

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
INSURRECTION IN ST DOMINGO,

DEGUN IN AUGUST 1791,

TAKEN FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES,

BY

J. G. HOPKIRK, LL.B.

Quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando
Explicet, aut possit lacrimis requare dolores?
Plurima per vias sternuntur inertia passim
Corpora.

Crudeis ubique

Luctus, ubique pavor, et plurima mortis imago,
Vincit, et Regid.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH;

AND

T. CADELL, STRAND, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXIII.

97294

H

Q728824

PREFACE.

THIS little Work has no other pretensions than to give a simple narrative of the nearly-forgotten story of the Insurrection in St Domingo, as related by those who witnessed it ; leaving to the reader inwardly to digest it, with reference to the present time, when the settlement of the " West India Question" is looked forward to with trembling expectation (paventosa speme.)

The fate of the French colony seems a beacon-light held out by the hand of Providence to guard Great Britain from striking against the rock on which St Domingo perished. May she not neglect the solemn warning !

Inform his mind—onc flash of heavenly ray
Would heal his heart and melt his chains away.
Then would he say—submissive at thy feet,
While gratitude and love made service sweet—
“ I was a bondsman on my native plain—
Sin forged and ignorance made fast the chain.
Thy lips have shed instruction, as the dew—
Taught me what path to shun, and what pursue.
Farewell my former joys ! I sigh no more
For Africa's onco-lov'd—benighted—shore :
Serving a benefactor, I am free
At my best home—if not exil'd from thee !”

COWPER.

INTRODUCTION.

ST DOMINGO, or Hispaniola, is one of the largest, and was accounted the most fertile of the islands forming the American Archipelago. It is about one hundred and seventy leagues in length, thirty in breadth, and about three hundred and sixty in circumference. By the natives it was called Haiti, or the Highland Country, on account of the hilly nature of its north division. When originally discovered by Columbus, it was called by him Isabella, in honour of the queen of Spain, but it soon afterwards was denominated St Domingo, after the principal city of the island. It is situated among the islands of Cuba, Jamaica, and Porto Rico. It extends from $17^{\circ} 37'$ to 20° of north latitude, and from $67^{\circ} 35'$ to $70^{\circ} 15'$ west longitude.

The island was formerly divided into two parts, that which is properly called Haiti, and Hispaniola; the former being the part which belonged to the French, and the latter to the Spanish.

The Spaniards held undisputed possession of the whole island of St Domingo for upwards of one hundred and twenty years, till, about the middle of the sixteenth century, when a number of French bucaniers settled at Tortuga, a small island lying to the north of St Domingo.

From this place, they made constant incursions against the Spanish settlements, till, at length, by the treaty of Ryswick, that part of the island in which they had established themselves was ceded to the French king, who had acknowledged them as his subjects, and taken them under his protection.

From this time the colony rapidly increased, favoured by the fertility and natural productions of the soil, as well as by the mildness with which the government, in itself essentially military, had been exercised. It is true that the laws which regarded the Mulattoes, placed them in an infinitely worse situation than those of the same class in the British colonies, but the very severity of these laws prevented their being executed, from the acknowledged humanity of the whites, and the abhorrence which would have attended their enforcement. The privilege also, which the coloured people of St Domingo held, of acquiring and holding property to any amount, mainly contributed to their protection.

The population, in the end of 1789, consisted of thirty thousand eight hundred white inhabitants, about twenty thousand free people of colour ; while the negroes amounted to not less than four hundred and eighty thousand. The number of sugar plantations was seven hundred and ninety-three. There were upwards of three thousand plantations of coffee, seven hundred and eighty-nine of cotton, three thousand one hundred and sixty of indigo, and six hundred and twenty-three smaller establishments, such as provision grounds, tanpits, potteries, brick-kilns, &c. &c.

At the period when a false philosophy had lighted up the torch of revolution in France, a strong feeling pre-

veiled in the minds of many, whose passions had been inflamed by the writings of their distinguished but infidel philosophers, that they who were themselves about to enjoy their new-born liberty, were bound to communicate it to their enslaved fellow creatures. Hence there arose, throughout France, a strong prejudice against the inhabitants of the sugar islands, on account of their negroes being in a state of slavery. It was not asserted that the condition of this class was worse at the time than at any former period, for the reverse was notoriously the case; but declamations in favour of freedom, and invectives against despotism of every kind had now taken hold of the public mind, and its indignation was directed against the planters, by those who were desirous of exciting commotion and insurrection in different parts of the French dominions.

This spirit was fostered and kept alive by a society which had established itself under the name of Amis des Noirs, and which is supposed to have been formed on the model of a similar society in London. There existed, however, this essential difference between the two societies, that the English society *then* professed to have no farther or ulterior object in view, than to obtain an act of the legislature for prohibiting the introduction of African slaves into the British colonies—disclaiming all intention of interfering with the government or condition of the negroes, and declaring their opinion to be that a general emancipation of these people, in their state of ignorance, would prove to themselves, in place of a benefit, a source of misery and distress. The association of the Amis des Noirs, on the contrary, whose latent design was to destroy the ancient despotism of France, *whose philosophy was a*

dagger, and whose virtue was a flaming torch, loudly insisted for a general and immediate abolition, not only of the slave trade, but of slavery itself. They did not investigate into the actual state of human nature, nor the distinction between civilized and uncivilized life, but proceeded entirely upon theory and abstract reasoning. This society was composed partly of furious Jacobins,* partly of deluded fanatics, and, doubtless, of a few who were really actuated by benevolent motives, and had the interest of their fellow creatures at heart, but who had allowed the specious sentiments of sophism to obtain the mastery over sound reason and mature deliberation. At this conjuncture then, when the French revolution had already begun to assume its wild and violent character, the immediate and unprepared emancipation of the slaves in the West India Islands was a measure which met with almost universal approbation. It was in this disposition that the National Assembly voted on the 20th of August 1789, the celebrated Declaration of Rights, the direct tendency of which was to destroy all distinctions and gradations of rank in society, and which could not fail to be fraught with ruin to the whole constitution of the colonies. The promulgation of the declaration, accordingly, excited the utmost alarm and dismay among the planters and the French residents of St Domingo.† Whatever was stated in France regarding the friendly feelings of the people

* Brissot, La Fayette, Robespierre, and the Abbé Gregoire, were the leading members of this society. Brissot was guillotined in October 1793, and Robespierre in July 1794.

† This declaration stated that "all men are born and continue free and equal as to their rights."

towards the slaves, and the exertions of the Amis des Noirs to obtain their emancipation, was represented in exaggerated terms, and glowing colours in the colony: these feelings were seconded and encouraged by the writings of certain ecclesiastics, and of several creoles who had received education at Paris;* and the whole was calculated to excite, in the hitherto peaceful negroes, sentiments of the deepest enmity towards the whites.

It would appear that the government had itself anticipated this consequence, for an order was issued to the Governor-General of St Domingo, requiring him to convoke an Assembly for interior regulations. This, however, was superseded by the adoption of measures of their own, and a strong disposition was evinced, on the part of the colonists, to renounce their dependence on the mother country. At length, in consequence of remonstrances from the merchants and traders, who implored the General Assembly to adopt measures for the security of the colonists, the subject was considered by that body on 8th March 1790, when, after a full discussion, they voted "That it never was the intention of the Assembly to comprehend the interior government of the colonies in the constitution which they had framed for the mother country, or to subject them to laws which were incompatible with their local establishments; they therefore authorise the inhabitants of each colony to signify to the National Assembly their sentiments and wishes concerning that plan of interior legislation and commercial arrangement which would be most conducive to their prosperity."

* See Note 1. App.

A declaration was annexed to this decree, "That the National Assembly would not cause any innovation to be made, directly or indirectly, in any system of commerce in which the colonies were already concerned."

If the Declaration of Rights was obnoxious to the colonists, the present decree was still more so to their opponents. It was received by the people of colour and the *Amis des Noirs* with the utmost indignation and disappointment, being viewed by them as a direct sanction, on the part of the legislature, to the continuance of the slave trade; and it was held, that by leaving the internal regulations of the colonial constitutions to the colonists themselves, their independence had been tacitly recognised.

In the meantime, the General Assembly of St Domingo having been duly convoked and constituted, proceeded to make some salutary laws for the melioration of the condition of the people of colour and slaves, and for the rectification of abuses which had prevailed in their judicatures. In these measures, however, they met with opposition from the Governor-General, M. Peynier, and a party who were strongly attached to the old system; and to the heart-burnings and discontent which the vacillating conduct of the National Assembly had given rise to, there was soon afterwards added a spirit of discord and dissention among the planters themselves.

Proceeding on the independence which they imagined they had acquired, a new and comprehensive decree was passed by the Colonial General Assembly on the 28th of May, for establishing the constitution, in which, among other ill-judged provisions, the Governor-General, the representative of the sovereign, was refused a negative

to any act of the legislature; and it was declared that no decree of the National Assembly should be in force till confirmed by the Colonial Assembly. These and similar propositions were held out as tantamount to a declaration of independence, and it was even alleged by some of their enemies, that the members of Assembly had sold the colony to the British.

