of the slaves of the neighbourhood, they did not succeed in their object; and after having set fire to the coffee plantations in the mountains, and done some injury amongst the estates in the valley, they began to deliberate on their condition, and to devise some plan, by which they might be able to rescue themselves from the dilemma into which they were thrown by their own rash and improvident proceedings. Some of the most powerful of the mulattoes, who found it impossible to gain the negroes over to their cause, deemed it advisable to propose an adjustment of their disputes, and attempt to bring about a reconciliation with the whites. One of the planters, a man of some power and address, and having been always very highly esteemed by the people of colour, as well as the negroes through the whole of the Cul de Sac, interposed, and a treaty was concluded on the 11th of September, between the people of colour on the one part, and the white inhabitants of Port au Prince on the other.

This treaty was called the Concordat: it had for
its basis the oblivion of past differences and the full recognition of the decree of the national assembly of the 15th of May. The treaty was subsequently ratified by the general assembly of the colony, and a proclamation was issued, in which it was held out that further concessions were contemplated for the purpose of cementing a good understanding between both classes, and these concessions, it was supposed, alluded to the admission of those persons of colour to the privileges of the whole who were born of enslaved parents. Mulattoes also were voted to be eligible to hold commissions in the companies formed of persons of their own colour, and some other privileges of minor consideration conceded to them. This, it was hoped, would restore order, and enable the people once more to enjoy peace and repose. But a circumstance occurred which blasted these hopes, and the flame, which appears only to have been partially subdued, was rekindled, and burst forth again with an astonishing rapidity, devouring all within its overwhelming reach.

Immediately after the ratification of the Concordat by the colonial assembly had been announced, and when it was admitted by all parties that its several provisions, amongst them the decree of the 15th of May, were judicious and highly commendable, tending to preserve order and tranquillity through the island, intelligence was received of the repeal of that very de-
cree by the national assembly in France, and of its having been voted by a very large majority. This was followed too by an intimation that the national assembly had determined on sending out commissioners to enforce the decree of the 24th of September 1791, which annulled the decree of the 15th of May, and to endeavour to restore order and subordination. Such unaccountable, and, as they may be justly characterised, deceptive proceedings on the part of the national assembly excited the indignation of the people of colour, who immediately accused the whites of being privy to these transactions, and declared that all further amity and good understanding must be broken off, and that either one party or the other must be annihilated. All the coloured people in the western and southern parts flew eagerly to the standard of revolt, and having collected a strong force, they appeared in a few days before Port au Prince, on which they made an attempt, but as that city had been strengthened by an additional force from France, it was enabled to receive the attack of the insurgents, and ultimately to repel them with no inconsiderable loss. The city however sustained considerable injury, and the revolters were successful in several attempts to set fire to it, by which a very large part of it was burnt down, or otherwise injured.

In the plains of the Cul de Sac the negroes joined
the mulattoes, allured by the charm of plunder and the pledge of freedom, and the expectation of satiating their lust on the defenceless and unoffending white females who should fall into their hands. In these plains some sanguinary battles were fought, remarkable however for nothing except the unrelenting cruelties with which the prisoners of the respective combatants were visited, and the barbarous and inhuman executions which followed them.

In these engagements it is recorded that the whites had the advantage, but they were unable to follow up their success, being destitute of a force of cavalry for the pursuit, a circumstance which made it quite impossible for them to improve on any decisive movement which they had effected. It appears, that in every skirmish or engagement the whites were in all cases most forward and bold in their attacks, and few only were the instances in which the contest was commenced by the mulattoes; whenever they were brought in contact with their opponents they exhibited no individual or collective displays of courage and heroism, but, on the contrary, there seemed a tincture of cowardice in all their proceedings, for they arranged the negroes in front of their position, and in all cases of advance these deluded creatures bore the first attack of their adversaries,
In December the commissioners Mirbeck, Roosne, and St. Leger arrived. Their reception was respectful, and there was a peculiar degree of submission shewn to them; but when they proclaimed a general amnesty and pardon to all who should submit and desist from further acts of insubordination, and subscribe the articles of the new constitution, a general murmur was excited, and marks of disapprobation were shewn towards them, not only by the colonial assembly, but by every individual of the contending parties. They remained in the island but a short time; and as an opinion prevailed that they were the mere instruments or organ of the national assembly, they obtained no attention or respect. Without any display of talent, they aspired to the government of a people, who were not to be commanded without being first taught that their commission was of a pacific tendency, and that their instructions were to appease, and not to excite. Instead of this, they declined to give any explanation of the object of their appointment beyond that which had been previously known, the enforcing of the decree of the 24th of September 1791. Finding all their efforts unavailing, and that they were unsupported by either party, finding that their authority was disputed and their representations despised, and, above all, left without any troops by which they might attempt to enforce obedience to their power, and submission to the decrees of the
mother-country, they took their departure from the island by separate conveyances, after having made many most ineffectual attempts to obtain the confidence and the good opinion of the people over whom they were sent to preside, and from whom they were sent to exact an accordance with such measures as the national assembly might think it expedient to adopt.

