

THE HORRORS OF SAN DOMINGO.

CHAPTER III.

CARIB SLAVES — INTRODUCTION OF
NEGROES — LAS CASAS — DECAY OF
SAN DOMINGO.

AMONG the natives captured by the Spaniards in the neighboring islands and upon the Terra Firma, as the South-American coast was called, were numerous representatives of Carib tribes, who had been released by Papal dispensation from the difficulties and anxieties of freedom in consequence of their reputation for cannibalism. This vicious taste was held to absolve the Spaniards from all the considerations of policy and mercy which the Dominicans pressed upon them in the case of the more graceful and amiable Haytians. But we do not find that Las Casas himself made any exception of them in his pleadings for the Indians; * for, though he does not mention cannibalism in the list of imputed crimes which the Spaniards held as justification in making war upon the natives to enslave them, he vindicates them from other charges, such as that of sacrificing infants to their idols. The Spaniards were touched with compassion at seeing so many innocent beings perish before arriving at years of discretion, and without having received baptism. They argued that such a practice, which was worse than a crime, because it was a theological blunder, could

* Herrera says, however, that Las Casas declared them to be legitimately enslaved, the natives of Trinity Island in particular. Schoelcher (*Colonies Étrangères et Haïti*, Tom. II. p. 59) notices that all the royal edicts in favor of the people of America, miserably obeyed as they were, related only to Indians who were supposed to be in a state of peace with Spain; the Caribs were distinctly excepted. It was convenient to call a great many Indians Caribs; numerous tribes who were peaceful enough when let alone, and victims rather than perpetrators of cannibalism, became slaves by scientific adjudication. "These races," said Cardinal Ximenes, "are fit for nothing but labor."

not be carried on in a state of slavery. "This style of reasoning," says Las Casas, "proves absolutely nothing; for God knows better than men what ought to be the future destiny of children who die in the immense countries where the Christian religion is unknown. His mercy is infinitely greater than the collective charity of mankind; and in the interim He permits things to follow their ordinary course, without charging anybody to interfere and prevent their consequences by means of war." *

The first possessors of Hayti were startled at the multitude of human bones which were found in some of the caverns of the island, for they were considered as confirming the reports of cannibalism which had reached them. These ossuaries were accidental; perhaps natives seeking shelter from the hurricane or earthquake were overwhelmed in these retreats, or blocked up and left to perish. We have no reason to believe that the caves had been used for centuries. And even the Caribs did not keep the bones which they picked, to rise up in judgment against them at last, clattering indictments of the number of their feasts. Nor do they seem to have shared the taste of the old Scandinavian and the modern Georgian or Alabamian, who have been known to turn drinking-cups and carve ornaments out of the skeletons of their enemies.

But they liked the taste of human flesh. The difference between them and the Spaniard was merely that the latter devoured men's flesh in the shape of cotton, sugar, gold. And the native discrimination was not altogether unpraiseworthy, if the later French missionaries can be exonerated from national prejudice, when they declare that the Caribs said Spaniards were meagre and indigestible, while a Frenchman made a suc-

* *Fifth Memoir: Upon the Liberty of the Indians*. Llorente, Tom. II. p. 11.

culent and peptic meal. But if he was a person of a religious habit, priest or monk, woe to the incautious Carib who might dine upon him! a mistake in the article of mushrooms were not more fatal. Du Tertre relates that a French priest was killed and smoke-dried by the Caribs, and then devoured with satisfaction. But many who dined upon the unfortunate man, whom the Church had ordained to feed her sheep less literally, died suddenly: others were afflicted with extraordinary diseases. Afterwards they avoided Christians as an article of food, being content with slaying them as often as possible, but leaving them untouched.

The Caribs were very impracticable in a state of slavery. Their stubborn and rigid nature could not become accommodated to a routine of labor. They fled to the mountains, and began marooning;* but they carried with them the scar of the hot iron upon the thigh, which labelled them as natives in a state of war, and therefore reclaimable as slaves. The Dominicans made a vain attempt to limit this branding to the few genuine Caribs who were reduced to slavery; but the custom was universal of marking Indians to compel them to pass for Caribs, after which they were sold and transferred with avidity, the authorities having no power to enforce the legal discrimination. The very existence of this custom offered a premium to cruelty, by furnishing the colonists with a technical permission to enslave.

But the supply could not keep up with the insatiable demand. The great expeditions which were organized to sweep the Terra Firma and the adjacent islands of their population found the warlike Caribs difficult to procure.† The sup-

ply of laborers was failing just at the period when the colonists began to see that the gold of Hayti was scattered broadcast through her fertile soil, which became transmuted into crops at the touch of the spade and hoe. Plantations of cacao, ginger, cotton, indigo, and tobacco were established; and in 1506 the sugar-cane, which was not indigenous, as some have affirmed, was introduced from the Canaries. Velloso, a physician in the town of San Domingo, was the first to cultivate it on a large scale, and to express the juice by means of the cylinder-mill, which he invented.* The Government, seeing the advantages to be derived from this single article, offered to lend five hundred gold piastres to every colonist who would fit up a sugar-plantation. Thus stimulated, the cultivation of the cane throve so, that as early as 1518 the island possessed forty sugar-works with mills worked by horsepower or water. But the plantations were less merciful to the Indians than the mines, and in 1503 there began to be a scarcity of human labor.

At this date we first hear that negroes had been introduced into the colony. But their introduction into Spain and Europe took place early in the fifteenth century. "Ortiz de Zuñigo, as Hum-
ples of cruelty of which he was a witness. He saw the slaves dragged to New Cadiz, to be marked on the forehead and on the arms, and for the payment of the *quint* to the officers of the crown. From this port the Indians were sent to the island of Hayti, after having often changed masters, not by way of sale, but because the soldiers played for them at dice." — Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, Vol. I. p. 176.

* Schoelcher, *Hayti*, Vol. II. p. 78. The Arabs introduced the cane, which had been cultivated in the East from the remotest times, into Sicily in the ninth century, whence it found its way into Spain, and was taken to the Canaries: Madeira sent sugar to Antwerp in 1500. See Bridge, *Annals of Jamaica*, Vol. I. p. 594, who, however, makes the mistake of saying that a variety of the sugar-cane was indigenous to the Antilles. See Humboldt, *Personal Narrative*, Vol. II. p. 28, who says that negroes were employed in the cultivation of the sugar-cane in the Canaries from its introduction.

* *Cimarron* was Spanish, meaning *wild*: applied to animals, and subsequently to escaped slaves, who lived by hunting and stealing.