The Governor-General, filled with resentment at the terms of this decree, issued a proclamation dissolving the Assembly, in which he did not hesitate to denounce the members as traitors to their country, and enemies to the King. He went so far as to attempt to seize the committee of the Western Provincial Assembly, when a skirmish ensued between his troops and the national guards, who protected the house of their meeting, in which several lives were lost. A civil war was on the eve of commencing, when the members of the General Assembly undertook a voyage to France for the purpose of justifying themselves in person, and all parties seemed disposed, tacitly, to await the issue of the appeal.

These members, whose numbers amounted to eighty-five, arrived in France in September 1790; but they found that their enemies had preceded them, by the industrious dissemination of misrepresentation, and they were condemned without being heard.* A decree was pronounced, reversing all their orders and acts, dissolving the Assembly, and declaring the members for ever incapable of being chosen delegates in future; and orders were issued for forming a new Colonial Assembly, on the principles of the decree of 8th March 1790.

* See note 2, App.

Nothing could exceed the surprise and indignation with which this decree was received in St Domingo. It seemed as if the government were resolved to leave no measure untried which might tend to degrade and to insult the colonists; and the decree was so much disregarded and contemned, that many of the parishes positively refused to choose other deputies. And, in order still farther to heighten the dissention, the National Assembly, instigated by the Abbé Gregoire, Condorcet, La Fayette, Brissot, Robespierre, and others, passed another decree on 15th May 1791, by which it was declared, "That the people of colour resident in the French colonies, born of free parents, were entitled, as of right to, and should be allowed the enjoyment of, all the privileges of French citizens, and among others, to those of having votes in the choice of representatives, and of being eligible to seats, both in the parochial and colonial Assemblies.

These measures were essentially calculated to uproot all the established laws, prejudices, and opinions, which had subsisted in the French colonies from their earliest period, while, at the same time, they destroyed the right which they had acquired, by the decree of 8th March 1790, of passing laws for their own internal government. The strongest remonstrances against them were ineffectually made by the colonial committees, while the deputies from the colonies refused to give their farther attendance. The only consequence of these remonstrances was the appointment, by the National Assembly, of three civil commissioners, who were required to repair to St Domingo to see the decrees duly enforced.

The feelings of the colonists were now excited to rage

and despair. Obedience to the decrees was universally refused; and as they appeared to have been betrayed by the mother country, their first impression was openly to throw off their allegiance, to seize on the French ships then in the harbour, to confiscate the goods of the merchants, and to throw themselves for protection on the British. The national cockade was degraded and trampled under foot, while the Governor-General, stripped of his authority, and finding all subordination at an end, awaited the issue in silence and in sorrow. It was then that alarming symptoms of commotion, the portents of the coming storm, manifested themselves in every quarter. The people of colour and the negro slaves were seen suddenly to assemble in vast bodies in different parts of the island, and the whole scheme of rebellion burst forth, in the month of August, in one uncontrollable and universal scene of carnage and desolation.

The subjoined address of a committee, deputed, in November 1791, to make a last appeal to the justice and protection of the National Assembly, resumes the narrative where we have left it, and eloquently relates the melancholy story, in terms which are calculated to sink deep into the heart of the most callous.

*ADDRESS to the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, on
3d of November 1791, by the Deputies from
the General Assembly of the French part of
St Domingo.*

THE General Assembly of the French part of St Domingo has appointed us a deputation to address you.

In that character, our first duty is to assure you of the inviolable attachment of this important part of the empire to the mother country, before we describe to you the terrible events which are now working its destruction, and solicit the earliest and most effectual succour, to save, if it be yet possible, its wretched remains.

Long have we foreseen the evils which afflict us, and which, doubtless, will end in our annihilation, if the national justice and power interpose not speedily for our relief.

We come to lay before you some particulars, which yet will give you but an imperfect idea of our disasters and of our situation.

The General Assembly of the French part of St Domingo, after having been constituted at Leogane, had appointed to hold its sessions in the town of the Cape. The deputies were gradually assembling there, for the purposes of their mission.

Several of them arriving, on the 16th of August, at the district of Limbé, distant six leagues from the Cape, were there witnesses of the burning of a trash-house on Chabaud's plantation.

The incendiary was a negro-driver of Desgrieux's plantation. Armed with a cutlass, he fled; M. Chabaud saw, pursued, and overtook him; they fought; the negro was wounded, taken, and put in irons.

Being interrogated, he deposed, "That all the drivers, coachmen, domestics, and confidential negroes of the neighbouring plantations and adjacent districts, had formed a plot to set fire to the plantations, and to murder all the whites." He marked out, as ringleaders, several negroes of his master's plantation, four of Flaville's, (situated at Acul, three leagues from the Cape,) and the negro, Paul, driver on Blin's plantation at Limbé.

The municipality of Limbé proceeded to M. Chabaud's, and, on putting the same questions, received the like answers from the incendiary negro. The municipality presented the examination, in form of a *proces-verbal*, to the Northern Provincial Assembly; and, informing Flaville's attorney of the names of the conspirators that were about him, advised his securing and lodging them in the prison of the Cape.

This man, who was of a mild and gentle disposition, more inclined to confidence than suspicion, assembled the negroes under his command, and, communicating the information he had received from the municipality, told them he could not give credit to a plot so atrocious, and offered them his head if they desired it. With one voice they answered, that the deposition of Desgrieux's driver was a

detestable calumny, and swore an inviolable attachment to their manager. He had the weakness to believe them; and his credulity has been our ruin. The municipality of Limbé demanded from M. Planteau, attorney of Blin's plantation, that they might examine the negro, Paul. This slave being interrogated, replied, "That the accusation brought against him was false and injurious; that, full of gratitude to his master, from whom he was daily experiencing acts of kindness, he would never be found concerned in plots that might be framed against the existence of the whites, and against their property."

In return for this perfidious declaration, and under assurance from M. Planteau, that Paul deserved credit, he was released.

In this state matters continued till the 21st, when the public force of Limbé, at the requisition of the municipality, proceeded to Desgrieux's plantation, to take into custody the negro cook, accused of being a ringleader. The negro fled, found out the negro, Paul, of Blin's plantation, and, in conjunction with the other conspirators, they prepared fire and sword for the completion of their horrible designs.

In the night between the 22d and 23d, twelve negroes reached the sugar-house on Noé's plantation at Acul, seized upon the apprentice refiner, and dragged him before the great house, where he expired under their wounds. His cries brought out the attorney on the estate, who was laid lifeless on the ground by two musket-balls. The wretches proceeded to the apartment of the head refiner, and assassinated him in his bed. A young man who lay sick in a neighbouring chamber, was left for dead under the blows

of their cutlasses; yet he had strength to crawl to the next plantation, where he related the horrors he had witnessed, and that the surgeon only was spared—an exception which was repeated in regard to the surgeons in general, of whose abilities the negroes had reckoned they would stand in need.

The plunderers proceeded to Clement's plantation, and there killed the proprietor and refiner.

Day began to break, and favoured the junction of the ill-disposed, who, spreading over the plain, with dreadful shouts, set fire to houses and canes, and massacred the inhabitants.

On that same night, the revolt had broken out on the three plantations of M. Gallifet.* At one of these the blacks, with arms in their hands, made way into the chamber of the refiner, with a design to assassinate him, but only wounded him in the arm. Favoured by the night, he escaped, and ran to the great house. The whites who resided there united for their defence. M. Odeluc, a member of the General Assembly, and attorney for the affairs of Gallifet, came to the Cape, and gave information there of the insurrection of his negroes. Escorted by the patrol, he reached the plantation, seized the ringleaders, and returned at their head to the town. Immediately he went out again with twenty men in arms, that he might restore tranquillity and maintain order. But the negroes were all embodied, and attacked him. *Their standard was the body of a white infant empaled upon a stake.*

* At the Cape, it was a proverbial mode of expressing any man's happiness—"Ma foi, il est heureux comme un negro de Gallifet."—He is as happy as one of Gallifet's negroes.

M. Odeluc, addressing himself to his coachman, whom he perceived among the foremost, exclaimed, "Wretch! I have ever treated thee with kindness, why dost thou seek my death?"—"True," he replied; "but *I have promised* to cut your throat," and instantly a hundred weapons were upon him. The majority of the whites perished with him, particularly M. Averoult, also a member of the General Assembly.

At the very same time, Flaville's gang (that which had so recently sworn fidelity to the attorney) armed themselves and revolted, entered the apartments of the whites, and murdered five of them who resided on the plantation. The attorney's wife, on her knees, besought the life of her husband. The inexorable negroes assassinated the husband, and told the wife that she and her daughters were reserved for greater brutality. M. Robert, a carpenter, employed on the same plantation, was seized by the negroes, who bound him between two planks, and sawed him deliberately in two.

