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The Author in Conversation with a private Soldier of the Black Army on his Excursion in St. Domingo.
AN
Historical Account
OF THE
BLACK EMPIRE OF HAYTI:
COMPREHENDING A VIEW OF
THE PRINCIPAL TRANSACTIONS IN THE REVOLUTION
OF
SAINT DOMINGO;
WITH
ITS ANTIENT AND MODERN STATE.

BY
MARCUS RAINSFORD, Esq.
LATE CAPTAIN THIRD WEST-INDIA REGIMENT,
&c. &c.

"Tyro, Tyriusve, mihi nullo discrimine agetur."
VIRGIL.

"On peut dire avec vérité qu'il y a peu de traits de barbarie qui
puissent leur (les noirs) être imputés."
DE CHARMILLY.

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1805.
HISTORY OF ST. DOMINGO.

CHAP. VI.

On the Establishment of a Black Empire, and the probable Effects of this Colonial Revolution.

Such, then, with the close of the year 1804, was the end of this eventful revolution, in which the Imperial dignity was the reward for the courage and experience of the Chief, who, profiting by the misfortunes of his brave and good predecessor, had more successfully combated his enemies—those enemies who were weak enough to consider it possible, nay, easy to reduce to slavery a powerful body of men who had for some few years enjoyed a state of the most perfect freedom; nor can it be asserted that his title is in any way inferior to that of the extraordinary man whose laurels have been sullied in the attempt to subdue him.

The recurrence to the earliest state of the new world for the name and character of the government, with the advantage of more than three hundred years experience, is an idea which could not originate in mean or untutored minds; nor is such the
CHAP. VI.

1894.

Probable effects of the colonial revolution.

the character of any of the present rulers of Hayti. With respect to the future policy they may chuse to adopt, time alone can determine. Should they adhere to the basis on which they have founded their proceedings, and remain unmolested by European powers, they may arrive at the most enviable state of grandeur and felicity; but should any evil spirits obtain a footing amongst them, and interrupt the harmony which may otherwise be maintained, by occasioning factions to arise from old contentions, or new divisions, the frequent consequence of overgrown wealth or dominion, they will in all probability fulfil the prediction of Edwards, by becoming "savages in the midst of society, without peace, security, agriculture, or property."

But, in either case, their reduction to their former situation is impossible; and though Europe waste her armies, and exhaust her navies in the endeavour, the blacks of St. Domingo will be unsubdued; and if they cannot repel the invasion of a reiterated and extended force, they will cut them off, as hath been already observed, with a scythe more keen and rapid than that of time. Every year and every day has been, and will still continue, to be pregnant with experience to them, and no power on earth will be able to reduce them, while their population will continue to increase in a vast proportion. The writer has reiterated these sentiments for several years, and through a period in which their confirmation appeared more than doubtful; his opinions were disinterested, and unmingled with any prejudice, either local, political, or pecuniary, and every event has tended to strengthen them.

Should
HISTORY OF ST. DOMINGO.

Should it ever happen in the course of time, that any of the various means dispensed by providence to check the exuberance of population should fall on Hayti, either in the form of contagion, or by a multiplication of the various diseases, to which the African race are subject, in the degeneration of slavery; and that a white population should by that time be formed, capable of taking advantage of such a calamity; then, but not till then, should the neighbouring continent of America be in a state to colonize, or the policy of European governments desire the attainment of the most splendid colony of the Antilles, an opportunity might possibly be afforded.—Whether it would be rational on the score of justice, or humanity to do so, is a subject not to be argued at present. Those who undertake the project, if ever it should be undertaken, will be capable of defending it with plausibility.

But to this part of the subject the public attention is rarely directed; the danger of a community of manumitted slaves in the American Archipelago, is their chief objection to the new Empire of Hayti. With those who form their opinion on erroneous principles, fears of this kind may arise, as the unreflecting clown startles at his shadow on the moonlight sward. Whether Hayti exist or not, as an independent island, if the black population of the other colonies of the Antilles continue to increase as it has done during the last fifty years, and to over-balance that of the whites, no power but that of the exercise of humanity, can preserve them to their present possessors. The practise of this power, happily, is prevalent at present, and

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it is hoped, and expected, that profiting by the past, it will be always co-equal with the increased wealth of the proprietors, and their capability of being liberal; but if it does not originate with themselves, that the smallest danger can arise to the colonies, from the Empire of Hayti, may be positively denied. The negroes, though sufficiently warlike and vindictive, when roused by revenge, court quiet, and are ardent in all the relations of life, when kindly treated by superiors. They would then with extreme difficulty, if at all, be persuaded to quit a situation of comparative ease, to join strangers in a bloody conflict. Besides, the inhabitants of Hayti could derive no advantage from such a union. They are not to be compared with the Maroons, or the Charaibes, as they possess a territory with an organised government, and sufficient resources of their own, all which they must lose in proportion to the success of any project of ambition. Neither have they, nor do they want the maritime power so absolutely necessary for an attack on the other islands; and many other difficulties occur to prevent such a scheme.

Yet, as many events beyond the utmost stretch of foresight happen in the course of time, it is incumbent upon those in particular, whose local interest is concerned, to take due care to prevent the miseries which they appear prematurely to dread; for extra precaution is not so great an evil, as a deficiency of necessary care; to the Proprietors of the British colonies in particular it is recommended, to think an inducement to some degree of devotion among their slaves an object of importance, with a careful
careful diffusion of morality. In the former, the more peculiar mysteries need not be included, nor in the latter that rigid system, which denies even the innocent gaieties of humble life. The personal care, too, of negroes, should be an object of more attention, than it is on certain occasions, with a view to preserve that health which is of so much value to their proprietors, as well as the comfort, necessary to render them satisfied with their condition. These attentions, including the care of pregnant females, added to those humane and salutary laws which already preclude excessive punishment, or labor, will always produce the most desirable effects, and be more certain than all the inflictions, that coercive measures can devise to prevent a spirit of deliberation (the first revolutionary system) among slaves.

And finally, if, it should appear from the concessions, which are already granted that the slaves in the colonies may be elevated from the consideration of being a species below, even to the lowest class of human society, the complaints which have formerly arisen, will soon have no grounds for existence; and those philanthropic minds which have been led, from the glorious principle of protecting "him that had none to help him," to countenance an enthusiasm, which has been of the most fatal tendency, will, no doubt, exert their beneficent offices in increasing the good effects, of what may have been already done. But this principle must always be preserved inviolable, (whether it militate or not against the policy of retaining distant colonies will not be argued,)—that no deliberative body should prescribe for the
internal polity of a country at a distance, such as precludes an intimate and constant knowledge of its concerns.

The Enquiry into the Rise of the Black Empire of Hayti, thus concludes for the present. It is hoped a remarkable and correct picture will be found of a Revolution, which ranks among the most remarkable and important transactions of the day. It is, at least, untintured with prejudice of any kind, unless that spirit can be so called, which inclines towards truth and humanity.