† "Girolamo Benzoni, of Milan, who, at the age of twenty-two, visited Terra Firma, took part in some expeditions in 1542 to the coasts of Bordones, Cariaco, and Paria, to carry off the unfortunate natives. He relates with simplicity, and often with a sensibility not common in the historians of that time, the exam-

boldt reports, with his usual exactness, says distinctly that 'blacks had been already brought to Seville in the reign of Henry III. of Castile,' consequently before 1406. 'The Catalans and the Normans frequented the western coast of Africa as far as the Tropic of Cancer at least forty-five years before the epoch at which Don Henry the Navigator commenced his series of discoveries beyond Cape Nun.' *"

But the practice of buying and selling slaves in Europe can be traced as far back as the tenth century, when fairs were established in all the great cities. Prisoners of war, representing different nations at different times, according to the direction which the love of piracy and conquest took, were exposed at those great periodical sales of merchandise to the buyers who flocked from every land. The Northern cities around the Baltic have the distinction of displaying these human goods quite as early as Venice or any commercial centre of the South: the municipal privileges and freedom of those famous cities were thus nourished partly by a traffic in mankind, for whose sake privilege and right are alone worth having. Seven thousand Danish slaves were exposed at one fair held in the city of Mecklenburg at the end of the twelfth century. They had the liberty of being ransomed, but only distinguished captives could be saved in that way from being sold. The price ranged from one to three marks. It is difficult to tell from this how valuable a man was considered, for the relation of the mark to other merchandise, or, in other words, the value of the currency, cannot be represented by modern sums, which are only technically equivalent, — as a mark, for instance, was then held equal to eight ounces of silver.†

* Schoelcher, *La Traite et son Origine*, in *Colonies Étrangères*, Tom. I. p. 364.

† Upon the subject of changes in the value of money, and some comparisons between the past and present, see Hallam's *Europe during the Middle Ages*, Vol. II. pp. 427–432, and *Supplement*, p. 406. Dealing in money, banking, bills of exchange, have a very early date in Europe. The Bank of Venice was founded in

That was not exorbitant, however, for those times, and shows that men were frequently exposed for sale. The merchants of Bristol used to sell a great many captives into Ireland; but it is recorded that the Irish were the first Christian people who agreed at length to put a stop to this traffic by refusing to have any more captives brought into their country. The Church had long before forbidden it; and there are no grounds for supposing that any other motive than humanity induced the Irish people to show this superiority to the conventions of the age.*

From the essay by Schoelcher, entitled "The Slave-Trade and its Origin," which has been prepared with considerable research, we gather that the first negroes seen in Portugal were carried there in 1441. Antonio Gonzales was the name of the man who first excited his countrymen by offering for sale this human booty which he had seized. All classes of people felt a mania like that which turns the tides of emigration to Australia and California. Nothing was desired but the means of equipping vessels for the coast of Guinea. Previously to this a few Guanches from the Canaries had been exposed for sale in the markets of Lisbon and Seville, and there were many Moorish slaves in Spain, taken in the wars which preceded the expulsion of that nation. But now there was a rapid accumulation of this species of property, fed by the inexhaustible soil of Africa, whence so many millions of men have been reaped and ploughed into the soils of other lands.

In 1443, an expedition of six caravels, commanded by a gentleman of the Portuguese court, went down the coast on

1401. Florentines dealt in money as early as 1251, and their system of exchange was in use throughout the North early in the fifteenth century. — McCullagh's *Industrial History of Free Nations*, Vol. II. p. 94.

* See in Hallam's *Supplement to Europe during the Middle Ages*, p. 133, and in Motley's *Dutch Republic*, Vol. I. pp. 32, 33, various causes mentioned for voluntary and compulsory servitude in the early European times. See also Sumner's *White Slavery*, p. 11.

one of these ventures, ostensibly geographical, but really mercenary, which then excited the popular enterprise. It managed to attack some island and to make a great number of prisoners. The same year a citizen of Lisbon fitted out a vessel at his own expense, went beyond the Senegal, where he seized a great many natives, discovered Cape Verde, and was driven back to Lisbon by a storm.

Prince Henry built the fort of Mina upon the Gold Coast, and made it a depot for articles of Spanish use, which he bartered for slaves. He introduced there, and upon the island of Arguin, near Cape Blanco, the cultivation of corn and sugar; the whole coast was formally occupied by the Portuguese, whose king took the title of Lord of Guinea. Sugar went successively to Spain, Madeira, the Azores, and the West Indies, in the company of negro slaves. It was carried to Hayti just as the colonists discovered that negroes were unfit for mining. Charlevoix says that the magnificent palaces of Madrid and Toledo, the work of Charles V., were entirely built by the revenue from the entry-tax on sugar from Hayti.

At first, all prisoners taken in war, or in attacks deliberately made to bring on fighting, were sold, whatever their nation or color. This was due to the Catholic theory that all unbaptized people were infidels. But gradually the same religious influence, moved by some scruples of humanity, made a distinction between negroes and all other people, allowing only the former to become objects of traffic, because they were black as well as heathen. Thus early did physiology come to the aid of religion, notifying the Church of certain physical peculiarities which seemed to be the trade-marks of the Creator, and perpetual guaranties, like the color of woods, the odor of gums, the breadth and bone of draught-cattle, of their availability for the market. What renown has graced the names of Portuguese adventurers, and how illustrious does this epoch of the little country's life

appear in history! Rivers, bays, and stormy headlands, long reaches of gold coast and ivory coast, and countries of palm-oil, and strange interiors stocked with new forms of existence, and the great route to India itself, became the charter to a brilliant fame of this mercenary heroism. Man went as far as he was impelled to go. While the stimulus continued, and the outlay was more than equalled by the income and the glory, unexplored regions yielded up their secrets, and the Continent of Africa was established by this insignificant nation to be for centuries the vast slave-nursery of the world.

When the habit of selling men began to be restricted to the selling of negroes, companies were formed to organize this business and to have it carried on with economy. The Portuguese had a monopoly of the trade for a long time. They went up and down the African coast, picking quarrels with the natives when the latter did not quarrel enough among themselves to create a suitable supply of captives. Slaves were in great demand in Spain, and quite numerous at Seville. The percentage which the Portuguese exacted induced the Spaniards at length to enter into the traffic, which they did, according to Zuñigo, in 1474.

At that time negroes were confined, like Jews, to a particular quarter of a Spanish city. They had their places of worship, their own regulations and police. "A *Cédula* [order] of November 8, 1474, appoints a negro named Juan de Valladolid mayor of the blacks and mulattoes, free and slaves, in Seville. He had authority to decide in quarrels and regular processes of law, and also to legalize marriages, because, says the *Cédula*, 'it is within our knowledge that you are acquainted with the laws and ordinances.' He became so famous that people called him *El Conde Negro*, The Black Count, and his name was bestowed upon one of the streets of the negro quarter."