A youth, aged sixteen, wounded in two places, escaped the fury of the cannibals, and it is from him we learned these facts. The sword was then exchanged for the torch, fire was set to the canes, and the buildings soon added to the conflagration. It was the appointed signal; revolt was the word, and with the speed of lightning it flamed out on the neighbouring plantations; wherever there were whites there were so many victims slaughtered; men, women, the infant and the aged, expired indiscriminately under the knife of the assassins.

A colonist was murdered by the very negro whom he most distinguished by acts of kindness. His wife, stretched

upon his body, became the victim of the brutality of his murderer.

M. Cagnet, an inhabitant of Acul, seeking to escape from these horrors, embarked for the Cape. His domestic negro begged permission to attend him. Such a mark of attachment determined his master to leave him as a gnard upon the plantation, that he might endeavour to preserve it. But M. Cagnet had hardly set foot on board, when he saw that slave, with a torch in his hand, setting fire to his property.

Expresses being sent to the Cape, armed citizens and troops of the line were despatched thence. They proceeded towards the strongest body of mutineers, and destroyed a part of them; but finding the number of rioters increasing in centuple proportion to their losses, and being unable to maintain their ground, they retreated in expectation of a reinforcement, which had arrived, but not before night, headed by M. de Touzard, who took the command of the little army.

M. de Touzard, perceiving that the revolted were rallying on Latour's plantation, marched thither. The moment the artillery was ready to play, in order to disperse them, the negroes pretended to surrender. M. de Touzard advanced, and many of them exclaimed they would return to their duty. He trusted to their repentance and retired. Humanity and the interests of the colony enjoined his forbearance; but it was not long before he was undeceived. The negroes separated indeed, but only that they might recruit their numbers with all the neighbouring gangs. The army returned into the town to take new steps for putting an end to the disorder. The revolted profited by

this interval to fill up the measure of their depredations. Our communications with the adjacent districts became impeded. We were alarmed lest the disorder had reached them, and our fears were soon realized. We learned from persons escaped by the sea, that Limbé, Plaisance, and Port Margot, were a prey to like horrors; and every citizen, in detailing his misfortunes, discovered to us new crimes.

M. Potier, an inhabitant of Port Margot, had taught his negro driver to read and write. He had given him his liberty, which the fellow enjoyed; he had granted him ten thousand livres, which were soon to be paid to him; he had also given to this negro's mother a piece of land on which she cultivated coffee. The monster seduced the gang of his benefactor and of his mother, burned and destroyed their possessions, and obtained, for this action, a promotion to the rank of general.

At Great River, an inhabitant, M. Cardineau, had two natural sons of colour,* to whom he had given their liberty, and who, in their childhood, had been the object of his tenderest care. They accosted him with a pistol at his breast, and demanded his money. He delivered it, but no sooner had they obtained it than they stabbed him to the heart.

At Acul, M. Chanvet de Breuil, deputy to the General Assembly, was assassinated by a mulatto, aged sixteen, his natural son, to whom he destined his fortune, having manumitted him from his childhood.

* In the French colonies, the free negroes, as well as the mulattoes, and others of the mixed race, were denominated *people of colour*.

M. and Mad. Baillon, with their son-in-law and daughter, encouraged by their negroes, remained on their plantation; but the depredations of those whom they had most trusted warned them that it was time to fly. The nurse of Mad. Baillon, the younger, confessed to her, there was not an instant to be lost, and offered to attend them. An old servant engaged to conduct their steps. Luckily, Mad. Baillon's nurse was the wife of Paul Blin, one of the negro generals, and had obtained from him some provisions for her master's family. At her entreaty, he had even promised to provide, at a distant barquadier, a canoe to carry the fugitives to the Cape. But how great was their grief at seeing a little skiff, without mast, or oars, or rowers! One of them tried to embark in it—the flimsy boat upset, and his life was with difficulty saved. Again they applied to Paul, and his wife reproached him with breaking his promise. He replied, that “he only provided this as a preferable mode of death to that which the revolted had prepared for the unhappy family.” Petrified with terror at this recital, despair gave them new strength: they set off on foot; and, after being twenty-one days in performing a journey of only five leagues, every day encompassed by dangers, they arrived at Port Margot, whence they reached the Cape.

Meantime, the flames gained ground on all sides. La Petite Anse, la Plaine du Nord, the districts of Morin, and Limonade, presented only heaps of ashes and of mangled carcasses.

Nothing, one would think, could deepen the horrors of this recital; and yet it is marked with features of a still more dreadful character, when we see that those slaves

who had been most kindly treated by their masters were the very soul of the insurrection. It was they who betrayed and delivered those humane masters to the assassin's sword; it was they who seduced and stirred up to revolt the gangs disposed to fidelity; it was they who massacred all who refused to become their accomplices. What a lesson for the *Amis des Noirs*! What a heart-breaking discovery to the colonists themselves, to whom futurity could suggest nothing but prospects of despair, if, in the midst of so many crimes, there had not yet been found slaves who gave proofs of an invincible fidelity, and who made manifest their determination to reject with disdain the seductions of those who have endeavoured, by promises of liberty, to inveigle them into certain destruction. Liberty is now theirs; but it is the gift of their masters—the reward of their honest attachment; and it has been ratified by the representatives of the colony, amidst the transports of universal gratitude.

We resume the narrative of our disasters. At this time one hundred thousand negroes were in rebellion; and all the buildings and plantations of more than half the northern province appeared only as one general conflagration. The plains and the mountains were filled with carnage and deluged with blood. The colonists, stupified with fear, knew not where to seek refuge. One flies for safety to the woods—is there betrayed by his negroes and stabbed; another confides in the promises of his gang; a rebel ringleader steals in among them, the gang rises, and the proprietor is their first victim.

Scattered over an extent of country intersected by mountains and deep valleys, the flying inhabitants

attempted to rally and sell their lives dearly. The roads were blockaded; they were taken prisoners and massacred.

They who combined opposed but a feeble bulwark against the swelling torrent. They were routed, taken, and expiated in tortures their exertions for self-preservation. These horrible scenes were acting at the very gate of the town of the Cape. Terror and dismay took possession of every mind; yet all felt the urgency of providing for their common safety. They assembled—acted in concert—the citizens took up arms—and the General Assembly placed the patriotic troops under the command of the governor.

The town of the Cape, with about three thousand men at the most, had to keep in check fifteen thousand black inmates, ready to follow the example of those without, and many ill-disposed whites. The General Assembly deliberated for an entire night upon the means of preservation from internal enemies. The result was a resolution to adhere solely to a well-directed and constant watch over their conduct and their dispositions. The revolt had been too sudden and too well concerted to leave a hope of stopping or of alleviating its ravages. The town of the Cape (the side next the sea excepted) was defenceless and incapable of fortification, without a delay of several days and immense labour. It was extremely to be feared, that the revolted negroes might pour down upon the town, and, favoured and seconded by those within, make a general massacre of the whole race of the whites. One resource alone, therefore, remained—to take possession of the passes of the hills contiguous to the town—to establish a

commanding post, which, by the help of the adjoining marshes, might protect it—and to defend the road of La Petite Anse by a battery of cannon and boats, lashed together. This resolution was adopted and executed: thenceforward, the Cape, surrounded by a solid pallisade, by chevaux-de-frize, and by considerable posts, might feel its situation less alarming.

During this interval, not a minute was lost in sending information, by sea, to the parishes which were yet uncontaminated, and in suggesting to them the proper precautions to be taken. The inhabitants of those parishes formed a league, and established camps, more or less considerable. These were stationed at Tron, Valliere, Great River, Mornet, Dondon, Marmelade, Port Margot, and other places in danger. The revolted followed the same plan. They stationed camps in all the districts they had ravaged. Moreover, they forced the camp of the whites at Great River, and killed or put to flight all the inhabitants of that district. The camp at Dondon shared the same fate, after a contest of seven hours, in which more than one hundred whites fell. The few unfortunate people who escaped on that occasion sought refuge among the Spaniards, but were driven back.

M. M. Gramal, Roynaud, and Lambert, inhabitants of Great River and Dondon, reached the house of a Spanish colonist, their intimate friend; this worthy man, urged on the one hand by the strongest sympathy and on the other by the fear of being burned out by his own countrymen, determined to keep the three Frenchmen locked up in his closet, whence he allowed them to escape at night, in the midst of deserts and under advantage of a storm.

Shall it be told you, that you may feel the indignation which the conduct of our neighbours must have excited, that depositions and the public report state, that several of the inhabitants of Dondon who took refuge among the Spaniards, were driven beyond the limits, and sold to the negro chiefs in consideration of three Portugal pieces (one hundred and thirty-two livres of France) per head, and that they were put to death.

The districts of Rocou, Maribaroux, Le Terrier Rouge, Jacquesy, Caracole, Ouanaminthe, and Fort Dauphin, forming the east part of the northern province, were, as yet, uninjured; *their* defence was an object of instant necessity.*

A camp was established, under the orders of M. de Rouvrai, which completely answered the purpose for which it was formed, in spite of the continual efforts of the insurgents to prevent it.

