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THE

PRESENT STATE OF HAYTI,

(SAINT DOMINGO,)

WITH REMARKS

ON ITS

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

BY JAMES FRANKLIN.

LONDON:
THE PRESENT STATE

OF

HAYTI,

OR SAINT DOMINGO.

INTRODUCTION.

An account of the present state of Hayti I believe has not yet been submitted to the public; to offer one likely to meet with a favourable reception is, I am aware, an undertaking of considerable difficulty: it requires, no doubt, that the author should be well skilled in the various branches of knowledge, in order to render it in every respect satisfactory and interesting to the public. Ignorant as I acknowledge myself to be in the higher walks of philosophy, and educated solely for the more humble avocations of a mercantile life, I can lay no claim to such acquirements: I must therefore rest my hope of commanding any degree of attention, on the truth and correctness of the statements which I
shall produce, founded as they are on actual observ-
atation. I am conscious that I am standing on deli-
cate ground, and touching on a subject likely to
excite angry feelings in those who have long been
the eulogists of the republic, who have been its ad-
voates when assailed, and who have held it forth
to the world as a country in which wealth abounds,
virtue flourishes, and freedom reigns triumphant,
instead of the oppression, the vice, and the poverty
which once prevailed there; but I will not shrink
from the undertaking, though powerful obstacles
may present themselves, and formidable opponents
be arrayed against me. My object in the following
sheets is, to endeavour to dissipate this delusion, and
to shew that there is nothing to warrant the unquali-
fied panegyrics poured forth by those individuals who
have been the most conspicuous for their zeal and en-
thusiasm, in holding up Hayti as a "land flowing
with milk and honey". In the performance of this,
I have no other aim than that of benefiting the
merchant and capitalist, the manufacturer, and the
trader, who have had no opportunity of visiting a
country to which their speculations in commerce
may lead them, by guarding them against the shoals
and quicksands upon which adventurers, destitute of
information, are so frequently wrecked.

The admirers of Hayti have been very indus-
trious in circulating the most deceptive accounts of
the state of its commerce, by garbled and exagge-
rated specifications. They have led many to believe that its imports and exports are daily on the increase, and that the resources of the people for the purchase of the products and manufactures of other states receive a gradual and steady augmentation. I am much deceived if I shall not succeed in convincing the reader that this representation is a perfect delusion, and that from the diminished means of the people, the commerce of Hayti, instead of increasing, annually sustains a considerable diminution; and that while the present state of things continues to exist—while its rulers are weak and imbecile, and the mass of the population are kept in a state of the grossest ignorance—there does not appear a ray of hope that any improvement may take place in the circumstances of the country, or that any change will be effected, likely to prove advantageous to foreigners disposed to embark in an intercourse with Hayti.

Several visits to Hayti—in two of which I had, from the nature of my mission, occasion to remain there a considerable time—gave me opportunities of seeing the actual state of it, in all its different branches of agriculture, commerce, finances, and the moral and religious condition of its people, together with the state of its government and the views of its chief. I am therefore encouraged to hope that my details may be productive of some benefit to the commercial part of the community,
and not be altogether unacceptable to others, whose
avocations are different, but who may be desirous of
correct information respecting those parts of the
globe of which they may know but little except the
name.

An historical account of Hayti would be a super-
fluous undertaking; I see nothing to add to what
has already been written by Charlevoix, Raynal,
Edwards, Walton, and others, in their elaborate
and voluminous works, and who have omitted no-	hing interesting, or worthy of being recorded, from
its first discovery by the illustrious Columbus down
to a very recent period. Every event connected
with its history seems to have been most faithfully
detailed by these writers, and their works are enti-
tled to the highest credit and consideration, as con-
taining the best and most authentic account of this
very extensive island.