Thus men were born in Europe into a

condition of slavery before 1500. In that year the introduction of negroes into Hayti was authorized, provided they were born in Spain in the houses of Christian masters. Negroes who had been bred in Morisco* families were not allowed to be carried thither, from a well-grounded fear that the Moorish hatred had sunk too deeply into a kindred blood.

A great many slaves were immediately transported to Hayti; for in 1503, "Ovando, the Governor-General of the Indies, who had received the instructions of 1500, asked the court 'not to send any more negroes to Española, because they often escaped to the Indians, taught them bad habits, and could never be retaken.'"

Schoelcher seems to think that these first slaves were so difficult to manage because they had been reared in a civilized country; and he notices that Cardinal Ximenes, who was well acquainted with the Spanish negro, constantly refused to authorize a direct slave-trade with Hayti, because it would introduce into the colony so many enterprising and prolific people, who would revolt when they became too numerous, and bring the Spaniards themselves under the yoke. This was an early presentiment of the fortune of Hayti, but it was not justly derived from an acquaintance with the Spanish-bred negro alone; for the negroes who were afterwards transported to the colony directly from Africa had the same unaccommodating temper, which frequently disconcerted the Cardinal's theory that an African should be born and bred in a Christian city to render him unfit for slavery. This unclerical native prejudice against working for white men is so universal, and has been so consistently maintained for three hundred years, as to present a queer contradiction to those divine marks which set him apart for that condition. The Cardinal attributed, in fact, to intercourse with the spirit of his countrymen that disposition of the negro which seems to be derived

* Moors, living in Spain as subjects, and nominally Christianized.

from intercourse with the spirit of his Creator.

No sooner did the negro enter the climate of Hayti, and feel that more truculent and desolating one of the Spanish temper, than he began to revolt, to take to the mountains, to defend his life, to organize leagues with Caribs and other natives. The colonists were often slain in conflicts with them. The first negro insurrection in Hayti occurred in November, 1522. It began with twenty Jolof negroes belonging to Diego Columbus; others joined them; they slew and burned as they went, took negroes and Indians along with them, robbed the houses, and were falling back upon the mountains with intent to hold them permanently against the colony. Oviedo is enthusiastic over the action of two Spanish cavaliers, who charged the blacks, lance in rest, went through them several times with a handful of followers, and broke up their menacing attitude. They were then easily hunted down, and in six or seven days most of them were hanging to the trees as warnings. The rest delivered themselves up. In 1551, Charles V. forbade negroes, both free and slave, from carrying any kind of weapon. It was necessary subsequently to renew this ordinance, because the slaves continued to be as dexterous with the *machete* or the sabre as with the hoe.

Humboldt and others have alluded to a striking prediction made by Girolamo Benzoni, an Italian traveller who visited the islands and Terra Firma early in the sixteenth century, and witnessed the condition and temper of the blacks. It is of the clearest kind. He says,* after

* *La Historia del Mondo Nuovo*, Venetia, 1565, Book II. p. 65, a duodecimo filled with curious plates representing the habits of the natives and the Spanish dealings with them. Benzoni elsewhere has a good deal to say about the cruelty exercised towards the negroes. For a failure to perform the daily stint in the mines, a negro was usually buried up to his chin, and left to be tormented by the insects. Wire whips were used in flogging, and hot pitch was applied to the wounds.

speaking of marooning in Hayti, — “*Vi sono molti Spagnuoli che tengono per cosa certa che quest’ Isola in breve tempo sarà posseduta da questi Mori. Et per tanto gli governatori tengono grandissima vigilanza,*” etc.: “There are many Spaniards who hold it for certain that in a brief time this island will fall into the hands of the Africans. On this account the governors use the greatest vigilance.” He goes on to remark the fewness of the Spaniards, and afterwards gives his own opinion to confirm the Spanish anticipation. Nothing postponed the fulfilment of this natural expectation till the close of the eighteenth century, but the sudden decay into which the island fell under Spanish rule, when it became no longer an object to import the blacks. Many Spaniards left the island before 1550, from an apprehension that the negroes would destroy the colony. Some authorities even place the number of Spaniards remaining at that time as low as eleven hundred.

The common opinion that Las Casas asked permission for the colonists to draw negroes from Africa, in order to assuage the sufferings of the Indians, does not appear to be well-founded. For negroes were drawn from Guinea as early as 1511, and his proposition was made in 1517. The Spaniards were already introducing these substitutes for the native labor, regardless of the ordinance which restricted the possession of negroes in Hayti to those born in Spain. It is not improbable that Las Casas desired to regulate a traffic which had already commenced, by inducing the Government to countenance it. His object was undoubtedly to make it easier for the colonists to procure the blacks; but it must have occurred to him that his plan would diminish, as far as possible, the miseries of an irregular transfer of the unfortunate men from Africa.

See Bridge’s *Jamaica, Appendix, Historical Notes on Slavery*. The Spaniards had even less scruple about their treatment of the negroes than of the Indians, alleging in justification that their own countrymen sold them to the traders on the Guinea coast!

The horrors of a middle passage in those days of small vessels and tedious voyages would have been great, if the number of slaves to be transported had not been limited by law. There is no direct evidence, however, that Las Casas made his proposition out of any regard for the negro. Charles V. resolved to allow a thousand negroes to each of the four islands, Hayti, Ferdinanda, Cuba, and Jamaica. The privilege of importing them was bestowed upon one of his Flemish favorites; but he soon sold it to some Genoese merchants, who held each negro at such a high price that only the wealthiest colonists could procure them. Herrera regrets that in this way the prudent calculation of Las Casas was defeated.

This was the first license to trade in slaves. It limited the number to four thousand, but it was a fatal precedent, which was followed by French, Spanish, and Dutch, long after the decay of the Spanish part of Hayti, till all the islands, and many parts of Central America, were filled with negroes.

It is pleasanter to dwell upon those points in which the brave and humane Las Casas surpassed his age, and prophesied against it, than upon those which he held in common with it, as he acquiesced in its instinctive life. At first it seems unaccountable that the argument which he framed with such jealous care to protect his Indians and recommend them to the mercy of Government was not felt by him to apply to the negroes with equal force. Slavery uses the same pretexts in every age and against whatsoever race it wishes to oppress. The Indians were represented by the colonists as predestined by their natural dispositions, and by their virtues as well as by their vices, to be held in tutelage by a superior race: their vices were excuses for colonial cruelty, their virtues made it worth while to keep the cruelty in vigorous exercise. In refuting this interested party, Las Casas anticipates the spirit and reasoning of later times. He was the first to utter anti-slavery principles in the Western hemisphere. We have improved upon

his knowledge, but have not advanced beyond his essential spirit, for equity and iniquity always have the same leading points to make through their advocates. When we see that such a man as Las Casas was unconscious of the breadth of his own philanthropy, we wonder less at the liability of noble men to admit some average folly of their age. This is the ridiculous and astonishing feature of their costume, the exceptional bad taste which their spiritual posterity learn to disavow.