While these alarming transactions were passing, the town of the Cape was resorted to by the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills and plains who had escaped from the sword of the assassins. It was then that M. de Blanche-lande thought it prudent to march out two small bodies of troops, which, joined by M. de Rouvrai, attacked, and carried in succession, several camps of the revolters, situated on the plantations of Chabanon, La Chevallerie, Bullet, Duplat, Cbaritte, Deuort, Dagout, and Gallifet; in each of which, many white females were set at liberty. It is from them that we have learned to what excess the revolters had carried their brutality. Your sensibility,

* These districts were all afterwards successively ravaged and destroyed.

already excited, could not endure the narrative of the horrid scenes which these women witnessed.

From the rebel prisoners, we discovered that the different chiefs of these banditti are at bitter enmity with each other: every troop forms a party, and these parties are always at variance—always ready for mutual destruction. The authority they have established is absolute despotism. The chiefs exercise unheard-of tyranny over those they command; the least disobedience, the slightest sign of hesitation, is punished with death; and it is a notorious truth, that more negroes have been sacrificed to their own ignorant rage and suspicion, than we have been compelled to destroy in our defence, although we have obtained over them several signal advantages. Their acts of cruelty fall even on those who have voluntarily engaged in the revolt. But who will not shudder to hear in what manner they punish those who determine to remain faithful to their masters! They seize them by force, and roast them at the next fire. They have been seen, with the cruelty of cowards, placing in the front of battle, the aged, the infants, and the women; and, finding them unfit for action, making use of them to parry our blows. Have they any wounded, and, for want of surgeons, cannot dress their wounds, they confine them in a hut and set fire to it. In short, be assured of this, if the sanguinary designs of these uncivilized and ferocious men should be realized in respect to the whites—should they accomplish the extermination of the Europeans in the colony—soon would you see St Domingo presenting a picture of all the atrocities of Africa. Subjected to the most arbitrary masters, distracted by the most bloody wars, they would render their

prisoners subservient to their caprices ; and the moderated servitude under which they are held by us, would be exchanged for a slavery, aggravated by all the refinements of barbarism.

In the deplorable situation we have described, M. Blanchelande, who acted in concurrence with the General Assembly, thought it right to suggest a proclamation, which might contribute to bring back the revolters to their duty. The General Assembly, composed of planters, perfectly acquainted with the character of the negroes, represented to him the danger of such a proclamation, and positively refused to give it their sanction. The week following M. Blanchelande renewed his proposal : the same motives dictated the same refusal. He persisted, and determined to issue it in his own name ; and he did it, because he had learned that the negroes were willing to submit themselves. The proclamation was made, and delivered by twelve dragoons. What effect was produced by this measure ? Seven of them were assassinated in the camp of the rebels, and the rest saved themselves with the utmost difficulty.

It would serve no purpose to describe to you all the horrors to which our unfortunate fellow-citizens have been a prey. Posterity will be shocked at so many cruelties, committed in the names of philosophy and liberty.

Yet have we only, in this relation, sketched to you some scattered outlines of the dreadful picture of those evils which have visited a country, till lately, so peaceful, so flourishing, so valuable to the French empire ! You will better judge by a summary of the losses which the colony had experienced at the period of our departure.

They reckoned, in the parishes of Plaisance, Port Mar-

got, Limbé, Marmelade, Acul, La Plaine du Nord, La Petite Anse, Morin, Limonade, Sainte Susanne, Moka, Cottellettes, Great River, Dondon, and other districts, more than two hundred sugar works, twelve hundred coffee works, many indigo works, entirely burned down; numerous potteries, distilleries, many considerable villages, public magazines, an immense quantity of merchandise, had shared the same fate. By adding to these all the instruments of husbandry, utensils for manufactures, household furniture, and specie, horses, mules, and other cattle, some idea may be formed of the enormity of our losses, which we value at upwards of six hundred millions of livres. The assistance of the nation, the exertions of commerce and of our own industry, may perhaps repair them; but what shall dry the tears that flow for more than one thousand of our fellow-citizens slaughtered, the victims of this cruel revolt? Can sensibility be mute, when we reflect, that fifteen thousand negroes will be destroyed before order and tranquillity can be re-established, and that, should they succeed in their projects, St Domingo will become the tomb of fifty thousand Frenchmen!*

Hitherto we have only spoken of the misfortunes of the northern parts; they are not all we have to lament. Blood was spilt in the western province; fire destroyed several properties there; the gangs of Grandfonds, Charboniere, and Fond Ferrier, revolted.

The detection of a conspiracy at Leogane preserved that district from carnage and conflagration, as well as those of Archaie, Des Vases, and le Cul de Sac. Jeremie experi-

* See Note 3, App.

enced some commotions, but a timely arrest of the excitors of them saved that place from the impending evil.

The southern parts had also great cause of alarm. The precautions taken there had, to the period of our departure, maintained their tranquillity; yet the population there is so thin that the measures employed are more the proofs of timidity than the pledges of security.

Thus you behold, on every side, the colony threatened; and if there be colonists who are yet to be saved from so many complicated dangers, still will they have to contend with treachery and famine—with epidemical diseases, caused by so many unburied carcasses in a burning climate—with disorders more acute, the effects of fatigue, terror, and vexation; in a word, with every evil that nature engenders for the destruction of mankind. What just reason have we not to dread the total ruin of the colony—a ruin which must accelerate that of the mother country. The destruction of our plantations will cause the stagnation of your manufactories; successive bankruptcies will injure public credit, and, even in Paris, will be felt by the capitalist and tradesman; in the inmost of your provinces, it will check the collection of taxes; the decrease of shipping in the sea-ports will reduce to beggary an innumerable body of labourers and of seamen. Then will cries of rage and despair ascend from every quarter, calling upon you for justice against the authors of so many calamities; and can they fail to be detected by the perfidious cunning, by the cruel perseverance with which they have so long been contriving a catastrophe, now so terribly conspicuous.

We passed our lives in tranquillity in the midst of our

slaves. A paternal government had, for many years past, meliorated the condition of our negroes; and we dare affirm, that millions of Europeans, attacked by every want, subject to every misery, possess fewer enjoyments than those who have been represented to you, and to the world in general, as loaded with chains and perishing by a lingering death. The situation of the negroes in Africa—without property, without political or civil existence, continually a prey to the weak capricious fury of tyrants, who divide among them that vast uncivilized country—is changed in our colonies for a condition of comfort and enjoyment. They are deprived of nothing; for liberty, which, it is true, they have not, is a plant that has never yet proved fertile in their native soil; and, whatever the spirit of party may assert, whatever imagination may invent, well-informed men are not to be persuaded that the negroes in Africa have the enjoyment of freedom. The traveller* who has most recently visited a part, hitherto almost unknown, of that extensive country, has given us, in his long and interesting work, a history only of blood and desolation. The men who inhabit Abyssinia, Nubia, the Galla, and the Funge, from the coasts of the Indian ocean to the very frontiers of Egypt, seem to rival, in ferocity and barbarity, the hyenas and tigers which nature has there created. Slavery is, with them, a title of honour; and life, in these horrible climates, is a possession unprotected by any laws, and held only at the will of a sanguinary despot.

Let any man of feeling and information compare the deplorable state of the negroes in Africa with the mild

* Bruce.

and comfortable lot they enjoy in our colonies ; let him set aside declamation, the pictures which a false philosophy has been pleased to delineate, (far more from a pursuit of popularity than from zeal in the vindication of humanity ;) let him recall the regulations which governed our negroes before they were seduced and alienated from us ; provided against every want ; supplied with accommodations unknown in the greater part of the cottages of Europe ; secure in the enjoyment of their properties, (for they had property, and it was sacred ;) nursed, in times of sickness, with an expense and an attention which may be sought in vain in the much boasted hospitals of England ; protected, respected, in the infirmities of old age ; at ease in respect to their children, their families, and their affections ; subjected to a labour calculated according to the strength of each individual, because individuals and employments were classed, and interest (even should humanity fail) enjoined an attention to the preservation of their numbers ; enfranchised whenever they had merited it by important services. Such was the just unflattered picture of the government of our negroes ; and this domestic government had been meliorated (particularly in the last ten years) with an anxiety of which you will find no example in Europe. The sincerest attachment connected the master and his slaves. We slept in security in the midst of men that were become our children, and many of us had neither locks nor bars to our houses.

Not that we would disguise to you, that there did exist, among the planters, a very small number of hard and ferocious masters ; but what was the lot of these wicked men ? Blasted in their fame, detested by men of charac-

ter, outcasts of society, discredited in their business, they lived in disgrace and dishonour, and died in misery and despair. Their names are never pronounced without indignation in the colony, and the bad estimation in which they are held serves as a warning to those who, yet unversed in the management of their slaves, might be led, by the impetuosity of their tempers, into excesses, proved, by experience, to be as contrary to good policy as they are, by increase of knowledge and humanity, become infamous.

