An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti

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who acknowledged the fact with gratitude; and his intercourse with general Maitland was of the noblest kind. Notwithstanding these exertions, in which he had to combat with the natural prejudices of many of his followers, he preserved their confidence in his integrity, and their obedience to his wishes, and was hailed, with great justice, by common consent, as the perfector of the independence of St. Domingo.268

### CHAP. IV.

*State of Manners on the Establishment of Independence, &c. in St. Domingo, with a Memoir of the Circumstances of the Author’s Visit to the Island.*

The white population of St. Domingo, now still farther decreased by the emigrations which followed the evacuation of the English, presented but a dismal semblance of the flourishing French colony; added to which, many of the whites who were encouraged to remain, now spread through the eastern districts with a spirit of wild speculation, and became more solitary, when they might have been expected to associate with stronger ties than ever. Of the Spaniards, widely scattered, in their most tranquil state, many had emigrated, but more had been sent from the island, on the surrender of the Spanish territory to Toussaint. Although the defection of the whites was striking in the towns where they had been most numerous, that of the blacks was increased in a proportion so large, as to astonish those who had witnessed their losses, and the decrease which was remarked after the first insurrections of the negroes. This is accounted for in a satisfactory manner, by the greater degree of comforts experienced by the females, and the decrease of general labor.* Although, for some time, the change of government appeared to tinge with a melancholy hue, the parts of the island formerly in the possession of the English, yet the rude happiness of those who had now become its possessors, soon suppressed every other effect; and, notwithstanding the despotic rule of martial law, circumstances in general began to wear a promising appearance.

At this period the narrator of their history became possessed of an opportu-
nity of judging of the state and power of the people, who form the subject of his present disquisition; and his personal observations during his detention among them, will supply the information submitted in the present chapter.269

A violent hurricane having dismasted the little bark,* in which he was proceeding from Jamaica to join his regiment at Martinique, (having been before accommodated in the cabin of his friend, Admiral Smith,† as far as the Mole St. Nicholas,) it was driven under the walls of Cape François, and in that state compelled to wait the relief of the brigands,270 an appellation which the superior policy that already appeared in this extraordinary republic, had not yet obliterated from its members. To avoid the suspicion in which, notwithstanding the recent treaty, the English yet continued to be viewed, and to prevent the probability of injury to his companions, the writer was induced to assume the character of an American, which was easy to be effected, as the vessel was ultimately bound to that continent. The crew were permitted to land after certain ceremonies, and the first object which excited their attention, was no less than the hero of this novel empire. Toussaint was conversing with two privates of his forces on the batteries, and when he saw the Europeans approaching, immediately walked towards them, and, addressing them in French, inquired the news, from whence they came, and their destination. One served as respondent for the whole, who spoke in such terms as his character demanded, and the General civilly took his leave.

The number of Americans at this port could not fail to attract particular notice, and every attention seemed to be paid to the accommodation of their commerce, and a striking degree of interest in every occurrence that concerned them. Even the women seemed to renew a fondness long repressed for the whites, in favor of the meanest of the American sailors. The present writer, however, requiring some rest after his recent voyage, hastened, on receiving his directions to the purpose, to the Hotel de la Republique, the principal house, usually resorted to by Americans, an edifice of rather elegant appearance; and on his way, except the preponderancy of the black complexion, perceived but little difference from an European city. On entering the house, however, he immediately perceived that the usual subordinations of society were entirely disregarded, and that he was to witness, for the first time, a real system of equality.

Here were officers and privates, the colonel and the drummer, at the same table indiscriminately; and the writer had been scarcely seated at a repast

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*The Maria, Danish schooner, commanded by James Frazer.
†The liberal reception which the military always met with on board the Hannibal is too well known to require any compliment on the present occasion.
in the first room to which he was conducted, when a fat negro, to initiate him in the general system, helped himself frequently from his dish, and took occasion to season his character by large draughts of the wine, accompanied with the address of “Mon Americain.” The appearance of the house, and its accommodations, were not much inferior to a London coffee-house, and on particular occasions exhibited a superior degree of elegance. Toussaint not unfrequently dined here himself, but he did not sit at the head of the table, from the idea, (as was asserted,) that the hours of refection and relaxation should not be damped by the affected forms of the old regimen, and that no man should assume a real superiority in any other place than the field. He was in the evenings at the billiard-table, where the writer conversed and played with him several times; and he could not help, on some occasions, when a want of etiquette disturbed him for a moment, congratulating himself, that if he experienced not the refinement of European intercourse, he saw no room for insincerity: and that if delicate converse did not always present itself, he was free from the affectation of sentiment.