About this time, also, there were some changes in France which indicated further arrangements with respect to the administration of the colonies, which could only tend to widen the breach, and inflame the parties to that degree of violence which would preclude the expectation of any amicable adjustment at a future period. The society of Amis des Noirs had now gained a considerable influence in the national assembly, and there seemed to exist an union of feeling in favour of the mulattoes, and also of the slave population, whom it was designed at no distant period to emancipate, however unprepared they might be, by moral improvement, to receive such a boon. It was suggested that instructions should be sent out to the colonial assemblies, conveying to them such intentions, as well as their opinion of the means by which "slavery might be abolished in toto", without in the least affecting the interest of the people, or in any way putting their property in jeopardy. This design, however, of the anti-slavery party in France met with some momentary opposition, although the advocates of the
measure uttered loud invectives against the planters in general; but whatever influence the former might have collected and brought against the latter, it is very clear it failed in its desired aim, for in less than two months this assembly passed another decree, which abrogated that of the 24th of September. This decree is of the 4th of April 1792, and it is the first step towards an emancipation of slavery, although it does not declare such an intention. It is important, and I shall therefore insert it from a translation in another work, to the writer of which I am much indebted.

"The national assembly acknowledges and declares, that the people of colour and free negroes in the colonies ought to enjoy an equality of political rights with the whites; in consequence of which it decrees as follows:—

"Article 1st. Immediately after the publication of the present decree, the inhabitants of each of the French colonies in the windward and leeward islands shall proceed to the re-election of colonial and parochial assemblies, after the mode prescribed by the decree of the 8th of March 1790, and the instructions of the national assembly of the 28th of the same month.

"2d. The people of colour and free negroes shall be admitted to vote in all the primary and electoral assemblies, and shall be eligible to the legislature and all places of trust, provided they
possess the qualifications prescribed by the fourth article of the aforesaid instructions.

"3d. Three civil commissioners shall be named for the colony of St. Domingo, and four for the islands of Martinique, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, and Tobago, to see this decree enforced.

"4th. The said commissioners shall be authorized to dissolve the present colonial assemblies; to take every measure necessary for accelerating the convocation of the primary and electoral assemblies, and therein to establish union, order, and peace, as well as to determine provisionally (reserving the power of appeal to the national assembly) upon every question which may arise concerning the regularity of convocations, the holding of assemblies, the form of elections, and the eligibility of citizens.

"5th. They are authorized to procure every information possible, in order to discover the authors of the troubles in St. Domingo, and the continuance thereof, if they still continue; to secure the persons of the guilty, and to send them over to France, there to be put in a state of accusation, &c.

"6th. The said civil commissioners shall be directed, for this purpose, to transmit to the national assembly minutes of their proceedings, and of the evidence they may have collected concerning the persons accused as aforesaid.

"7th. The national assembly authorizes the civil commissioners to call forth the public force when-
ever they may think it necessary, either for their own protection, or for the execution of such orders as they may issue by virtue of the preceding articles.

"8th. The executive power is directed to send a sufficient force to the colonies, to be composed chiefly of national guards.

"9th. The colonial assemblies immediately after their formation shall signify, in the name of each colony respectively, their sentiments respecting that constitution, those laws, and the administration of them, which will best promote the prosperity and happiness of the people, conforming themselves nevertheless to those general principles by which the colonies and the mother-country are connected together, and by which their respective interests are best secured, agreeably to the decree of the 8th of March 1790 and instructions of the 28th of the same month.