Here we appeal, not to those who write romances to gain a name as men of sensibility—to acquire a momentary popularity, soon to be wrested from them by general indignation; but to them who have visited—who know the colonies. Let *them* say if the recital we have made is faithful, or if we have coloured it to interest you in our cause.

We repeat it, we have passed our lives in this state of tranquillity and happiness, and we returned to the mother country—the protectress of our properties—the entire tribute of our produce, which was applied in adding to the wealth of the metropolis, to her internal strength, and to her superiority in foreign commerce.

Meantime, a society springs up in the bosom of France, and prepares, at a distance, the destruction and convulsions to which we are now a prey. Unobtrusive and modest in their outset, they professed only a desire to alleviate the lot of our slaves; but that alleviation, already so far advanced in the French islands, must result from means which were totally unknown to this society, although they were objects of our unceasing attention, until obliged to

abandon them, by these incompetent meddlers having excited among our slaves a spirit of mutiny, and, among us, a spirit of distrust.

In order to meliorate gradually the lot of the slaves, and to increase the number of the emancipated, there should certainly be a previous solicitude of attention to the perfect safety of their masters. But an expedient so wise would have gained no applause in *their* temple of renown. Vanity commanded that measures of prudence should be relinquished for specious declamations, that we should be surrounded with terror and alarm, and that calamities should be contrived, the same which we have predicted since the earliest proceedings of the Amis des Noirs, and which have been so lately realized.

On a sudden, this society demands an abolition of the slave trade; that is to say, that the profits which may result from it to the French commerce, should be transferred to foreigners; for never will their romantic philosophy persuade all European powers, that it is incumbent upon them to abandon the culture of their colonies, and to leave the natives of Africa a prey to the barbarity of their native tyrants, rather than employ them elsewhere, and under more humane masters, in cultivating a soil which, without them, must remain uncultivated, and whose valuable productions are, to the nation which possesses them, a fertile source of industry and prosperity.

Combining itself next with the revolution in France, this society confounds its extravagant and irrational system with the plan which the nation had conceived for its enfranchisement; and, profiting by the universal ardour of all Frenchmen in the cause of liberty, interests them, from

the remembrance of their servitude, in its design to put an end to that of the negroes. Its blind enthusiasm, or its perversity, forgets that those savage men are incapable of knowing in what true social liberty consists, or of enjoying it with moderation, and that the rash law which should destroy their prejudices, would be, to them and to us, a sentence of death.

Thenceforwards this society, or, at least, some of its members, have given an unbounded loose to their enterprise; all means have seemed to them good, so they might but tend to its accomplishment. The open attack, the deep and studied innuendo, the basest and most despicable calumnies, have been practised to forward their designs; ingeniously mixing cunning with audacity, the society at one time flatters us by an invitation to shake off the yoke of the French merchants, assuring us of its support if we will unite with it in obtaining a free commerce, at another time it arms the mercantile body against us, affirming that we have in view a disgraceful bankruptcy, a chimerical independence, and that, in our career of vanity, we would build up a separate power on a level with that of France. Thus, after having endeavoured to irritate the planters and the merchants against each other—after having offered us principles incompatible with the interests of the mother country, when, in spite of its insidious counsels, we have declined to adopt them—still are we accused by this society of such intentions. And they lay hold of the Declaration of the Rights of Man—an immortal work, and beneficial to highly enlightened men, but inapplicable, and therefore dangerous, to our colonial regulations; they send it with profusion into our colonies; the journals in their pay or

under their influence publish this declaration in the midst of our gangs ; the writings of the Amis des Noirs openly announce, *that the freedom of the negroes is proclaimed by the Declaration of Rights.*

The decree of the 8th of March seemed calculated to check these desperate plots. But can the Amis des Noirs reverence any law but those oaths by which they are bound together, and that vow which they have formed to carry fire and sword into our habitations ? If a law be favourable to their theories, they adopt, they promulgate, they interpret that law ; if repugnant, they misconstrue, disavow, insult it, without shame ; they endeavour to degrade the authority on which it is founded.

The planters, merchants, and men enlightened enough not to be the dupes of their falsities, are indiscriminately the objects of their abuse. It is not enough that they have made themselves the arbiters of our property and our peace—they assume over us a supremacy of defamation ; nor may we defend ourselves and strive to parry their blows, without undergoing a torrent of their low scurrility. Thus, prejudicing us against the public opinion, shutting up from us the channels of defence, they undermine in security the rock on which our possessions are placed ; they surround it with snares, and our ruin must follow.

When it was found, that they had vainly flattered themselves with obtaining from the National Assembly the emancipation of our slaves, they attempted to introduce dissension among us, by persuading that assembly to take on itself to discuss the question of the people of colour. We had demanded, that we should ourselves make the laws upon this subject, which require great delicacy and

prudence in their application. We had pledged ourselves that those laws should be just and humane.

But that boon, which, had it then been granted by the white planters, would have eternally cemented the ties of affection and benevolence existing between these two classes of men, is presented to them by the *Amis des Noirs* as an offering of vanity and the means of avoiding equitable stipulations.

Other measures were tried to gain their point: they collected together at Paris some people of colour; they extolled their understandings; they invited them to unite their cause with that of the negroes. These men passed over to St Domingo in the sort of delirium occasioned by such doctrine; they communicated to the slaves those hopes with which they had been amused; they were loaded with libels and pamphlets, which encouraged the people of colour and the slaves to a general insurrection and a general massacre of the whites.

Ogé was the first victim of this fatal error; one of his brothers, misled by him, declared, on the 9th of March, in his death-bed testimony, that, had not the swelling of the rivers prevented the junction of the conspirators, eleven thousand rebel negroes were ready to pour down upon the Cape so early as the month of February, and to cause the devastation which took place only on the 23d of August. He named the ringleaders, gave particulars of the conspiracy, and offered proof. It was the voice of his conscience which spoke out at that moment, the last that remained to him for discovering the truth.

In the midst of this fermentation, in this general delirium, while the whites were agitated by distrust and terror,

and while the negroes were indulging themselves in a thousand fatal dreams, was the discussion of the decree of the 15th of May agitated among you. A shoal of writings, previous and subsequent, have been disseminated among our gangs. There have been read and commented upon, those terrible words—those words, the signal of blood and conflagration,—

“Perish the colonies!”*

It was then that a minister of the gospel of peace, in a letter addressed to his brethren, the people of colour, announced to our slaves, that soon should the sun shine upon none but freemen.†

Could the negroes—assailed by so many temptations, worked upon by so many manœuvres, stimulated by libels written in characters of blood, read at evenings in their huts, in the midst of assemblies of their chiefs, by men breathing only disorder and pillage—could they long resist the vertigo with which they were stricken? All memory of the kindness of their masters was erased from their minds; a desire of novelty was all they felt; they became the apt instruments of those men inveterately malevolent, who have greedily seized, in the writings of

* These words were used by Robespierre, in the National Assembly, when attempting to prove that the Declaration of Rights implied an enfranchisement of all the negroes in the colonies. “Let the colonies perish,” exclaimed he, “rather than that we should sacrifice one of our principles!” His speech was printed, and, with many other writings of a similar tendency, extensively circulated in St Domingo.

† The Abbé Gregoire. See note 4, App.

the Amis des Noirs, and in the interpretation of decrees, such arms as were best suited to lead the way to insurrection.

Is our measure of misfortune sufficiently full, that we may hope at last to have the truth no more disguised? Have we a valid claim to the retribution of the laws, without waiting those proofs which must result from the proceedings now on foot at St Domingo, and which will be transmitted to us? Is not the fatal influence of the authors of so many calamities already evidently proved by the whole of their transactions and by their criminal writings? Can it be doubted at this time that our ruin is *their* work? And shall France still restrain the cry of indignation due to the guilt of our enemies?

Flattered by hopes that misfortunes like ours would find consolation in the bosom of the mother country—that on our arrival in the capital, where we have at least a claim to pity, the hearts of our fellow-citizens would be open to our complaints—we find ourselves preceded by calumny. They who have made light of our properties and our blood, reckoned upon being the objects of our bitter reproaches, and have endeavoured to anticipate them. Skilled in the arts of defamation, which are habitual to them, after having rendered us the victims of their machinations, it remained to cast upon us the reproach and the shame. With a cruelty equalled only by their disregard for probability, they have dared to fabricate and to report that our constituents were themselves the contrivers of their own afflictions. They have dared to affirm that the absurd and barbarous project of effecting a counter-

revolution was the object to which they have sacrificed their properties, their families, their lives! They have dared to say that we wished to offer ourselves to Great Britain!

In return, we ask of you, with the boldness of freemen and of French citizens, (for, after all, we too are Frenchmen and citizens,) we ask of you whether it be permitted to any set of men, of any nation upon earth, to insult, with such effrontery, those whom they have injured?