In traversing the once superb city of the Cape, though presenting a tolerable appearance from the shore, desolation everywhere presented itself. On the site where elegant luxury had exhausted its powers to delight the voluptuary, all was magnificent ruin! and to mark the contrast stronger, of the wrecks were composed temporary houses for the American merchants, and petty shops inhabited by the natives. Several spacious streets towards the centre, displayed the walls of superb edifices of five and six stories, with gilded balconies, of which the beautiful structure exhibited the devastation that had occurred, with additional horror. Nor was this all, for in different parts of these ruins the sad remains of the former possessors were visibly mingled with the crumbling walls:

“There—heedless of the dead,
The shelter-seeking peasant rears his shed,
And wonders man could want the larger pile.”

Having been informed of a review which was to take place on the plain of the Cape, the writer availed himself of the opportunity, accompanied by some Americans, and a few of his own countrymen who resided there under that denomination. Of the grandeur of the scene he had not the smallest conception. Two thousand officers were in the field, carrying arms, from the general to the ensign, yet with the utmost attention to rank; without the smallest symptom of the insubordination that existed in the leisure of the hotel. Each general officer had a demi-brigade, which went through the manual exercise with a degree of expertness seldom witnessed, and performed equally
well several manoeuvres applicable to their method of fighting. At a whistle a whole brigade ran three or four hundred yards, then separating, threw themselves flat on the ground, changing to their backs or sides, keeping up a strong fire the whole of the time, till they were recalled; they then formed again, in an instant, into their wonted regularity. This single manoeuvre was executed with such facility and precision, as totally to prevent cavalry from charging them in bushy and hilly countries. Such complete subordination, such promptitude and dexterity, prevailed the whole time, as would have astonished any European soldier who had the smallest idea of their previous situation.

The pleasing sensations inspired by the ability manifested in this review, were checked by the additional monuments of human ferocity which presented themselves on his return to the city; the conflagration of which, and of the surrounding plantations, was still in the memory of several Americans, who described the effect, as awfully grand beyond conception.

In one of the squares in the north-west quarter was placed an edifice that made some amends for the desolation appearing in its vicinity, from the elegance of its execution. It was an ascent to a canopy, or dome, of which the architecture was not perfectly regular, beneath which were two seats, and above them an inscription, that eminently exhibited the tolerance of Toussaint. There were two sentinels to guard it, who, being asked if any one might ascend the steps, answered in the affirmative, but with a strict prohibition against touching the cap of liberty, which crowned it. It was a tribute of respect to the memory of Sonthonax and Polverel, the French commissioners, and had been erected by some of their advocates at a time when their largesses obtained for them what they would not otherwise have enjoyed, a transitory popularity. An extract from a speech of one of them formed part of the inscription, in French, and which countenanced the opinion, that the abolition of slavery was a primary object of their mission. It was to the following effect:

My Friends,
We came to make you free.
Frenchmen give Liberty to the World.
You are free.
Guard your Freedom.
Vive la Liberté. Vive la Republique.
Vive Robespierre.\textsuperscript{273}

The remainder of the inscription consisted of a selection from the proclamation for abolishing slavery. The prevailing opinion of these men, notwith-
View of a Temple erected by the Blacks to commemorate their Emancipation. Reproduced with the permission of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.
standing they had been execrated for their conduct, was favorable to their talents, and to their spirit.

Though impressed with the necessity of caution, it would have required much more *sang-froid* than was possessed by the observer, to resist the numerous impulses of mingling with a people whose conduct presented the most generous hospitality, and objects of the most interesting contemplation. He obtained access to the houses of most whose intercourse could furnish either information or pleasure; nor did he reject the negro hut at other times, though certainly of less attraction.

As in all states of human society, particularly in the vortex of a revolution, which effected so complete a change, the able and the cunning had elevated themselves above those who were of the same rank of life. Negroes, recollected in the lowest state of slavery, including Africans, filled situations of trust and responsibility; they were, likewise, in many instances, occupied by those who had been in superior circumstances under the old regimen, free negroes, and mulattoes.