Impelled, no doubt, as they were with a desire
to afford to the world every possible information re-

tative to the resources of the country, and of the
character and general habits of the people, they
have left little to be performed by their successors,
except to notice the changes and events which may
have taken place since the date of their latest pro-
ductions. Besides a copious and a faithful histori-
cal sketch, they have given a correct statistical view
of its agriculture, its commerce, and public revenue;
they have also pointed out the slow advances made
by the people in industry, in morality, and in general knowledge: but little, therefore, remains to be said on these subjects, except to call the attention of the reader to the striking contrast which the present situation of the republic exhibits, when compared with that which it displayed before the revolution; to give a brief sketch of Hayti as it is, with an occasional reference to Hayti as it was. I must beg leave to assure my readers, that in executing this task, I am actuated by no unfair nor unjust motives; I am only anxious that the highly coloured statements which have been published respecting its present wealth and prosperity should be submitted to the test of candid and impartial scrutiny. For a series of years Hayti has been made the theme of constant praise, and has excited no little share of the public attention, on account of the unexampled efforts which its slave population made to throw off the fetters by which they had been previously bound, and on account of their having, as their eulogists declare, made the most rapid and extraordinary strides in civilization and social improvement. It must be admitted that the revolution effected in Hayti, was an event almost unparalleled in history; and that a people just emerging from a state of barbarism should have so successfully combated and defeated the finest troops
miration: but when the partial eulogists of the Haitians go to the length of asserting that they have arrived at a high degree of moral improvement, that they have reached a state of refinement little inferior to that which generally prevails in Europe, the limits of truth are overstepped: such overstrained assertions are totally destitute even of the semblance of truth, and my personal experience enables me to declare, in the most explicit and unqualified terms, that at this very moment, the people of Hayti are in a worse state of ignorance than the slave population in the British colonies. There are some cases, it is true, in which instances of intelligence have been discovered in the Haitian citizen, but this never occurs except where individuals have had the advantages of an European education, or who, being the descendants of persons who previously to the revolution were possessed of wealth, had the means of travelling, for the purpose of acquiring the manners and customs of more enlightened nations. But taking the people in the aggregate, they are far from having made any advances in knowledge.

It has also been commonly asserted by the friends of Hayti, and I believe very generally credited in Europe, that it preserves its agricultural pre-eminence solely by free labour; now I think I shall be able to prove to a demonstration that this is not the case, and that it is too evident, from every document that has yet appeared on the subject, that agricul-
ture has been long on the wane, and has sunk to the lowest possible ebb in every district of the republic; that the true art and principles of the culture of the soil, are not understood, or if in the least known, they are not practically applied. There is nothing to be seen having the least resemblance to a colony, flourishing in the wealth derived from a properly regulated system of agriculture.

On the subject of free labour I shall have occasion to offer a few remarks, and I trust that in doing so, I shall not be considered as inimical to it, wherever it may be found practicable to obtain it; on the contrary, no man would be more happy to see that our own colonies could be cultivated by free labour, provided a full compensation should be honourably made to those whose interests might be endangered by the experiment, if unsuccessful; but I shall, I think, be able to shew that this is absolutely impracticable, and that the system of labour so pursued in Hayti, instead of affording us a proof of what may be accomplished by it, is illustrative of the fact, that it is by coercion, and coercion only, that any return can be expected from the employment of capital in the cultivation of soil in our West India islands. I shall also be able to shew that Hayti presents no instance in which the cultivation of the soil is successfully carried on without the application of force to constrain the labourer: on the estates of every individual connected with
the government, all the labourers employed work under the superintendence of a military police, and it is on these properties alone that any thing resembling successful agriculture exists in Hayti. I am aware that this will excite the astonishment of persons who have been accustomed to think otherwise; but I shall state facts which cannot be controverted, even by President Boyer himself—nay, I shall produce circumstances which I have seen with the utmost surprise on his own estate; circumstances that must shew his warmest advocates, that all his boasted productions have not been obtained without the application of that system against which they loudly exclaim.