The memory of Las Casas ought to be cherished by every true democrat of these later times, for he announced, in his quality of Protector of the Indian, the principles which protect the rights of all men against oppressive authority. He was eager to convince a despotic court that it had no legal or spiritual right to enslave Indians, or to deprive them of their goods and territory. In framing his argument, he applied doctrines of the universal liberty of men, which are fatal to courts themselves; for they transfer authority to the people, who have the best of reasons for desiring to be governed well. It is astonishing that the republicanism of Las Casas has not been more carefully noted and admired; for his writings show plainly, without forced construction or after-thought of the enlightened reader, that he was in advance of Spain and Europe as far as the American theory itself is. Our Declaration of the Rights of Man shows nothing which the first Western Abolitionist had not proclaimed in the councils and conferences of Seville.

It is worth while to show this as fully as the purpose of this article will admit. One would expect to find that he counselled kings to administer their government with equal regard to the little and the great, the poor and the rich, the powerful and the miserable; for this the Catholic Church has always done, and has held a lofty theory before earthly thrones, notwithstanding its own ambitious derelictions. But Las Casas tells the Supreme Council of the Indies that no charge, no

servitude, no labor can be imposed upon a people without its previous and voluntary consent; for man shares, by his origin, in the common liberty of all beings, so that every subordination of men to princes, and every burden imposed upon material things, should be inaugurated by a voluntary pact between the governing and the governed; the election of kings, princes, and magistrates, and the authority with which they are invested to rule and to tax, anciently owed their origin to a free determination of people who desired to establish thereby their own happiness; the free will of the nation is the only efficient cause, the only immediate principle and veritable source of the power of kings, and therefore the transmission of such power is only a representative act of a nation giving free expression to its own opinion. For a nation would not have recourse to such a form of government, except in accordance with its human instinct, to secure the advantage of all; nor does it, in thus delegating power, renounce its liberty, or have the intention of submitting to the domination of another, or of conceding his right to impose burdens and contributions without the consent of those who have to bear them, or to command anything that is contrary to the general interest. When a nation thus delegates a portion of its power to the sovereign, it is not done by subscribing any written contract or transaction, because primitive right presides, and there are natural reserves not expressed by men, such as that of preserving intact their individual independence, that of their property, and the right of never submitting to a privation of good or an establishment of taxes without a previous consent. People existed before kings and magistrates. Then they were free, and governed themselves according to their untrammelled intent. In process of time people make kings, but the good of the people is the final cause of their existence. Men do not make kings to be rendered miserable by their rule, but to derive from them all the good possible. Liberty is the greatest good which a peo-

ple can enjoy: its rights are violated every time that a king, without consulting his people, decrees that which wounds the general interest; for, as the intention of subjects was not to grant a prince the ability to injure, all such acts ought to be considered unjust and altogether null. "Liberty is inalienable, and its price is above that of all the goods of this world."*

Las Casas follows the fashion of his time in resting all his glorious axioms upon the authority of men and councils. He quotes Aristotle, Seneca, Thomas Aquinas, the different Popes, the Canons, and the Scriptures; but it is astonishing to find how democratic they all are to the enthusiastic Bishop, or rather, how the best minds of all ages have admitted the immutable principles of human nature into their theology and metaphysics. When will the Catholic Church, which has nourished and protected so many noble spirits, express in her average sentiment and policy their generous interpretations of her religion, and their imputations to her of being an embodiment of the universal religion of mankind?

Men complained of Las Casas for being severe and unsparing in his speech. In this respect, of calling the vices and enormities of Slavery by their simple names, and of fastening the guilt of special transactions not vaguely upon human nature, but directly upon the perpetrators who disgraced the nature which they shared, he also anticipated the privilege and ill-repute of American Abolitionists. He told what he saw, or what was guaranteed to

him by competent witnesses. His cheek grew red when it was smitten by some fierce outrage upon humanity, and men could plainly read the marks which it left there. Nor did they easily fade away; he held his branded cheek in the full view of men, that they might be compelled to interpret the disgrace to which they were so indifferent. Men dislike to hear the outeries of a sensitive spirit, and dread to have their heathenism called by Christian names. How much better it would be, they think, if philanthropy never made an attack upon the representatives of cruelty! they would soon become converted, if they were politely let alone. No doubt, all that the supporters of any tyranny desire is to be let alone. They delight in abstract delineations of the vices of their system, which flourishes and develops while moral indignation is struggling to avoid attacking it where only it is dangerous, in the persons of its advocates. If there were nothing but metaphysical wickedness in the world, how effective it would be never to allude to a wicked man! If Slavery itself were the pale, thin ghost of an abstraction, how bloodless this war would be! Fine words, genteel deprecation, and magnanimous generality are the tricks of villany. Indignant Mercy works with other tools; she leaps with the directness of lightning, and the same unsparing sincerity, to the spot to which she is attracted. What rogue ever felt the clutch of a stern phrase at his throat, with a good opinion of it? Shall we throttle the rascal in broad day, or grope in the dark after the impersonal weasand of his crime?

And those amiable people who think to regenerate the world by radiating amenity are the choice accomplices of the villains. They keep everything quiet, hush up incipient disturbances, and mislead the police. No Pharisee shall be called a Devil's child, if they can help it: they say "Fie!" to the scourge of knotted cord in the temple, or eagerly explain that it was used only upon the cattle, who cannot, of course, rebel. "These people who give the fine name of prudence to

* *Fifth Memoir: Upon the Liberty of the Indians who have been reduced to the Condition of Slavery*: Llorente, Tom. II. pp. 34, 35. *Sixth Memoir: Upon the Question whether Kings have the Power to alienate their Subjects, their Towns and Jurisdiction*, pp. 64 et seq. *Letter of Las Casas to Miranda, resident in England with Philip, in 1555*.—The Sixth Memoir is a remarkable production. Its closing words are these: "The dignity of a king does not consist in usurping rights of which he is only the administrator. Invested with all the necessary power to govern well and to make his kingdom happy; let him fulfil that fine destiny, and the respect of the people will be his reward."