The superior order had attained a sumptuousness of life, with all the enjoyments which dignity could obtain, or rank confer.—The interior of their houses was, in many instances, furnished with a luxe beyond that of the most voluptuous European, while no want of trans-atlantic elegance appeared; nor, amidst a general fondness for shew, was the chasteness of true taste always neglected. Their etiquette extended to a degree of refinement scarcely to be conceived; and the service of their domestics, among whom were, from what cause was not ascertained, some mulattoes, was performed with more celerity than in many instances in Europe. A conscious ease, and certain *gaieté du cœur*, presided over every repast. Conversation had free scope, except as related to their own former circumstances, but when the defence of their country was the subject, every eye filled with fire, and every tongue shouted—Victory! The names of some, who had seceded from the black army were, the only objects that seemed to excite detestation. In many instances the writer has heard reasoning, and witnessed manners of acuteness and elegance, the relation of which would appear incredible, from those who were remembered in a state of servitude, or whose parents were in situations of abject penury; while sallies of wit, not frequently surpassed, have enlivened many an hour.

It would ill become him, notwithstanding the tide of prejudice, which has always pervaded his assertions, to suppose his readers capable of gratification from the chit-chat of a St. Domingo table; and it would be equally unjust to employ the opportunities afforded him by unguarded kindness, in the accumulation of fleeting anecdotes, arising from domestic privacy; he therefore contents himself with stating, that the enjoyments of life were to be found in
a high degree in the capital of St. Domingo, and that their alloy did not exceed, nor perhaps always equal, that of ancient European cities.

The men were in general sensible and polite, often dignified and impressive; the women frequently elegant and engaging. The intercourse of the sexes was on the most rational footing, and the different degrees of colour which remained, had lost most of that natural hostility which formerly existed. Several Americans had intermarried with ladies of colour very advantageously, and to appearance happily. They were, generally, very agreeable women, and felt no inequality in their difference of complexion or nation. Like Sappho, they could plead, (in many instances, in point of wit, sprightliness, and pathos, little inferior to the Lesbian muse, though without her powers of song)

"Brown though I am, an Ethiopian dame
Inspir’d young Perseus with a generous flame;
Turtles and doves of different hues unite,
And glossy black is pair’d with shining white."274

The drama, that source of rational delight, always so prevalent in St. Domingo, existed, in more strength and propriety than it had done before; and that licentiousness which appears inseparable to it in a higher state, was actually restrained. The representations were chiefly comedies en vaudeville, and a sort of pantomime;—sometimes serious representations, allusive to local circumstances, and sometimes merely humourous burlesques.—The conduct of the whole was highly creditable to the talents of the performers, some of whom yet remained from the French school, who, although driven to seek a livelihood under such doubtful auspices, might have shone with equal lustre to their more fortunate contemporaries on an European stage. The black performers, who preponderated in number, were not behind in talents; the writer saw a play of Moliere’s performed with an accuracy that would not have disgraced the first theatre in Europe.275—Even painting, from some recent specimens, appeared to be encouraged, and cultivated as an accomplishment, in a slight degree. A young lady of colour, of the name of La Roche, presented a large company, of which the writer was one, in the course of a few minutes, with their likenesses, very accurately cut in profile.—Music, also, though it must be confessed, not such as to vie with the harmony of the spheres, was every where prevalent to an excess, and the practice of most kinds in use, though stringed instruments were preferred.—Yet, with an ardent sensibility that appeared in many instances, and which could not fail to be cultivated under present circumstances, the rich blacks suffered the greater part of the capital to lie in ruins; they appeared to shrink
from reinstating it, as if in rebuilding their former residences, they should create new masters.

The situation of those who still remained in humble privacy, and who formed the great bulk of the people, was indeed very greatly changed. Their condition, agreeably to their capacities of enjoyment, approached nearer happiness than many others which are considered its ultimatum. Crimes were by no means frequent, and those rather attributable to accident than vice. They were perfectly at liberty as regarded themselves, and were more ready to perform their social duties, than the state was urgent in requiring them. Those qualities conspicuous in the negroes under their worst circumstances, their regard for all the relations of life, and tendernesses to each other, seemed expanded with their freedom, and many of the little prejudices that had existed wore away. Those amusements, which were formerly suppressed, had now free scope, but they restrained themselves from public annoyance with more regularity than could have been effected by the strictest police.