"10th. The colonial assemblies are authorized to send home delegates for the purposes mentioned in the preceding article, in numbers proportionate to the population of each colony, which proportion shall be forthwith determined by the national assembly, according to the report which its colonial committee is directed to make.
The carrying of this decree into effect was entrusted to Messrs. Santhonax, Polverel, and Ailhau, the executive in France sending out a body comprising eight thousand men of the national guards, for the purpose of compelling the colonists to submit to their authority. Having arrived on the 13th of September, their first act was to dissolve the colonial assembly, and their next, to send the governor, Blanchelande, to France, where, after an examination into his administration, he was sentenced to death, and suffered on the guillotine in the April following. M. Desparbes, who was invested with chief command in his stead, having disagreed with the commissioners, was also suspended, and, like his predecessor, he was sent to France to undergo a similar fate.

The greatest consternation everywhere prevailed on the announcement of this decree, and, as I have before observed, a pretty general feeling existed, that this was only a prelude to a general emancipation of the slave population, and which afterwards was actually realised. The white inhabitants, in particular, suspected the candour of the commissioners, who were anxious to have it believed that the object of their mission was nothing more than to carry into operation the provisions of this decree, and to settle all those disputes between the one class and the other, which had been fomented to the great destruction of persons and property. These agents
of the national assembly seem to have been well skilled in the art of dissimulation, more particularly the leader, M. Santhonax, who, whilst professing to the whites the warmest solicitude and anxiety for the preservation of peace and the promotion of the prosperity of the colony, was secretly intriguing with the mulattoes, and holding clandestine meetings with their chiefs; and in the end, in conjunction with his coadjutors, he openly declared that they, with the free negroes, should enjoy their privileges, receive the protection of the national guards, and that he would espouse their cause in every possible way in which it could be effectually promoted.

The properties of the white inhabitants, as well as their lives, seemed at this juncture in the greatest jeopardy, and they possessed no means of averting the fate which seemed to await them. Some little hope, however, was raised in their minds by the appointment of a new governor, M. Galbaud, who arrived to take the command in May 1793, and to place the island in the strongest state of defence, it being apprehended by the French government that the British might interpose in the existing disputes, as war had been declared between the two powers. His arrival was hailed by the authorities and the inhabitants of the Cape with the strongest manifestations of joy, and from his having property in the island, they had the highest confidence in his character for probity, and anticipated
that the most decisive measures would be adopted for the restoration of their property, and for the security of their lives. But how vain were their anticipations, and how fleeting their hope! The national assembly of France, the great mover of all the evils which afflicted this unhappy country, again interposed with new instructions, and suspended the new governor from his command, decreeing that anyone holding property in the colonies should be ineligible to fill any office of trust in the colony in which his estate was situate.

Galbaud did not, however, resign his appointment without a struggle; and aided by his brother, a man of some spirit and great enterprise, he collected a force composed of militia, seamen from the ships in the harbour of the Cape, and a strong body of volunteers, and without delay advanced against the commissioners, whom he found ready to receive him at the head of the regular troops. A conflict severe and bloody ensued, and considerable resolution was displayed by the rival parties, each supporting their cause with unshaken firmness and determined bravery; but the sailors, who composed the greatest body of Galbaud's force, having become disorderly, he was obliged to retire, which he did without being in the least interrupted or opposed by the force of the commissioners.

The next day various skirmishes took place, in which the success was in some degree mutual; and
whilst the brother of Galbaud fell into the hands of the commissioners' troops, the son of Polverel was captured by the seamen attached to Galbaud's force. The commissioners finding, however, that their force diminished, and that their opponents were resolute and fought with unexampled bravery, had recourse to a measure which in the sequel caused much slaughter, although it succeeded in the destruction of Galbaud's force; they called in the aid of the revolted slaves, offering them their freedom, and promising that the city of the Cape should be given up for plunder. Some of the rebel chiefs rejected a proposition which could only produce the sacrifice of lives and the spilling of human blood, without in any way promoting their own cause, but Macaya, a negro possessing some power over his adherents, and being of a savage and brutal disposition, with an insatiable thirst for the blood of the whites, accepted the proposal of the commissioners, and with three or four thousand of his negro brethren joined their standard, when a scene of horror and of carnage ensued, the recital of which would shock the hardest and most unfeeling heart. Men, women, and children were without distinction unmercifully slaughtered by these barbarians, and those who had escaped the first rush into the city, and had reached the water-side, for the purpose of getting on board the ships in the harbour, were intercepted and their retreat cut off by these merciless wretches, just at
the moment when arrangements had been accomplished for their embarkation. Here the mulattoes had an opportunity of gratifying their revenge; here they had arrived at the summit of their greatest ambition and glory; here it was that these cowardly and infamous parricides, gorged with human blood, sacrificed their own parents, and afterwards subjected their bodies to every species of insult and indignity; here it was that these disciples of Robespierre—this injured and oppressed race—the theme of Gregoire's praise, and the subject of his appeal and harangue, shewed themselves worthy disciples of such masters! If any thing were wanted to establish the fact of these scenes being unexampled, and without a parallel, one thing, I am sure, will alone be sufficient, and that is, that the commissioners, these amiable representatives of the national assembly, the immaculate Santhonax, and the equally humane and virtuous Polverel, these viceroyalty of the society of Amis des Noirs, these protectors of the mulattoes, were struck with horror at the scene which was presented to them, and repaired to the ships, there to become spectators of the effects of their own crimes, and of a splendid and opulent city devoured by the flames which had been lighted by the torch of anarchy and rebellion.