their timidity, and whose discretion is always favorable to injustice!"*

"I have decided to write this history," says Las Casas, in his "Memoir upon the Cruelty of the Spaniards," "by the advice of many pious and God-fearing persons, who think that its publication will cause a desire to spring up in many Christian hearts to bring a prompt remedy to these evils, as enormous as they are multiplied." He designates the guilty governors, captains, courtiers, and connects them directly with their crimes. He does not say that they were gentlemen or Christians: "these brigands," "executioners," "barbarians," are his more appropriate phrases. If he had addressed them as gentlemen, the terrible scenes would have instantly ceased, and the system of *Repartimientos* would have been abandoned by men who were only waiting to be converted by politeness! He calls that plan of allotting the natives, and reducing them to Spanish overseership, "atrocious." Yet for some time it was technically legal: it was equivalent to what we call constitutional. So that it was by no means so bad as the anarchical attack which Las Casas made upon it! He tells where an infamous overseer was still living in Spain, — or at least, he says, "his family was living in Seville when I last heard about him." What a disgraceful attack upon an individual! how it must have hurt the feelings of a respectable family! — "How malignant!" cried the *hidalgos*; "How coarse!" the women; and "How ill-judged!" the clergy. He speaks of Cortés with contempt: why should he not? for he was only the burglar of a kingdom. But we read these sincere pages of Las Casas with satisfaction. The polished contemporaries of Abolitionists turn over the pages of antique denunciation, and their lymph really quickens in their veins as they read the prophetic vehemence of an Isaiah, the personality of a Nathan, the

unmeasured vernacular of Luther, the satire and invective of all good upbraid-ers of past generations, until they reach their own, which yet waits for a future generation to make scripture and history of its speech and deeds. Time is the genial critic that effaces the contemporary glosses of interested men. It rots away the ugly scaffolding up which the bold words climbed, and men see the beautiful and tenacious arch which only genius is daring enough and capable to build. It is delightful to walk across the solid structure, with gratitude and taste in a glow. We love to read indictments of an exploded crime which we have learned to despise, or which we are committing in a novel form.

Charlevoix takes up this complaint of the imprudence of Las Casas, and, to illustrate it, thinks that he could not have anticipated the bad effects of the publication of his "Memoir upon the Cruelty of the Spaniards," for it appeared during the war with the revolted Netherlands, and was translated into Dutch by a Frenchman. "Nothing," he says, "so animated those people to persist in their rebellion, as the fear, that, if they entered into any accommodation with Spain, they would be served as the natives had been in the American Provinces, who were never so badly oppressed as when they felt most secure upon the faith of a treaty or convention." If the book of Las Casas really lent courage and motive to that noble resistance, as it undoubtedly did by confirming the mistrust of Spanish rule in the Low Countries, the honorable distinction should be preserved by history.

While a bad institution is still vigorous and aggressive, the divine rage of conscientious men is not so exhilarating. A different style of thought, like that which prevailed among the French missionaries to the Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is more acceptable to colonial susceptibility. A South-side religion is a favorable exposure for delicate and precarious products like indigo, sugar, coffee, and cotton. Las Casas had not learned to wield his enthusiastic pen

* "Ces hommes qui donnent le beau nom de prudence à leur timidité, et dont la discrétion est toujours favorable à l'injustice." — Hilliard d'Aubertueil, *Considérations sur l'État Présent de la Colonie Française de St. Domingue*, 1776.

in defence of the negro; but when the islands became well stocked with slaves, later Catholics eagerly reproduced the arguments of the Spanish *encomiendas*, and vindicated afresh the providential character of Slavery. "I acknowledge," says one, "and adore with all humility the profound and inconceivable secrets of God; for I do not know what the unfortunate nation has committed to deserve that this particular and hereditary curse of servitude should be attached to them, as well as ugliness and blackness." "It is truly with these unfortunates that the poet's saying is verified, —

'Dimidium mentis Jupiter illis aufert,' —

as I have remarked a thousand times that God deprives slaves of half their judgment, lest, recognizing their miserable condition, they should be thrown into despair. For though they are very adroit in many things which they do, they are so stupid that they have no more sense of being enslaved than if they had never enjoyed liberty. Every land becomes their country, provided they find enough to eat and drink, which is very different from the state of mind of the daughters of Zion, who cried, on finding themselves in a foreign country, — '*Quomodo cantabimus canticum Domini in terra aliena?*'" *

Another missionary, in describing his method of administering baptism, says: "After the customary words, I add, 'And thee, accursed spirit, I forbid in the name of Jesus Christ ever to dare to violate this sacred sign which I have just made upon the forehead of this creature, whom He has bought with His blood.' The negro, who comprehends nothing of what I say or do, makes great eyes at me, and appears confounded; but to reassure him, I address to him through an interpreter these words of the Saviour to St. Peter: 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'"

He complains that they do not appear to value the mystery of the Trinity as a necessary means of salvation: the negro

* *Histoire Générale des Isles de St. Christophe, etc.*, 1654, par Du Tertre.

does not understand what he is made to repeat, any more than a parrot. And here the knowledge of the most able theologian will go a very little ways. "Still, a missionary ought to think twice before leaving a man, of whatever kind, to perish without baptism; and if he has scruples upon this point, these words of the Psalmist will reassure his mind: '*Homines et jumenta salvabis, Domine*': 'Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and cattle!'" *

Father Labat is scandalized because the English planters refused to have their slaves baptized. Their clergymen told him, in excuse, that it was unworthy of a Christian to hold in slavery his brother in Christ. "But may we not say that it is still more unworthy of a Christian not to procure for souls bought by the blood of Jesus Christ the knowledge of a God to whom they are responsible for all that they do?" This idea, that the negroes had been first bought by Christ, must have been consoling and authoritative to a planter. The missionary has not advanced upon the Spanish theory, that baptism introduced the natives into a higher life.† "However," says Labat, "this notion of the English does not affect them, whenever they can get hold of our negroes. They know very well that they are Christians, they cannot doubt that they have been made by baptism their brothers in Christ, yet that does not prevent them from holding them in slavery, and treating them like those whom they do not regard as their brothers."‡

* From a letter by the Jesuit father Le Pers, quoted by Charlevoix, *Histoire de St. Domingue*, Tom. IV. p. 369. Amsterdam, 1733.

† Upon the reputed effects of baptism, and some anecdotes connected with the administration of this rite, see Humboldt's *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, London, 1811, Vol. I. p. 165, note.

‡ *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique, à la Haye*, 1724, Tom. V. p. 42. Father Labat is delighted because the Dutch asked him to confess their slaves; and he records that many masters take great pains to have their Catholic slaves say their prayers morning and evening, and approach the sacrament; nor do they undertake to indoctrinate them with Calvinism.