The menage of the labourer in the town and its vicinity, was improved in a proportion equal to his condition. A rough, yet neat couch, supplied the place of the wretched bedding of a former period, and the visitor was not unprovided for, though it is lamentable to state, that in several instances the furniture of the cottage was beholden to the public commotions, and in one instance, painfully risible, a beautiful fire-screen, the dextrous workmanship of some fair sufferer, concealed a dog then roasting from some of their fellows, who considered it opprobrious to be mangeurs des chiens.*

In one instance, the writer was introduced by a brigand† of peculiar intelligence, (with whom he had frequent conferences on the military tactics of the black army) to the cottage of a black laborer, of whom an account may not be uninteresting. He had a family of thirteen children; eight of them by one woman, and the remainder by two others; the former only lived with him in the same cottage, with his mother, who was aged and infirm; the other two, separately, at a small distance. This man was an epitome of legislature, and his family a well regulated kingdom in miniature. His cottage consisted of three irregular apartments, the first of which was his refectory, where, as often as

*Let it not excite wonder that the blacks, deriving their origin from some peculiar parts of Africa, are remarkably fond of the flesh of this animal, (of which an account may be seen at large, I believe, in Du Tertre,) for it has been often found an excellent substitute for other food at sea, and has been used with success by convalescents. See Cook’s Voyages. I quote the incident from memory. [James Cook (1728–79), A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1784).]

†In the recollection of my stay at Cape François, I use the term negro and brigand, (both derogatory of the ruling power of St. Domingo,) not as by any means appropriate to the people they describe at present, but as the means of distinguishing them to the European, who cannot so easily assimilate himself with their present condition.
possible, and always on *jours de fêtes*, his subjects assembled, including on those occasions his three wives. The furniture of this apartment was entirely of his own making, even to the smallest utensil, and with an ingenuity beyond what might be expected from perfect leisure; notwithstanding the artificer, during the process, had been obliged to attend his labor in the fields, and was a considerable time in arms. On a neat shelf, appropriated peculiarly to their use, lay a mass book, and a mutilated volume of Volney’s Travels, some parts of which he understood more than his visitor. Every thing convenience required was to be found on a small scale, and the whole so compact, and clean, with such an air of *propriété* throughout as was absolutely attractive. His own bed-room was furnished with an improved bedstead, supported by trusses, with a mattress and bedding of equal quality with the other furniture, but that of his children and mother surpassed the whole. One bedstead contained them, yet separated the male from the female, the young from the aged, and was separated or combined in an instant. —The third was his kitchen and store-house, and might also be called his laboratory, for conveniences were found for chemical experiments, though not of the most scientific kind; but every utensil for culinary purposes were provided in the best manner. The wife of this laborer (for he had submitted to the ceremony of marriage with the female who had borne him the most children, as is the general custom with them) was nearly as ingenious as himself, and equally intelligent. The mode he pursued in the regulation of his domestic economy was excellent; as continence is not a virtue of the blacks, the increase of his family was not confined to his own house; yet, even in his amours he was just; and as the two mothers before-mentioned were less protected than his ostensible wife, the primary object of his consideration was to have the whole of his children under his own care. This was reconciled to all parties from the first, in so mild a way, that no distinction was perceivable but in age, while the mothers held a relationship to their domiciliated offspring similar to that of an aunt or cousin, each exerting herself for the purpose of adding to the comforts of her own child.—On festive occasions, the two mothers sat alternately on the right or left of the mistress of the house, with as much etiquette as might be perceived in a more elevated station, and with the utmost harmony. The master of the family was absolute, but with him it was in theory, not in practice, for all seemed to vie in forbearance. As soon as the children could contribute their little powers to labor, they were employed; the younger (except as regarded their strength) being subject to the inferior offices; and, sin-

*It is a matter of regret to the author, that the plan of this singular bedstead, which might have been adapted to the European cottage with many advantages, was lost.*
gular as it may appear, on the festive occasions alluded to, they waited upon their seniors, though but by a few years, and seemed delighted in the office. Agreeable to this rule, in accordance with that reverence for age so remarkable among blacks of every condition, the grandmother received the affection and attention of all; and though often crabbed, infirm, and discontented, no one seemed to consider her failings as such, but as a duty prescribed them to bear.