What! *We* place fire and sword in the hands of our negroes! *We* light the torch that has destroyed our plantations! *We* sharpen the daggers that have assassinated our brethren and our friends! *We* prompt the brutal passions of which our females have been the hapless victims! *We* kindle in our country the volcano which has already covered it with ashes, and which perhaps will reduce it to nothing!

These desolators, calling themselves patriots, accuse us of having plotted a counter-revolution. They are then uninformed that, from the earliest days of the revolution, it has had our veneration; and that, as being more exposed under a despotic government to oppression, we have, with greater ardour, sprung towards liberty. Our most recent transactions testify in our favour. Is it the act of a counter-revolutionist to have declared, in constituting our assembly, that we would protect, with all the power of the law and of public opinion, the recovery of the debts due to the mother country? Is it the act of a counter-revolutionist to have there recorded, that to the National Assembly belongs the right of instituting our political and commercial regulations?

Is it the act of a counter-revolutionist to have written

to the representatives of the nation, while the grave was opening beneath our feet, that our last sigh and our last vow should be for our country?*

Had we been counter-revolutionists, is it to the National Assembly we should have addressed such sentiments?

It is asserted, it is printed and published, that we wished to offer ourselves to Great Britain. Our reply to this falsehood is very simple: it is written in every page of our proces-verbal. There we have manifested our principles; and we can safely affirm the full performance of our duty.

But we will go yet farther. Permit us a hypothesis, which our situation, singular in the records of history, authorises us to state.

At the moment of the insurrection breaking out, all the inhabitants of the town of the Cape were anxious to discover the cause of an event so horrible.

A journalist had printed the decrees of the 13th and 15th of May last, with the speech of M. Monneron, deputy of the Isle of France. The first depositions stated, that these papers, with all those of the pretended philanthropists, were read and commented upon by a mulatto upon Normand's plantation, in the nocturnal assemblies where the negro-drivers met, who are now the ringleaders of the rebels. We learned that the town of the Cape was to be included in the conflagration, and that within that town were lurking those who were to set it on fire and massacre all its inhabitants. Immediately a cry of rage and despair arose on all sides. The philanthro-

* See Note 5. App.

pists—France itself—were accused of this dreadful plot. Distraction and fury were impressed on every countenance; every heart was in agitation; every thing menaced a horrible butchery—a general confusion. Already the report of muskets was heard. Negroes and mulattoes received their contents at the very door of the General Assembly. Some assumed a white cockade, some loudly called for the protection of the English, some assumed a black cockade. These words—“The nation, the law, and the king,” disappeared from the hall which was preparing for the General Assembly: a hand, bewildered by rage, obliterated them. Exclamations were heard, that the government at home had yielded us to the murderer’s sword—to the torch of incendiaries! That, in short, they had delivered us over to every human crime, in one day, believed to be the last of the colony! Furious voices blasphemed against a country to whom they were indebted, not for their protection, but their death!

In the midst of this frenzy, of which no power could repress the first effusion, the General Assembly was yet attentive to measures of security. The moments were precious. A proclamation was issued forbidding, under pain of death, any one to take away another’s life. Four of the members made it public even whilst it was writing. These commissioners carried it from place to place, and met, in every place, mobs and shouts; and even insults; but they succeeded in saving the mulattoes, who, being accused, would otherwise have been massacred; and their care and their entreaties suspended the fury of the people.

A new alarm was suggested. The General Assembly was accused of participating in the crime of the people

of colour, and was threatened. Its courage remained unabated. The mulattoes offered to arm themselves for the common defence, and to leave, as hostages, their wives and children. The Assembly ventured to arm them; and, uniting them with the soldiers of the regiment of the Cape, thus converted into defenders those who had been nearly sacrificed as enemies.

At this violent crisis, which betokened a subversion of all things—if, giving way to impressions so calculated to inspire terror, we had experienced its effects—if, like those who surrounded and threatened us at that moment, we had regarded our country in no other light than as the cause of our misfortunes—if we had called in a foreign power to snatch the colonists from their butchers, to save their properties, to preserve the very credit of the metropolis—where is that man, having a conscience, who would have dared to condemn us? Yet were we still Frenchmen! And shall we, after this, be reduced to the abject necessity of justifying ourselves from the reproach of having aimed at independence? Let them examine all our acts. If there be a single one that tends to loosen us from those indissoluble ties which attach us to the empire, our heads are here to suffer the punishment due to such perfidy. We know that some captains of ships, whose vanity has been wounded because their inhumanity was made public, have been ready to join the *Amis des Noirs* in finding us guilty; but the groans of dejected commerce, feeling for our calamities and for their consequences, shall teach them their error, and that, should they succeed in rendering us odious by their calumnies, they will themselves have, ere long, to lament their success.

True, we have asked—we glory in having asked—(for it was the duty of men invested with a trust by their fellow-citizens)—assistance from all who surrounded us. That assistance we implored in concert with the Governor-General, and, therefore, as Frenchmen and as men; and since, without distinction, we applied at the same time to three different nations, we have sufficiently proved that our solicitations, the dictates of misfortune, could cover no project inimical to the mother country. Who, indeed, will dare accuse us for having had recourse to the British of Jamaica, since the National Assembly (then informed of our calamities and of our dangers only by imperfect reports) thought fit, of itself, to express the national gratitude to that generous people.

But even had we called in the British—not to lend us assistance but to govern us—to whom ought the guilt to be imputed? Place, for a moment, in our situation that department of the kingdom which you believe to be the most patriotic, the most proud of the appellation of Frenchmen; suppose that the sowers of sedition had stirred up in its bosom servants against masters, banditti against possessors of property; that, a hundred times, the peaceable inhabitants had remonstrated against such practices with no return but contempt; that, so far from receiving succour from the mother country, all that issued from its bosom seemed to teem with the seeds of revolt; that already the houses and properties of a multitude of citizens had fallen a prey to the disturbances; that they had seen the most abominable murders committed under their eyes; that they were hopeless of protection: if, at

such a time, so destitute and abandoned, these hapless citizens should have indulged an idea of forming new connections, and of imploring the assistance of another country, to whom, think you, ought the reproach to be made? To wretches bewildered by despair, or to the miscreants who took pleasure in wearing out their patience, and in breaking asunder the dearest and most sacred ties by an excess of misery?

We know our duty and we love it, but we also know and boldly claim our rights. We dedicate to the prosperity of the mother country the entire produce of our labours. She owes us protection against foreign force; she owes us the security of our properties and peace against the plots of the turbulent.

It is now proved that the influence of the Amis des Noirs is fatal to the colonies. Let them weave what sophisms they please, they cannot hide the evidence of our calamities. There is not an unprejudiced man existing, who can doubt that *their* labours, *their* declamations, *their* writings, *their* infamous emissaries, have been the active persevering cause which, for two years past, has paved the way for our ruin, and which at length has succeeded.

France owes us protection, but in vain would she render it effective, if such attempts are to remain unpunished; that which ought to disgrace our enemies, affords them matter of triumph and exultation.

She owes us protection; but to what end are her fleets and her armies, if she permit that seditious writings should incessantly scatter in our houses the seeds of every trouble; if she permit us to be pressed down to the earth with

humiliations ; and if to encompass us with murder and with blood become, in the eyes of the country to whom we sacrifice ourselves, the road to glory and to fame !

Forgive the warmth of our language. So many calamities have given us a privilege to speak out. Grief, bitter grief, is at our hearts ! A hundred times have we imprecated the public vengeance on the hateful manœuvres of those men who convulse our country under the mask of humanity. We have obtained no redress. O may the dreadful calamity of which we have sketched to you the picture, serve as a lesson for futurity, and preserve from like calamities all those of our fellow-citizens to whose lot they have not yet fallen.

It is to your steadiness in punishing the authors of our disasters, and in checking their new efforts, that the western and southern provinces have to look for their security.

As for the northern province, its losses are irreparable. Immense capitals are sunk—the restoration of its industry requires such an advance of funds as the merchants and proprietors cannot wholly accomplish. We speak not to you of individuals, but you will examine what, on your part, is required by the interest of the colony and that of the nation.

Representatives of the people of France ! You have heard a recital of the greatest calamity that has visited the human race in the course of the eighteenth century.

You have heard the complaint of the first colony in the world ; of a colony necessary to the existence of that nation whose concerns are placed in your hands. That

colony wishes to interest you only by its feelings and its sufferings !

It demands from you JUSTICE, SAFETY, SUCCOUR.

(Signed) J. B. MILLET.
 COUGNACQ. MION.
 SAINTE JAMES.
 CHENEAU DE LA MEGRIERE.
 LA GOURGUE.
 LE BUCQUET.

REPLY OF THE PRESIDENT.

To love our country is a source of heartfelt satisfaction ! To serve it in time of distress is the first of civic virtues, and it is yours ! The calamities of the colony are dreadful ! The National Assembly views them with horror, with indignation, with grief. You ask its justice—that is due from it to all the citizens of the empire. Its protection—that is due to your courage, your patriotism, your misfortunes. Its succour—that it is already occupied in providing. It will give your application its most serious consideration, and invites you to the honours of the session.