This English antipathy to baptizing slaves, for fear of recognizing them as men by virtue of that rite, appears to have existed in the early days of the North-American Colonies. Bishop Berkeley, in his "Proposal for the Better Supplying of Churches in our Foreign Plantations," etc., alludes to the little interest which was shown in the conversion of negroes, "who, to the infamy of England and scandal of the world, continue heathen under Christian masters and in Christian countries; which could never be, if our planters were rightly instructed and made sensible that they disappointed their own baptism by denying it to those who belong to them." This receives an explanation in a sermon preached by the Bishop in London, where he speaks of the irrational contempt felt for the blacks in the Plantation of Rhode Island, "as creatures of another species, who had no right to be instructed or admitted to the sacraments. To this may be added an erroneous notion that the being baptized is inconsistent with a state of slavery. To undeceive them in this particular, which had too much weight, it seemed a proper step, if the opinion of his Majesty's attorney and solicitor-general could be procured. This opinion they charitably sent over, signed with their own hands; which was accordingly printed in Rhode Island, and dispersed throughout the Plantation. I heartily wish it may produce the intended effect."*

In a speech upon West-Indian affairs, which Lord Brougham delivered in the House of Commons in 1823, there is some account of the religious instruction of the slaves as conducted by the curates. He alludes in particular to the testimony of a worthy curate, who stated that he had been twenty or thirty years among the negroes, "and that no single instance of conversion to Christianity had taken place during that time,—all his efforts

to gain new proselytes among the negroes had been in vain; all of a sudden, however, light had broken in upon their darkness so suddenly that between five and six thousand negroes had been baptized in a few days. I confess I was at first much surprised at this statement. I knew not how to comprehend it; but all of a sudden light broke in upon my darkness also. I found that there was a clue to this most surprising story, and that these wonderful conversions were brought about, not by a miracle, as the good man seems himself to have really imagined, and would almost make us believe, but by a premium of a dollar a head paid to this worthy curate for each slave that he baptized!"

We return to Las Casas once more, to state precisely his complicity in the introduction of the race whose sorrows have been so fearfully avenged by Nature in every part of the New World. Many of the writers who have treated of these transactions, as Robertson, for instance, have accused Las Casas, on the strength of a passage in Herrera, of having originated the idea that the blacks could be profitably substituted for the Indians. It is supposed, that, in his eagerness to save the Indians from destruction, he sought also to save colonial interests, by procuring still a supply of labor from a hardier and less interesting race. Thus his indignation at the rapid extinction of the Indians appears sentimental; to indulge his fancy for an amiable race, he was willing to subject another, with which he had no graceful associations, to the same liabilities. We have seen, however, that the practice of carrying negroes to Hayti was already established, seven years before Las Casas suggests his policy. The passage from Herrera has been misunderstood, as Llorente, Schoelcher, the Abbé Grégoire, and others, conclusively show. That historian says that Las Casas, disheartened by the difficulties which he met from the colonists and their political and ecclesiastical friends at home, had recourse to a new expedient, to solicit leave for the Spaniards to trade in negroes, "in order that their labor on the plantations

* *A Sermon preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at their Anniversary Meeting in the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday, February 18, 1731.*

and in the mines might render that of the natives less severe." This proposition, made in 1517, has been wrongly supposed to signalize the first introduction of blacks into America. Nor was Las Casas the first to make this proposition; for another passage of Herrera discloses that three priests of St. Jerome, who had been despatched to the colony by Cardinal Ximenes, for the experiment of managing it by a Board instead of by a Governor, recommended in 1516 that negroes should be sent out to stock the plantations, in order to diminish the forced labor of the natives. This was a concession by the Jeronites to the public opinion which Las Casas had created.* Negroes already existed there; the priests perceived their value, and that the introduction of a greater number would both improve the colony and diminish the anti-slavery agitation of the Dominicans. The next year this project was taken up by Las Casas, borrowed from the Jeronites as the only alternative to preserve a colony, to relieve the natives, and to keep the people interested in the wholesome reforms which he was continually urging upon the colonial administration.

He had no opportunity to become acquainted with the evils of negro slavery, but it is strange that he did not anticipate them. It was taken for granted by him that the blacks were enslaved in Africa, and he accepted too readily the popular idea that their lot was improved by transferring them from barbarous to Christian

* Oviedo says nothing about this Jeromite proposition, but records the arrival of this priestly commission, (*Hist. Ind.*, Book IV. ch. 3,) and that one object of it was to provide for the Indians, — "*buen tractamiento é conservacion de los indios.*" He says that all the remedial measures which it undertook increased the misery and loss of the natives. He was not humane. It seemed absurd to him that the Indians should kill themselves on the slightest pretext, or run to the mountains; and he can find no reason for it, except that their chief purpose in life (and one which they had always cherished, before the Christians came among them) was to eat, drink, "*folgar, é luxuriar, é idolatrar, é exercer otras muchas sugedades bestiales.*"

masters. Their number was so small in Hayti, and the island fell so suddenly into decay, that no formidable oppression of them occurred during his lifetime to replace his recollections of the horrors of Indian servitude. His plan did not take root, but it was remembered. Thus the single error of a noble man, committed in the fulness of his Christian aspirations, and at the very moment when he was representing to a generation of hard and avaricious men the divine charity, betrayed their victims to all the nations that sought wealth and luxury in the West, and pointed out how they were to be obtained. His compromise has the fatal history of all compromises which secure to the present a brief advantage, whose fearful accumulation of interest the future must disgrace, exhaust, and cripple itself to pay.

In 1519 the colony had already begun to decay, though all the external marks of luxury and splendor were still maintained. That was the date of a famous insurrection of the remnant of Indians, who occupied the mountains, and defended themselves for thirteen years against all the efforts of the Spaniards to reduce them. It was hardly worth while to undertake their subjection. Adventurers and emigrants were already leaving San Domingo to its fate, attracted to different spots of the Terra Firma, to Mexico and Peru, by the reported treasures. That portion of the colony which had engaged in agriculture found Indians scarce and negroes expensive. There was no longer any object in fitting out expeditions to reinforce the colony, and repair the waste which it was beginning to suffer from desertion and disease. The war with the natives was ignominiously ended by Charles V. in 1533, who found that the colony was growing too poor to pay for it. He despatched a letter to the cacique who had organized this desperate and prolonged resistance, flattered him by the designation of Dom Henri* and profuse expres-