In this destruction of the Cape, some instances of the most extraordinary brutality were exhibited,
and others of devotedness and heroism were displayed; one or two it will be as well to mention, as illustrative of the generosity and humanity of the one party, and of the ferocity and cruelty of the other. When the revolters first entered the city, every man, woman, and child were bayoneted or cut down with such instruments as they could muster, but the young females were in most cases spared, for the momentary gratification of the lust of those into whose hands they fell. One case of the most singular enormity took place:—a leader of the revolted slaves, named Gautier, had entered the house of a respectable merchant in the square, in which were the proprietor, his wife, his two sons, and three daughters; the sons were young, not exceeding the age of ten, but the daughters were elegant young women, the eldest about eighteen, and the youngest not exceeding fourteen. Gautier, assisted by one or two wretches equally inhuman, promised to spare the family, on account of his having received many acts of kindness and generosity from the father, to whom he was often sent by his master on business, he being a domestic slave. These poor creatures, who were at first half-expiring from the terror of the scene around them, and from the idea of being the captives of barbarians, recovered somewhat from the alarm into which they had been thrown, through the promises of security thus unconditionally pledged to them;
and although not permitted to go out of the sight of their captors, they did not apprehend that any mischief was in embryo, and that their lives were to be sacrificed. Impressed with the idea of safety, they proceeded to prepare a repast for their supposed guardians, and set it before them in the same splendour as they were wont to do when receiving their best and dearest friends. Gautier drank freely, and his comppeers did no little justice to the rich repast. Night coming on, and apprehensive of the consequences of a surprise from the governor's force, they began to deliberate upon what plan they should adopt to secure their unhappy captives from flight, when, not being able to devise any thing likely to be effectual, they came to the savage resolution of murdering them all. The daughters were locked up in a room, under the watch of two of the revolters, whilst the remainder of them commenced the bloody task by bayoneting the two sons. The mother, on her knees, imploring mercy with pitiful cries, met with the same fate, whilst the husband, who was bound hand and foot, was barbarously mangled, by having first his arms and then his legs cut off, and afterwards run through the body. During this blood-thirsty scene, the daughters, ignorant of the tragic end of their parents, were in a state of alarm and terror not to be de-
alas! how deceitful that hope! for their destiny
was fixed, and their time but short. Gautier and
his diabolical associates went into their room,
stripped them naked, and committed on their de-
fenceless persons the most brutal enormities, when
with the dead bodies of their parents they were
thrown into the flames which were then surrounding
them, where they all perished.