The sequel of the melancholy story, which is so well detailed in the foregoing address, is soon told. Unhappy

France became herself too much distracted and rent asunder by the dissensions and atrocities which marked her unhallowed career in the march of revolution, to be able to afford any effectual relief to her injured colony; and the justice, protection, and succour, which had been promised, never was extended.

The ascendancy which the Amis des Noirs had, by this time, acquired with the Jacobins and in the legislative body, enabled them to get passed the decree of 4th April 1792, which acknowledged and declared, "that the people of colour and free negroes in the colonies ought to enjoy an equality of political rights with the whites;" and the National Assembly sent out three commissioners for the purpose of seeing this decree enforced, and of *restoring tranquillity and order!* But neither the character nor the measures of these commissioners were calculated to produce any such beneficial results. They were three of the most violent of the Jacobin faction; men of low origin, without talents, principles, or abilities, who had risen, amidst the confusion of the times, to a power which they abused. Such men as these were but little calculated to meet with any consideration from the planters. Actuated by a spirit of avarice, fanaticism, and revenge, they took advantage of their authority to enrich themselves by plunder and confiscation. They made perfidious protestations of protection to the colonists, and then joined against them; and they succeeded in bringing, for a second time, indiscriminate carnage on the ill-fated island. Under such men as these there could be little hope of any amelioration; and accordingly, having, by their injudicious measures and the immorality of their private lives, frustrated entirely

the object which they had been sent to accomplish, they became terrified at the mischief which they had themselves wrought, and, after a few months residence, sought their safety in an ignominious flight, and returned separately to France.

The white inhabitants now fled from all quarters to the sea-shore, in hopes of finding protection from the governor, on board the ships in the harbour; but a body of mulattoes intercepted them, and a slaughter ensued, which lasted from the 21st to the 23d of June 1793, when the savages, after having murdered every white person who fell in their way, set fire to the buildings, and more than half of the city was consumed.

Towards the end of this year, the British government, (induced by a disposition, on the part of several of the colonists, and subsequent overtures made to General Williamson, the governor of Jamaica, to throw themselves upon the protection of Britain,) fitted out an expedition under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Whitelock, for the purpose of taking possession of the French part of the island. After several years of varied success, and after suffering dreadfully by the ravages of a pestilential malady which had broken out,* the British troops were finally withdrawn in the month of October 1798, and the island evacuated. In 1795, the Spanish part of it had been ceded

* Of the eighty-second regiment, no less than six hundred and thirty became victims to this disorder within ten weeks after its landing. In one of its companies no more than three rank and file were fit for duty. Hompesch's regiment of hussars was reduced, in little more than two months, from one thousand to three hundred, and the ninety-sixth regiment perished to a man!

to the French, who, however, could not retain possession of it; and although Bonaparte, after the peace of Amiens, sent out a large army under the command of General Le Clerc, the expedition was in the greatest degree disgraceful and disastrous.

It became obvious that the struggle could be no longer maintained—that the colony was for ever lost; and it was thenceforth delivered over to the black population, by whom it has been rent asunder and devastated by the incessant struggles of the barbarous chiefs who have, from time to time, arisen to strive for the ascendancy, and this once beautiful and flourishing colony is now fast retrograding to a condition of sterility and desolation.

In reviewing the events which are detailed in the foregoing pages, it becomes interesting to inquire, first into the causes which led to the insurrection in St Domingo, and secondly, the means by which so fatal an event may be avoided in other colonies similarly situated.

Of the causes, then, which produced the catastrophe, the perusal of the preceding narrative cannot leave a doubt on the mind that the chief was the dissemination, in the colony, of the theories of the French philosophers and philanthropists, and the industrious promulgation of the abstract proposition that all men ought to be free, and that every bond by which a human being held his fellow being in subjection, was a moral sin. These sentiments were eagerly caught by the negroes, men in the lowest state of mental cultivation, whose ignorant and uncer-

lightened minds could not lead them to discriminate between moral and corporal restraint, who were utterly incapable of understanding the necessity of a gradation of rank in civil society, or the mutual relations in the chain of creation by which mankind is linked together, and between whom and their masters the only tie which as yet subsisted, was that of force on the one side and fear on the other. When these men were told that liberty belonged to them as a birthright equally with the whites, they naturally imagined that it was attended by all the privileges and comforts which the whites enjoyed; and being taught by the most enlightened men in France that this valuable birthright was withheld from them by the cruelty and selfishness of their masters, the impulse of their unrestrained feelings hurried them on, first to seize it by force, and then to punish those by whom it had been held back.

How could it be supposed that beings so low in the scale of intellect could possibly enter into, or understand, the complicated and artificial relations on which the well being of cultivated society depends for its existence, and those feelings of affection, resignation, patience, humility, and a thousand others, which teach a man how to fill his station in life—a lesson which it requires long tuition, even in those who are born in the most favourable circumstances, to acquire. When they were told, in the address of the the Abbé Gregoire, that, “reinstated in the fullness of their rights, they would in future participate in the sovereignty of people; that the decree which the National Assembly had just published respecting them was *not a favour*, for a favour is a *privilege*, and a privilege to one

class of people is an injury to all the rest ;"—when they were assured that, "above a century ago, Louis XIV. solemnly acknowledged and proclaimed their rights, but of this sacred inheritance they had been defrauded by pride and avarice;"—when they were reminded that "there had been new oppressions on the part of their masters, and new miseries on theirs, till at length the cup of affliction was filled even to the brim,"—what other result could be expected than that they should consider it a sacred duty to resume that boasted inheritance of which they had been defrauded, and an act of justice to bring upon their oppressors the just punishment which their crime deserved. In the untutored mind of every age, the strongest feelings are those of cupidity and revenge, and it is only by the means of education and religion that the one can be lowered down into industry and the other raised up to justice. The rebellion of St Domingo was not the irresistible impulse of human nature groaning under the load of intolerable oppression, and struggling to be free ; it was the work of savage minds, goaded into frenzy by the precepts of an insane philosophy, which taught them to struggle through rebellion and bloodshed in the hopes of grasping an unsubstantial shadow.

At the present time, when there has gone abroad over the empire a strong feeling for the emancipation of the slaves in the British colonies, and when the great council of the nation is about to be occupied in deliberation on the subject, the fate of St Domingo furnishes matter for deep and solemn meditation.

It will be the great duty of the legislature, in considering the question, to revolve the subject well in all its

bearings; and, above all, to take advantage of those lights which history and the experience of other nations has furnished, for guiding them along the path to justice and mercy; pushing aside, on the one hand, all regard for arguments derived from selfish interest, and, on the other, the unstable phantasies of abstract theory and speculation. They will avoid being led away, alike by the excited feelings of those who would "maintain a principle," though "the colonies should perish," and the long rooted prejudices of those who would support what is wrong, although it had no farther claim to respect than that which is derived from antiquity. They will come to the discussion of the momentous question, impressed by the consideration that the lives of many thousand human beings hang on their decree; and they will recollect that, as soon as the *fat* shall go forth which makes the negro free, there will be no recall—*vestigia nulla retrorsum*—and the fate of the colonies, for weal or for woe, is from that hour irrevocably fixed.

By every rightly constituted mind, slavery cannot fail to be viewed as an evil which is *indefensible, and ought to cease*. But it is an evil which was originally sanctioned by British statutes, and has been continued and maintained under British authority; and the question is, whether the whole system ought to be suddenly demolished, and the boon of freedom showered down, without preparation, upon those who have not yet received that intellectual enlargement of soul which would teach them duly to appreciate the gift, and properly to use it when bestowed. We should think meanly of his judgment who would let in the dazzling rays of the noonday sun upon the weak-

eried orbs of one who has just recovered from total blindness. To the poor exhausted wretch who might be discovered in a state of inanition from hunger, the skilful physician would administer food by a cautious and sparing hand, until he should be sufficiently restored to be able to support a more substantial meal. In the same way it may be thought that the negro ought to be raised up by an easy ascent from his state of intellectual weakness, by ameliorating his condition, cultivating his understanding, and leading his mind to an accurate knowledge of the gradations of rank, and of the relative situations of master and servant, by which he will learn, that his own happiness and welfare depend on the manner in which he performs the duties of that station which has been allotted to him by providence. Surely a fearful responsibility is incurred by those who, in the mistaken zeal of indiscriminating humanity, distribute specious tracts and pamphlets throughout the colonies, holding out the necessity of immediate and unconditional emancipation, the direct tendency of which must be to render the white inhabitants odious in the eyes of their slaves, to excite in the latter visionary ideas of independence and equality, and which *may* lead to a renewal of the scenes of horror which St Domingo exhibited, involving masters and slaves alike in one common destruction.