* The priests gave him the name of Henri, when they baptized him, long previous to his revolt. He was called Henriquillo by way of

sions of admiration, sent a Spanish general to treat with him, and to assign him a district to inhabit with his followers. Dom Henri thankfully accepted this pacification, and soon after received Las Casas himself, who had been commissioned to assure the sole surviving cacique and representative of two million natives that Spain was their friend! At last the Protector of the Indians has the satisfaction of meeting them with authoritative messages of peace. And this was the first salutation of Dom Henri, after his forty years' experience of Spanish probity, and thirteen years of struggle for existence: "During all this war, I have not failed a day to offer up my prayers, I have fasted strictly every Friday, I have watched with care over the morals and the conduct of my subjects, I have taken measures everywhere to prevent all profligate intercourse between the sexes";* thus nobly trying to recommend himself to the good Bishop, who had always believed in their capacity for temporal and spiritual elevation. He retired to a place named Boya, a dozen leagues from the capital. All the Indians who could prove their descent from the original inhabitants of the island were allowed to follow him. A few of them still remained in 1750; their number was only four thousand when Dom Henri led them away from Spanish rule to die out undisturbed.†

After its passionate and blood-thirsty

Catholic endearment. But the consecrating water could not wash out of his remembrance that his father and grandfather had been burnt alive by order of a Spanish governor. What, indeed, can quench such fires? Yet this little dusky Hannibal loved the exercises and pure restraints of the religion which had laid waste his family.

* Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.*, Book V. ch. 11, who gives the cacique little credit for some of his prohibitions, but on the whole praises him, and, after mentioning that he lived little more than a year from the time of this pacification, and died like a Christian, commends his soul to God. Oviedo hated the Indians, and wrote about colonial affairs coldly and in the Spanish interest.

† *Histoire Politique et Statistique*. Par Placide Justin.

life, the colony was sinking to sleep, not from satiety nor exhaustion, for the same race was holding its orgies in other countries, but from inability to gather fuel for its excesses. A long list of insignificant governors is the history of the island for another century. They did nothing to improve the condition of the inhabitants, whose distress was sometimes severe; but they continued to embellish the capital, which Oviedo described to Charles V. as rivalling in solidity and beauty any city in Spain. He wrote in 1538, and possessed a beautiful residence in the plain of St. John. The private houses were built substantially, in several stories, of stone, embowered in charming gardens; the public edifices, including the cathedral, displayed all the strength and rich ornamentation which had been common for a hundred years in the Spanish cities. There were several well-endowed convents, and a fine hospital. When Sir Francis Drake took possession of San Domingo in 1586, he attempted to induce the inhabitants, who had fled into the country, to pay an enormous ransom for their city, by threatening to destroy a number of fine houses every day till it was paid. He undertook the task, but found that his soldiers were scarcely able to demolish more than one a day, and he eventually left the city not materially damaged.

Antonio Herrera, in his "Description of the West Indies," gives the number of inhabitants of the city in 1530 as six hundred, and says that there were fourteen thousand Castilians, many of them nobles, who carried on the different interests of the colony. He has a list of seventeen towns, with brief descriptions of them.

It appears by this that the island had speedily recovered from the ill reports of the early emigrants, many of whom returned to Spain broken in purse and person, with excesses of passion and climate chronicled in their livid faces.* There

* "The Indies are not for every one! How many heedless persons quit Spain, expecting that in the Indies a dinner costs nothing, and

was a period when everybody who could get away from the colony left it in disgust, and with the expectation that it would soon become extinct. It was to prevent such a catastrophe, which would have effectually terminated the explorations of Columbus, that he proposed to the Government, in 1496, to commute the punishments of all criminals and large debtors who were at the time in prison to a perpetual banishment to the island, persons convicted of treason or heresy being alone excepted. The advice was instantly adopted, without a thought of the consequences of reinforcing the malignant ambition of the colony with such elements. Persons capitally convicted were to serve two years without wages; all others were to serve on the same terms for one year; and they went about with the ingenious clog of a threat of arrest for the old crimes in case they returned to Europe.

The Government improved upon the hint of Columbus by decreeing that all the courts in Spain should condemn to the mines a portion of the criminals who would in the course of nature have gone to the galleys.* Thus a new country, which invited the benign organization of law and religion, and held out to pure spirits an opportunity richer than all its crops and mines, was poisoned in its cradle. What wonder that its vigor be-

that there is nobody there in want of one; that as they do not drink wine in every house, why, they give it away! Many, Father, have been seen to go to the Indies, and to have returned from them as miserable as when they left their country, having gained from the journey nought but perpetual pains in the arms and legs, which refuse in their treatment to yield to sarsaparilla and *palo santo*, [*Ugnum vite*,] and which neither quicksilver nor sweats will eject from their constitution." From a Spanish novel by Yanez y Rivera, "*Alonzo, el Donado Habladon*": "Alonzo, the Talkative Lay-Brother," written in 1624. New York, 1844.

* Charlevoix, *Histoire de St. Domingue*, 1733, Tom. I. p. 185, who notices the admission of Herrera that the Admiral made a great mistake, since malefactors should not be selected for the founders of republics. No, neither in Virginia nor in any virgin world.

VOL. X.

came the aimless gestures of madness, that a bloated habit simulated health, and that decrepitude suddenly fell upon the uneasy life?

At the same time it was expressly forbidden to all commanders of caravels to receive on board any person who was not a born subject of the crown of Castile. This was conceived in the exclusive colonial policy of the time. It was a grotesque idea to preserve nationality by insisting that even criminals must respect the Spanish birthright. History counts the fitful pulses of this bluest blood of Europe, and hesitates to declare that such emigrants misrepresented the mother-country.

But after the middle of the sixteenth century, the inhabitants were pillaged by the public enemies of the mother-country, and by private adventurers of all lands. And yet, in 1587, the year after Drake's expedition, their fleet carried home 48 quintals of cassia, 50 of sarsaparilla, 134 of logwood, 893 chests of sugar, each weighing 200 pounds, and 350,444 hides of every kind. There is no account of indigo, and the cultivation of cotton had not commenced. Coffee was first introduced at Martinique during the reign of Louis XIV., who died in 1715. Its cultivation was not commenced in Jamaica till 1725.*

The negroes whom Hawkins procured on his first voyage to Africa were carried by him to San Domingo. This was in 1563, the date of England's first venture in the slave-trade. The English had sent vessels to the African coast as early as 1551, on private account, for gold and ivory; but as they had no West-Indian

* Some slips of Mocha fell into the hands of Europeans first by being carried to Batavia. It was then transplanted to Amsterdam in the end of the sixteenth century; and a present of some shrubs was made to Louis XIV., at the Peace of Utrecht. They flourished in his garden, and three shrubs were taken thence and shipped to Martinique in the care of a Captain de Chen. The voyage was so prolonged that two of them died for want of moisture, and the captain saved the third by devoting to it his own ration of water.