I shall mention another case of an opposite cha-
acter, and in which a degree of heroism was exhi-
bited that deserves to be recorded with every praise.
A M. Tardiffe, a planter, and a young man of con-
siderable property and of great courage and pre-
sence of mind, had joined the force of the governor,
and had consequently become an object of great
hatred, particularly on the part of some of the
mulattoes who resided in the vicinity of his estate.
Awakened one night about twelve o'clock by the
cries of females, he jumped up, and rushed to the
room in which his sisters, two amiable young ladies,
were reposing, where he found armed men attempt-
ing to get through the window. He instantly flew
for his sabre and pistols, which were loaded, his
sisters following him, and then returned to the room
to oppose the assassins. He found one had accom-
plished his purpose of getting into the room, whom
he in an instant ran through the body; when, turn-
ing to the window, he shot another fellow just en-
tering, and afterwards one or two others who made similar attempts. About this time his domestics had all come up stairs, and they shewed themselves most faithful in adhering to their master; for, not contented with merely opposing the entry of the assassins into the house, they sallied forth to meet them at the front of it, and although their numbers were inferior to that of their unprincipled and lawless invaders, they successfully attacked them, killing seven, and driving away the rest, with the exception of one, who was captured, who happened to be the illegitimate brother of M. Tardiffe, to whom he had shewed the warmest affection and whom he had cherished as the dearest relation. In return for such ingratitude and villainy, how did M. Tardiffe act? Did he give him up for public justice? No. Did he permit his faithful and enraged domestics, who were witnesses of his crimes, to execute momentary vengeance upon him? No. But he took him by the hand, mildly remonstrated with him, and afterwards furnished him with the means of leaving the colony for America, lest the searching hand of justice might before long stay his career. I have thought it advisable to relate these two cases, from the extraordinary enormity of the first, and from the singular circumstances attending the last, having received the detail of them from an individual who was engaged in most of the events which occurred at that period.
After this first revolt of the slaves in the north, emigrations commenced in almost all parts of the colony, some going to the United States, many to the neighbouring islands; and some of the most opulent and powerful of the planters to England, under the impression that the British government would be disposed to turn its attention to their cause. The war between France and England having commenced, some regard was paid to their solicitations, and through the instance of M. Charmilly (the M. Charmilly of Spanish notoriety) the government of England sent out directions to the governor of Jamaica to afford to those inhabitants of St. Domingo who were desirous to place themselves under British protection every possible support, and to send without delay a competent force, and to take possession of such places as the people might be disposed to surrender to them.

The intentions of the British government being known by the means of secret agents, the commissioners, Santhonax and Polverel, had recourse to every possible means of strengthening the force in the colony, and of being prepared for the reception of the British troops whenever they should make their contemplated descent. They collected the re
when united, to oppose British soldiers led on by experienced commanders. They therefore at once "proclaimed the abolition of every species of slavery, declaring that the negroes were thenceforth to be considered as free citizens"; and thereby assigned over to a lawless banditti the fee simple of every property in the French part of the island of St. Domingo, placing every white inhabitant within almost the grasp of a set of people insensible to every feeling of humanity, rude and ruthless as in their native wilds.

A description of these untutored people cannot be better given than in the language of Mr. Edwards, who says, "The Charaibs of St. Vincent, and the Maroons of Jamaica, were originally enslaved Africans; and what they now are, the freed negroes of St. Domingo will be hereafter,—savages in the midst of society, without peace, security, agriculture, or property; ignorant of the duties of life, and unacquainted with all the soft endearing relations which rendered it desirable; averse to labour, though frequently perishing for want; suspicious of each other, and towards the rest of mankind revengeful and faithless, remorseless and bloody-minded; pretending to be free while groaning beneath the capricious despotism of their chiefs, and feeling all the miseries of servitude without the benefits of subordination." The prediction of this elegant author has certainly been realized in all its parts, and subsequent
events have fully confirmed the opinion which he had formed of the negro character, when left to his own uncontrolled will and unrestrained in his propensities. Sloth, lust, and every species of wantonness and cruelty marked the progress of the enfranchised slaves in the first moment of their freedom; and until leaders of decisive and resolute powers for command undertook to preserve some degree of order and submission, they wandered in parties through the different parishes, inflicting the most unheard-of cruelties on the innocent and unoffending, without regard to sex or colour. To the will and command of their chief they were generally obedient, although they were subjected to duties of the most dangerous and laborious description; but when the least relaxation of discipline was permitted, they again resorted to plunder and destruction, and to every other species of insubordination, gratifying their insatiable thirst for the blood of the whites, as well as of that of the mulattoes, who were averse to the measure of emancipation. In these predatory excursions they committed the most shocking excesses, and more real and afflicting accounts have been received of the enormities practised by them when wandering in detached parties, than have been known to follow the most sanguinary battle in which they had been engaged.

I see nothing through the whole career of the rebellion to induce me to alter my opinion of the cause
whence all these lamentable effects sprung; and I must again repeat, that it was not misconduct on the part of the proprietors which excited the first revolt, and induced the slaves to take up arms against those from whom, in innumerable instances, they had experienced kindness and indulgence. It was natural to expect that in a colony, the operations in which are entirely performed by slaves, some cases of oppression would occur which would justly deserve reprobation; but the rebellion became general, although I am not aware that any successful attempt has been made to shew that the conduct of the planters towards their slaves was generally harsh and oppressive.