It cannot be doubted, that the planters have done much of themselves, and under many disadvantages, to foster this moral culture; and to them, as being intimately acquainted with the habits and dispositions of the people, the task peculiarly belongs. All improvement in the condition of the negro should, in policy and in principle,

be derived from the hand of the master,* whose interest, if a higher feeling be wanting, depends on the prosperity of the slave, so as to strengthen the incipient sensations of gratitude, until the iron chains of fear be superseded by the silken cords of affection. It would seem to be a wise measure, and one essentially leading to the end in view, not with a rash hand to tear asunder the bonds which have hitherto subsisted between the planters and their dependents, but to encourage the former to proceed in the good work, to second their endeavours for the melioration of the slave population, and to afford them protection and assistance in their system for progressively leading the slaves onward to civilization and mental improvement, until the time should arrive when the chains of captivity, having thus been gradually lightened, shall finally drop off, the negro shall come forth a free, intelligent, and emancipated moral being; and “the beams of the morning shall *indeed* cease to illumine the fetters of slavery.”

* See note G, App.

APPENDIX.

NOTE I. p. 9.

THE most remarkable of these latter was James Ogdé, whose miserable fate, a short time afterwards, excited much commiseration.

Ogdé was a Creole, born at St Domingo, but was resident at Paris. He had been introduced into the Society of Amis des Noirs, where he soon became initiated into a knowledge of the rights of man, and became acquainted with the imaginary miseries of the condition of himself and his brethren. Filled with the notion, which was industriously fostered, that the whole coloured population was ready to rise up in arms against their oppressors as soon as a fit leader should appear, his heated imagination and vanity led him to believe that he possessed all the qualifications requisite for the situation, and he therefore resolved to set himself at their head. He secretly landed at St Domingo on 12th October 1790, with arms and ammunition, which he found means to convey to a place which his brother, who resided there with his mother, had prepared.

His first act was to send a letter to the Governor-General, demanding, in imperious terms, that the provisions of the *Codes Noir** should be enforced; that the privileges enjoyed by the whites should be extended to all classes whatsoever; and in which he proclaimed himself the protector of the oppressed.

He then endeavoured, by every means in his power, to disseminate disaffection and to draw together associates; but he only succeeded in collecting about two hundred undisciplined young men, who commenced their military career by the murder of such whites as fell in their way, and of those people of colour who refused to join them. Notice of these proceedings having reached the town of Cape Francois, a body of troops

* An edict passed by Louis XIV. in 1685, in favour of the slaves.

was sent against them, who attacked them at a camp which they had established at Grande Riviere, and completely routed them, having killed many and made sixty prisoners. Ogé himself escaped and took refuge with the Spaniards, who, on the demand of the Governor-General, delivered him up in the end of December, and he was shortly thereafter miserably put to death by being broken upon the wheel.

It was discovered, nine months afterwards, that Ogé had made a confession, in which he had fully detailed the plot of the insurrection which subsequently took place, with the names of the ringleaders and the places where their meetings were held. This confession was *suppressed* by the commissioners appointed by the supreme council of the northern province to take Ogé's examination.

NOTE 2. p. 11.

Extracts from the Address of the St Domingo Planters, assembled at Paris, to the King, 11th December 1701.

“On the first report of our calamities, France has seen those men, *whose philosophy is a dagger, and whose virtue is a flaming torch*, setting their writers and their clubs to work to counteract that impression of pity which our situation was calculated to inspire; and, at the very moment of the accomplishment of their prophetic vow, ‘Perish the colonies rather than our principles,’ M. Condorcet published, in his journal, ‘that the accounts were fabricated, and had no other object than to create, to the King of the French, an empire beyond the seas, in which there should be masters and in which there should be slaves.’

“When the news was confirmed, when the manufacturers, the seamen, the shipowners, and the whole commercial body of the kingdom discovered their alarm, the anti-social sect (through its agent, M. Brissot) exclaimed, that the blood of our brethren and the ashes of our habitations covered a crime of high treason; and this friend of humanity proposed to summon before the high national court whatever remnant of the planters should be left unmurdered by the negroes.

“These proposals were agitated and discussed in the National Assembly. Perhaps it was the first time that a civilized people suffered, in a legal form, the impious assault of guilt against misfortune.

“ The contempt, consequent on such charges, obliged them to shift their ground. The colonial regulations are inimical to their levelling system. Sworn enemies are they to all property, for they spurn, they persecute, they would annihilate, all wealth and all authority, in which they cannot participate. Their hypocrisy would preserve sacred the rights only of that multitude of which they are the despots. Therefore, the people of colour in the colonies were, for them, fit instruments into whose hands they must put arms, and they have succeeded !”

Even M. Brissot, the most violent of abolitionists, at one period disavowed any thing beyond the cessation of the slave trade, having declared, “ That he had never thought of liberating the slaves ; that during his residence in Virginia, he was convinced that the negroes were as unfit for liberty as infants of two years of age ; that he was persuaded that the abolition of slavery would be a great evil to them ; and that, in opposition to it he would lose his life, if necessary.”—*Du Morier sur les Troubles des Colonies.*

NOTE 3. p. 23.

“ Several journals have taken incredible pains to soften the representation of this mass of horrors. I can affirm that the General Assembly, whose meetings I attended till the 21st of October, had, at the close of the preceding month, received a particular account of the destruction of two hundred and twenty-two sugar estates, and between eleven and twelve hundred coffee plantations ; and it could not then be known how far the mischief had extended itself among the hills, with which the town of the Cape could no longer maintain any communication.

“ The number of white men, women, and children, whose throats had been cut, or who had been otherwise butchered by the negroes, then amounted to more than two thousand, and not to six hundred only, as the journals of the pretended philanthropists assert.

“ It would be too irksome a task to enumerate the acts of cruelty committed by the revoltors, those barbarians in whose favour a certain sect of philosophers so warmly interest themselves ! All the white and even the mulatto children have, in many places, been murdered without pity, and most frequently before the eyes or clinging to the bosom of their mothers. Infants, impaled on the ends of pikes, have been their ensigns. The Sieur

C728824 no correspondence

Blin, an officer of police, was nailed to one of the gates of a plantation, and his limbs, one by one, cut off; others have been tied between two planks and sawed asunder."—*Mot de Verité par M. Baillio.*

NOTE 4. p. 37.

Many of the mulattoes had established a correspondence with considerable persons in France, from several of whom, particularly the Abbé Gregoire, letters of a very extraordinary tendency were received and distributed through the colony. In one of these letters, after promising protection and support, the Abbé declares, that "the day will soon come when the sun shall shine upon free people only." "The beams of the morning," says he, "shall no longer give light to the fetters of slavery." These and similar expressions were exaggerated into one point—that the king had given freedom to all the slaves in St Domingo; and the Abbé Gregoire, to whose good offices this benevolence was ascribed, was immediately considered as the patron of all the mulattoes and negroes in the island. It is no wonder, therefore, that, considering their masters unjustly to withhold from them those privileges which they believed were granted them in France, they determined to do justice to themselves by slaying their oppressors.

No one who reads the above can fail to be struck with the resemblance which it bears to the repetition of the scene which has been acted forty years afterwards in Jamaica; where the same belief—that the King of England had given freedom to the slaves, but that the boon had been withheld by the planters—led to the same acts of insurrection and bloodshed. "Did you ever hear the prisoner say any thing about negroes being free? Yes; he said that, after Christmas, we all should be free. Did the prisoner tell you not to work? Yes; he told us we were all free. Who did the prisoner say had made them free? The king."—*Trial of Mr Pfeiffer—House of Commons Papers, No. 482, p. 14.*

"Did you ever attend the chapel and hear the prisoner say, that slaves were to be free? Yes; he told them that they must behave themselves—that the king has given them free."—*Ib. p. 15.*

Sharpe said, "The thing is now determined upon; no time is to be lost. The King of England, and the Parliament, have given Jamaica freedom, and it is held back by the whites: we must at once take it. The King

sent the law since March last, and it has been withheld by the whites: rise at once and take it."—*Confession of Robert Gardner.*—*Report, House of Commons Papers, No. 185, p. 35.*

NOTE 5. p. 40.

The following affecting passage occurs in the first address by the members of the General Assembly of St Domingo to the National Assembly:—
 "We will not inform you what cause has produced our calamities; you ought sufficiently to be acquainted with it. That which you will learn from us is, that, if we must perish, our last eyes shall be turned towards France—our last wishes shall be for her!"

NOTE 6. p. 54.

The late Mr Canning thus expressed himself in the House of Commons, in March 1824:—"If the condition of the slave is to be improved, that improvement must be introduced through the medium of his master. The masters are the instruments through whom, and by whom, you must act upon the slave population; and if, by any proceedings of ours, we shall unhappily place between the slave and his master the barrier of insurmountable hostility, we shall at once put an end to the best chance of emancipation or even of amendment. Instead of diffusing gradually over these dark regions a pure and salutary light, we may at once kindle a flame only to be quenched in blood."

THE END.

EDINBURGH:

PETER BROWN, PRINTER, LADY STAIR'S CLOSE.