colony, and the trade in slaves was a monopoly, they had no object to increase the risks of a voyage which infringed upon the Portuguese right to Africa by carrying negroes away. Vessels were fitted out in 1552 and 1553 to trade for ivory and pepper; in the two following years the English interest in Africa increased, and a negro was occasionally carried away and brought to England.* This appears to have been the first circumstance which attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth, and drew remonstrances from her before it became clear that a good deal of money could be made out of such transactions. She blamed Captain Hawkins, who had succeeded by treachery and violence in getting hold of three hundred negroes whom he carried to San Domingo, and disposed of in the ports of Isabella, Puerto-de-Plata, and Monte Christi. Her virtue was proof against this first speculation, although it was an exceedingly good one, for Hawkins filled his three vessels with hides, ginger, and a quantity of pearls, and freighted two more with hides and other articles which he sent to Spain. It was after his third voyage, in 1567, when he sold his negroes in Havana at a profit greater than he could derive from the decaying San Domingo, that the Queen forgot her scruples, and gave Hawkins a crest symbolical of his wicked success: "a demi-Moor, in his proper color, bound with a cord," made plain John a knight.†

But the Portuguese jealously watched their privilege to export men from Af-

rica, so that only about forty thousand negroes were brought yearly by lawful and contraband channels to the different islands. Cuba obtained most of these. The greater part of the Portuguese trade took the direction of Brazil, for the sugar-cane had been carried from Madeira to Rio Janeiro in 1531. Formidable rivalry in selfishness was thus sown in every direction by the early splendor of San Domingo. When the Genoese merchants bought the original privilege to transport four thousand, they held the price of negroes at two hundred ducats. Their monopoly ceased in 1539, when a great market for slaves was opened at Lisbon; Spain could buy them there at a price varying from ten to fifty ducats a head, but their price delivered in good condition at San Domingo, including the inevitable percentage of loss, made them almost as expensive as before.

The capital was shattered by an earthquake in 1684. The people melted away, and fine houses, which were deserted by their owners, remained tenantless, and went to ruin. Valverde,* a Creole of the island, is the chronicler of its condition in the middle of the eighteenth century. He observes that the Spanish Creoles were living in such poverty that mass was said before daylight, so that mutual scandal at dilapidated toilets might not interfere with the enjoyment of religion. The leprosy was common, and two lazarettos were filled with its victims. The negro blood had found its way into almost every family; a female slave received her freedom as a legacy of piety or of lust. She could also purchase it for two hundred and fifty dollars; and if she was with child, an additional twelve dollars and fifty cents would purchase for the new-comer all the glories and immunities of Creole society. These were to doze and smoke in hammocks, and to cultivate listlessly about twenty-two dilapidated sugar-plantations and a little coffee. The trade in cattle with the French part of the isl-

* Hüne, *Geschichte des Sklavenhandels*, I. 300.

† When John's son, Richard, was fitting out a vessel for a voyage into the South Sea, ostensibly to explore, his mother-in-law had the naming of it at his request; and she called it "The Repentance." Sir Richard was puzzled at this; but his mother would give him no other satisfaction "then that repentance was the safest ship we could sayle in to purchase the haven of Heaven." The Queen changed the name to "Daintie."—*Observations of Sir Richard Hawkins, Knight, in his Voyage into the South Sea*, A. D. 1593.

* *Idea del Valor*, etc., Madrid, 1785: *An Idea of the Value of the Spanish Island*, etc. By A. S. Valverde.

and absorbed all the business and enterprise that remained. Still Valverde will not admit that the Spanish Creole was indolent: it is in consequence of a deficiency of negroes, he explains, that they cannot labor more!

A great injury was inflicted upon the colony by the exclusive commercial spirit of the mother-country. Spain was the first European government which undertook to interfere with the natural courses of trade, on the pretence of protecting isolated interests. In the eleventh century a great commercial competition existed between some Italian, French, and Spanish cities. To favor the last, when they were already enjoying their just share of trade, the King of Aragon prohibited, in 1227, "all foreign vessels from loading for Ceuta, Alexandria, or other important ports, if a Catalan ship was able and willing to take the cargo"; the commerce of Barcelona was in consequence of this navigation act seriously damaged.* Spain treated her colonies afterward in the same spirit; and other countries, France in particular, pursued this narrow and destructive policy, wherever colonial success excited commercial jealousy and avarice.

"The commerce of the colony was all confined to the unwise arrangement of a Government counting-house, called the *Casa de la Contratacion*, (House of Trade,) through which all exports were sent out to the colonies and all remittances made in return. By this order of things, the want of free competition blasted all enterprise, and the exorbitant rates of an exclusive traffic paralyzed industry. The cultivation of the vine, the olive, and other staple productions of Spain, was prohibited. All commerce between the colonies was forbidden; and not only could no foreigner traffic with them, but death and confiscation of property were decreed to the colonist who should traffic

with a foreigner,—slave-vessels alone being excepted."*

Thus the policy which ought to have favored the island first settled by Spaniards, against the attractions of Peru, Mexico, and Cuba, towards which the mother-colony was rapidly emptying her streams of life, was not forthcoming. These Spaniards, who were enslaved by the tenacious fancy that El Dorado still glittered for them in some distant place, needed to be attached to the soil by generous advantages, such as premiums for introducing and sustaining the cultivation of new productions, immunity from imposts either by Government or by the middle-men of a company, and liberty to exchange hides, tallow, and crops of every kind with the French, Dutch, and English, in every port of the island, to convert a precarious illicit trade with those nations into a natural intercourse, so that different articles of food, which were often scarce, and sometimes failed entirely, might be regularly supplied, until by such fostering care the colony should grow strong enough to protect itself against its own and foreign adventurers. But if all these measures had been accordant with the ideas of that age, they would have been defeated by its passions.

Other people now appear upon the scene, to put the finishing touch to this decay, while they freshen the old crimes and assume the tradition of excess and horror which is the island's history.

* *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo*, by J. Brown, M. D., 1837, p. 40. Even this exception in favor of slave-traders appears afterwards to have been withdrawn; for Charlevoix relates (*Histoire de St. Domingue*, Tom. III. p. 36) that the Governor of San Domingo got Tortuga away from the French, in 1654, by means of two negroes whom he had purchased cheap from some Dutchmen, and who showed him a path by which he drew up two cannon to command the fort. He was recalled, and beheaded at Seville, because he had bought negroes of foreigners.

Copyright of Atlantic Magazine Archive is the property of Atlantic Monthly Group LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.