In fact, the writer considered this numerous family, as he beheld them at their frugal meal a model for domestic life, with a proof that those jarring interests, which, in the smallest connection, as well as in the largest states, creating more embarrassment than the most adverse circumstances, or the greatest crimes, may be avoided by a generous conduct, and reciprocal kindness. He need scarcely add, happy was his humble friend, or that each individual of his family, in their separate capacities, laid up a store of happiness for themselves, and those around them.

From what could be perceived (quitting the confines of the town,) the productive system of the earth seemed to be founded on original principles.—Every individual employed a portion of his time in labour, and received an allotted part of the produce for his reward, while all took the field, from a sense of duty to themselves. A perfect combination appeared in their conduct, and every action came directly from the heart. More than sixty thousand men were frequently exercised together on the plain of the Cape, in excellent discipline, whose united determination against an invading enemy, would be victory or death. Little coercion was necessary, and punishment was chiefly inflicted by a sense of shame produced by slight confinement, or the like. Labour was so much abridged, that no want of leisure was felt; it would be a great gratification to the feeling heart, to see the peasant in other countries with a regulated toil similar to that of the labourer in St. Domingo.

Such is a general sketch of the state of society, as it appeared in the capital of St. Domingo, which spread internally as far as its effects could be expected to reach.—There was no possibility of acquiring correct accounts of the plans of government, which had been submitted to Toussaint, much less of the forms he was disposed to adopt. A regular municipal establishment existed, and martial government, dispensed everywhere in all its vigour, rendered civil jurisdiction of little avail.

The writer observed, with pleasure, the delay in repairing the vessel, which afforded him an opportunity of examining objects which might never return. For several weeks he continued to amuse himself with observations on the manners of the people, which he had no idea at that time of preserving beyond the information and amusement of his own friends, and by sketching
draughts of the principal posts that were accessible. He enjoyed the habits of a metropolis, and, except the anxiety which would obtrude on account of the delay from his duty, participated in the general happiness.

When the time arrived for the departure of the vessel, at an unexpected moment; such is the human heart, he lingered on a spot which he would have before avoided at the hazard of his life. The ship had been repaired—all was ready—and bidding farewell to new connections which had just began to engage him, he returned on board with the agreeable hopes of a speedy arrival at St. Thomas’s; but—

“Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate!”

After beating about upon the coast for three days, in the most perilous circumstances, the unfortunate vessel sprung a leak, when they were compelled to put into Fort Dauphin, or, according to the revolutionary nomenclature, Fort Egalité.

In this situation the master of the vessel and the writer apprehended no danger or impropriety in going on shore. Hoisting therefore Danish colours, they came to anchor under a small fort, when in less than half an hour the latter was arrested after landing by four blacks, and a mulatto officer of great ferocity. They returned with him on board, and placed him under the care of two black sentinels. These informed him, in answer to his anxious inquiries, that he was suspected of being a spy, that he would be tried on the morrow, and of course be condemned. Such was the complacent idea attached to the trial of a stranger, who was afterwards to defend the character of their chief.

Apprehensions of different kinds now crowded his imagination: he did not know whether suspicions might not have occurred at Cape François; and the commandant of the district have been prepared for his arrival. He was aware, that, in a few instances, he had ventured farther than he should have done. He had also been allowed access to many of the principal people, and he knew not what might have taken place after his departure. He was, however, left unmolested, and, except his freedom, without any other deprivation; a circumstance of the most fortunate kind, as it afforded him an opportunity of destroying his baggage and papers, including a variety of documents, which must have been dangerous in the highest degree.* These he disposed of, by putting them out of the cabin-window in the middle of the night, with

*Besides his military appointments, they included correct views of Fort Picolet and other works, and several plans, which he hoped to have had the honour of presenting to the Duke of York; his Royal Highness having condescended to regard, with attention, other attempts which he had the honour of presenting to him. [Rainsford addressed a Memorial to the Duke of York in 1795 before leaving for the West Indies, but its contents remain a mystery.]
a weight attached sufficient to sink them. Having succeeded in this affair, and the proceedings of the ensuing day continuing to occupy his attention, his situation became most unpleasant. The silence of the night, interrupted by the murmers of the ocean, the clamours of the guard, and the distant sounds from the shore, produced the strongest melancholy; while confused surmises of the determination of the morrow, and a contemplation of the shame, rather than the terror of an ignominious death, revolving in his mind, deprived him of the possibility of rest, and totally unfitted him for the slightest preparation.