De Vastey, in his remarks, would wish it to be inferred that the brute creation received infinitely more kindness and indulgence from their master than was shewn towards the slave: but De Vastey being a negro, it is natural that he should exhibit the worst side of the picture, without noticing its better one. He adduces no instances of that oppression which he wishes to prevail upon mankind to believe to have been inflicted: we have nothing from him but allegations and assertions, without proof to support them. It is true, that he puts forward some statements of cruelties inflicted on his ne-
first acts of cruelty and indiscriminate murder, were
committed by his very brethren (for whom he claims
the pity of mankind for their sufferings and for
their unmerited bondage) on the plantation Noé,
and others in the vicinity. De Vastey, it is plain,
is no authority on which the charge of cruelty on
the part of the planter before the rebellion can be
supported.

With regard to the mulattoes, or free men of co-
lour, who were doubtless the chief instigators of
the rebellion and of the first revolt of the slaves,
although they cannot escape the condemnation just-
ly due to them for their perfidy, yet the extreme
disabilities under which they laboured in some
measure might be adduced in mitigation of the cen-
sure which their faithless conduct so truly de-
served. If they had not commenced the work of
revolt, but had remained quiet observers of the
proceedings of the national and colonial assem-
blies, and delayed their operations until the result
of the deliberations and arrangements of those
bodies had been promulgated, they would have
called forth spontaneous expressions of approbation
from all classes of people: but the eagerness which
they manifested for civil feuds and for a prepon-
derancy of power in the colony, without any condi-
tions and without the least possible reservation, has
called down upon them, and I think justly too, very
severe reprobation. It has been observed, that this
class of people were, from their education and from their general demeanour, as eligible members of society as the whites, and as such ought to have been admitted into all its rights and advantages. This, I believe, no one undertakes to deny; but it is no more than fair and equitable towards the white population to observe, that prior to every concession being made to them, something like a line of demarcation should have been drawn as to the limits to which those concessions should be carried, otherwise from their number and power the mulattoes might have obtained an overwhelming preponderancy in the colony, rendering the white colonists mere cyphers.

The decrees against the people of colour, as they appear on the records of the colony, are extremely harsh and impolitic, and a relaxation, if not a repeal of them, would have been only an act of justice. The government held them in no repute, but considered them as it were national property, and gave the public a right in them. They were subjected by the governors, when they had arrived at a particular age, to a military servitude of the most degrading kind, and for a time to labour on the public roads, the severity of which was almost too great to be borne. They were not permitted to hold any office of power or trust in the state, nor could they even follow the humble calling of a schoolmaster. The least possible taint in the blood excluded them, and the distinction of colour had no termination. Not
so in the British colonies, where it is lost in the third generation. It is said also, that "the courts of criminal jurisdiction adopting the popular prejudices against them gave effect and permanency to the system. A man of colour, being a prosecutor, must have made out a strong case indeed, if at any time he obtained the conviction of a white person. On the other hand, the whites never failed to procure prompt and speedy justice against mulattoes. To mark more strongly the distinction between the two classes, the law declared that if a free man of colour presumed to strike a white person, of whatever condition, his right hand should be cut off; while a white man for a similar assault on a free mulatto was dismissed on the payment of an insignificant fine."*

It is, I conceive, impossible for any one to be informed of the existence of such a system without exclaiming, that whatever might have been the proceedings of the people of colour in the work of rebellion, their grievances offered considerable extenuation of their conduct. This presents the most disgraceful and indefensible page in the colonial records of criminal jurisprudence. True it is that its severity, that its flagrant injustice, precluded the possibility of putting it in force; the abhorrence which it so generally excited among all orders of

* Anonymous.
people, made it a dead letter; but it was notwithstanding a law in force, and might have been acted upon by an arbitrary and unmerciful judge.

The only circumstance that contributed towards affording the coloured people some degree of security and protection under their disabilities was the power which they indirectly derived from the possession of property in the colony. They consequently had influence, because under a corrupt government money bought it, and many were the venal officers of the state who had stooped to be their pensioners. Many of these mulattoes held large estates, and possessed besides extensive available funds; these men in most cases evaded those exclusions from society, to which their brethren of less influence were obliged to submit. They were secure enough both in their persons and property, whilst the less wealthy among their coloured brethren had to submit to every species of insecurity and mortification.

I have now said as much as may be deemed necessary on the subject of the situation of the coloured people at the time of the first disturbances in St. Domingo, and I trust I have made it appear conclusive, that the cause of those disturbances did not proceed from the oppression and the tyranny practised over the slaves, but from the measures of the national assembly, the colonial assemblies, aided
by that specious and intriguing body, the society of Amis des Noirs, and the coloured people then residing in France, who had been tainted with the pernicious doctrines then prevailing in that country.