Instead of holding out an example of what might be accomplished by a people released from bondage, without first having been prepared for freedom by moral and religious instruction, I think Hayti rather forms a beacon to warn us against the dangers and difficulties by which that unhappy country has been overtaken. The present condition of Hayti, arising from the events which have taken place since the revolution, should render us exceedingly cautious how we plunge our own colonies into the same misery and calamity; by conferring on a rude and untaught people, without qualification, or without the least restraint, an uncontrolled command over themselves. However acutely we may feel for the miseries to which the West Indian slave was at one period sub-
jected, yet I cannot conceive it possible that any one can be so destitute of correct information on the subject as not to know, that at this moment the slave is in a condition far more happy, that he possesses infinitely greater comforts and enjoyments, than any class of labourers in Hayti, and that, from the judicious measures which have been already adopted by the colonial legislatures, and from others which are in contemplation, for improving the condition of the slave, it is very rational to conclude that before long slavery will only be considered as a name; and that were it to receive any other designation it would furnish no peg on which the European philanthropist might hang his declamations against slavery.

To place the slaves in the British colonies upon a footing with the free labourers in Hayti, or with the largest proportion of the people in that country, would be a work of easy accomplishment; but the effect would be, to cause them to exchange a state of comparative plenty and comfort, for one in which every species of tyranny and oppression, with their concomitants, disease and want, are most lamentably conspicuous. Whatever may be the views of the British Cabinet relative to their colonies, I should warn it to steer clear of the erroneous policy which has proved so fatal to Hayti, and should it be determined that a change should be introduced into the policy hitherto pursued with so much success, and with so much advantage in our colonial
Possessions, I trust it will not be by emancipating the slave, before he is prepared for freedom by a proper moral and religious education. Let the system of slavery be gradually improved, and the slave will glide imperceptibly into a state of freedom.

It is not my intention, in this early stage of my remarks, to enter into any lengthened detail of the disunion or want of cordiality subsisting between the two classes of people in Hayti: this I shall reserve for its proper place; where it will be seen, that a very strong dissatisfaction prevails amongst the black population, which manifests itself upon almost every occasion of celebrating public events, and festivities. This acrimonious feeling evidently arises from the jealousy excited by the predominant influence of the coloured people in the government. This influence, detrimental as it may be to the good order and repose of the country, is courted and nurtured by the president, to the great danger of overthrowing the whole establishment. One or two attempts at revolt have been made by the people of the north, who were the subjects of the late Christophe, and from these efforts, although abortive, it may be inferred, that the spirit for a more extensive commotion still lurks in their minds, and that the least possible irritation would so agitate and inflame them, that the whole would be thrown into a scene of disorder; tumult, and irremediable confusion. The combinations are numerous and powerful, but
such was the extraordinary apathy of the government, that until a communication was made by an individual to Boyer, neither he nor any one of his officers had the least intimation that such proceedings were in contemplation. The want of energy visible in the government makes it obnoxious to the people, and no country like Hayti can be expected to remain long in repose and tranquillity, unless its governors possess both talent and resolution to command.

That the government of Hayti is the most inefficient and enervated of any of the modern republics cannot be denied, and I cannot see the least hope of an improvement, unless there be a complete revision of its constitution, and a new one framed, better suited to the tastes of the people, and more adapted to their present very rude state of knowledge. From the present rulers it would be vain to expect any effort which might prove beneficial to the country; any attempt to cultivate or improve the habits and morals of the people, or to promote agriculture. The members composing the present government, seem to consider the poverty and ignorance of the people, as the best safeguards of the security and permanence of their own property and power.

A recognition of the independence of Hayti by
called out loudly for the protection of that power, whilst they have as loudly exclaimed against the policy pursued towards France. No event in its history has excited in the republic greater abhorrence or more general murmuring, than the act of purchasing from France that which it had de facto possessed for twenty-one years unmolested and undisturbed; thereby at once admitting the sovereignty of that power over the island, and which sovereignty France will, at some convenient period, unquestionably assert, and that without the least fear of any inconvenient consequences arising from it; for what power can give aid to the Haytians against France, when the former have openly and formally admitted themselves to be a colony dependent upon the French crown. Whatever intercourse Englishmen may be disposed to maintain with Hayti; it is indispensible that they should use the most vigilant precaution, and exact a rigid adherence to such treaties as may have been entered into, if they would avoid certain loss; for the Haytian character, taken generally, will be found, so far from being entitled either to credit or confidence, not even to possess common honesty. Compacts with them are easily made; but a faithful adherence to agreements must not be expected;—their maxim is to break them, whenever they find it can be accomplished with advantage.