Early in the morning he was taken on shore, and examined by a black general, named Muro, the commanding officer of the district. He could not help thinking that his appearance augured well, for he bore the principal mythological characteristic of Justice. He was totally blind of one eye, and appeared to see but little through the other. He, however, relieved the prisoner from the apprehension of any charge existing previous to the moment; for he began his examination by insisting, that he was not an American, but an English spy, reconnoitering the coast; and closed it by acquainting him, that a court-martial, already summoned, would assemble on the morrow, and his trial would be prompt and decisive. He was then conducted to a dark prison, (which wanted none of the usual concomitants of such a place,) and treated with the utmost indignity. There was no bed; nor had he any other provision than some coarse, dry fish, which he could not eat—a treatment he was afterwards informed was used to prisoners during the space between apprehension and trial, to prevent any opportunity for the contrivance of evasion. At the hour of ten he was brought before a regular military court, composed of twelve black general officers, the etiquette of which astonished him. General Christophe, a relative of Toussaint, being in a neighbouring district, presided, and Muro sat on his right-hand. They interrogated him with the utmost discrimination and acuteness, appearing perfectly conversant with the nature of the business. But, for the commandant already named, not a look nor an attitude escaped him—and he darted his eye, in which both seemed to have centered an uncommon degree of fire, over every part of the prisoner, the form of whose very head-dress, he insisted, was not en Americain!

He was put on his defence in equal form, but all he could urge had not the smallest effect, as he had no passports nor any American papers to exhibit. Notwithstanding every appearance to the contrary, they had had some decisive testimony of imprudent liberty on the island; and, after several hours deliberation, he was condemned to suffer death as quick as possible. The master of the vessel behaved with dignity of character, and the utmost solicitude. He protested against the judgment, but without effect; and the prisoner was remanded till the sentence should be transmitted to the General-en-Chef for his approval.
The Court Martial which sentenced the Author to Death: General Christophe President. Reproduced with the permission of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.
He was then remanded to a different kind of prison, which, though little superior in point of accommodation, had the advantage of air, and the communication of the human species, though only by stealth. It was the remains of a dilapidated building, the part of which appropriated to the prisoner, was secured with strong iron-bars, in a fashion then very prevalent: he had also the incumbrance of a chain from the right arm to the left foot. For fourteen days he lay in the agony of suspense between life and death, with every evening the cruel intimation, that he would certainly be hanged on the next morning.

Even in this situation he could not resist the opportunity which his prison, or rather cage, afforded him, of observing the surrounding scene, which was more delightful than even fancy could picture. It was situated in the midst of a rich valley, through which a stream from the neighbouring hill meandered in romantic form. A church was nearly hid in the vale, and the rising ground was fortified in every direction. Over the whole the most exquisite foliage exhibited its charming fruits, with all the richness of a tropic region. Beneath the spreading cocoa, and the taller yam, he was nightly amused with the cheerful dance, the negroes assembling when they quitted labour, without any seeming appointment, but as a natural habit; sometimes they had, on jours de fêtes, or holidays, a particular entertainment of activity, the principal part of which was the Calenda, or “dance of love.” On these occasions they were dressed with peculiar care: those who had been recently employed in arms retaining some part of their uniform, and the females bedecked with various jewels: they had also a refection. The animation displayed by both sexes in the dance was astonishing, which consisting entirely of amatory history, was equal to many ballets which are performed on the French or Italian stage, while the dancers might have been called, without any dereliction from the Cytherean goddess, though not exactly comporting with her in complexion,

——“fair Venus’ train.”

The hauteur with which they passed the prison of “the white man taken” was astonishing; yet some seemed willing to pity and relieve, but it arose rather from ostentation than mercy. One circumstance, however, occurred that remains deeply impressed in his bosom, and relieves his mind while recording it, which would have done honor to the most dignified of a different complexion.

After lying two nights on a couch, formed of dried sugar-canes, with a very slender supply of food, the prisoner had resigned himself to the vacuity of despair; he was stretched out in silent agony, when, as the night closed in, and the mirthful troops had progressively retired, a gentle female voice, with
the tenderest accents, aroused his attention. How long the benign object had been there, he could not ascertain; but, when he looked up, and beheld her, his feelings were indescribable: she was a fine figure, rather tall, and slender, with a face most beautiful, and a form of the finest symmetry, improved by the melancholy air which the scene had given her.

She was dressed in a superior style, and possessed all the elegance of European manners, improved by the most expressive carriage. She held a basket, containing the most delicate food, with the finest fruits: she entreated him to receive them silently, and to destroy any remnants, as a discovery would be fatal to her, and prejudicial to himself. He was about to reply with the ardour of gratitude, when, in an instant, she was gone! On the following evening, she returned, and endeavoured to comfort him with the most obliging expressions; and, by evincing extreme anxiety on his behalf, once more light up the illusion of hope in his breast, which he had abandoned, with all human prospects, for ever. The next evening she repeated her visit, and condescended to favor him with more extensive communication. Still not a word occurred to disclose her name, or situation: once, indeed, she made some distant allusions to the English, which led him to imagine, she had been impressed with gratitude towards the country by some obligation. Whatever her name, or whatever her circumstances, if this slight memorial should live to reach that delightful isle, in which, as an angelic representation of mercy, she may yet stay the hand of the destroyer, it will bear to her the sincere effusions of a grateful heart, which, though bruised by those of a fairer skin, can never discharge its sense of duty.*

The faithful commander of the vessel, from whose mishap this dreadful

*I have ever conceived this adventure as highly illustrative of the character of the sex conveyed in the eulogium of Lediard, which contains sentiments I have always delighted to repeat. — “I have,” says he, “always remarked, that women, in all countries, are civil, obliging, tender, and humane; that they are ever inclined to be gay and cheerful, timorous and modest; and, that they do not hesitate, like men, to perform a kind, or generous action. Not haughty nor arrogant, not supercilious, they are full of courtesy, and fond of society — more liable in general to err than man, but in general, also, more virtuous, and performing more good actions than he. To a woman, whether civilized or savage, I never addressed myself in the language of decency and friendship, without receiving a decent and friendly answer. With man it has often been otherwise.”

With many opportunities of judging in various countries, and in various situations, I warmly subscribe to this just encomium. [John Ledyard (1751–89) was a famed American traveler, author of A Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1783). The “Eulogium” was part of personal papers first published posthumously in Proceedings of the Association for Promoting the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa, 1788–1790 (1791), 65–67. It became very popular and was often quoted and republished in a variety of journals and newspapers.]
The Author when under sentence of Death relieved by a benevolent Female of Colour. Reproduced with the permission of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.
circumstance arose, never long quitted the spot, and frequently ventured to whisper consolation, though with the greatest danger to himself; for it appeared a political method to expose the victims of justice, none being knowingly permitted to approach them. Whatever he heard, however, to relieve the dreadful suspense of his friend, the taciturnity of the jailor tended to contradict, as little could be obtained of information from him, except his assuring him every night, that he would be certainly hanged on the morrow.

However, on the morn of the fifteenth day, when he had ventured to disengage himself of a part of his dress, for the purpose of a temporary relief from the weight of his chains, the answer of Toussaint arrived, bringing, instead of (as was fully expected) the confirmation of the sentence, an order from that truly great man for his release, and to be suffered to proceed on his voyage, with this prohibition, conveyed with much shrewdness, but the greatest magnanimity, “That he must never return to this island without proper passports!”

To describe his feelings on such an unexpected reverse would be difficult and useless. Restored to himself once more, he did not long remain on a part of the island where his sufferings would have tended to efface the agreeable impressions received at Cape François. Once he tried to trace the haunts of his benevolent incognita, but in vain. She was impervious. He again bade adieu to this interesting soil, and at length reached his long-desired destination, the island of Martinique.*

CHAP. V.
View of the Black Army, and the War between the French Republic and the Independent Blacks of St. Domingo.

The close of the eighteenth century, a period marked by the grandest operations and the most gigantic projects, presented to the world, a new and organised empire, where it was not only supposed to be impossible to exist, but,

*It is necessary to add, that on his arrival he met with the usual kindness and urbanity of the commander in chief, General Cuyler, who ordered him a remuneration for the loss of his baggage, and to whom he is indebted for many polite attentions since. He has been also informed, that he was honored with a congratulatory letter from his Royal Highness the Duke of York, which, from some unaccountable accident, he did not receive. [Rainsford’s mention of Cuyler indicates that he could only have arrived in Martinique prior to May 1798, when Cuyler was replaced and sailed back to Great Britain. See the Introduction.]