

Toussaint L'Ouverture

A lecture delivered by Wendell Phillips
December 1861, in New York and Boston
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have been requested to offer you a sketch made some years since, of one of the most remarkable men of the last generation—the great St. Domingo chief, Toussaint l'Ouverture, an unmixed Negro, with no drop of white blood in his veins. My sketch is at once a biography and an argument—a biography, of course very brief, of a Negro soldier and statesman, which I offer you as an argument in behalf of the race from which he sprung. I am about to compare and weigh races indeed, I am engaged tonight in what you will think the absurd effort to convince you that the Negro race, instead of being that object of pity or contempt which we usually consider it, is entitled, judged by the facts of history, to a place close by the side of the Saxon. Now races love to be judged in two ways—by the great men they produce, and by the average merit of the mass of the race. We Saxons are proud of Bacon, Shakespeare, Hampden, Washington, Franklin, the stars we have lent to the galaxy of history; and then we turn with equal pride to the average merit of Saxon blood, since it streamed from its German home. So, again, there are three tests by which races love to be tried. The first, the basis of all, is courage—the element which says, here and today, “This continent is mine, from the Lakes to the Gulf: let him beware who seeks to divide it!” And the second is the recognition that force is doubled by purpose; liberty regulated by law is the secret of Saxon progress. And the third element is persistency, endurance; first a purpose, then death or success. Of these three elements is made that Saxon pluck which has placed our race in the van of modern civilization.

In the hours you lend me tonight, I attempt the Quixotic effort to convince you that the Negro blood, instead of standing at the bottom of the list, is entitled, if judged either by its great men or its masses, either by its courage, its purpose, or its endurance, to a place as near ours as any other blood known in history. And, for the purpose of my argument, I take an island, St. Domingo, about the size of South Carolina, the third spot in America upon which Columbus places his foot. Charmed by the magnificence of its scenery and fertility of its soil, he gave it the fondest of all names, Hispaniola, Little Spain. His successor, more pious, rebaptized it from St. Dominic, St. Domingo; and when the blacks, in 1803, drove our white blood from its surface, they drove our names with us, and began the year 1804 under the old name, Hayti, the land of mountains. It was originally tenanted by filibusters, French and Spanish, of the early commercial epoch, the pirates of that day as of ours. The Spanish took the eastern two thirds, the French the western third of the island, and they gradually settled into colonies. The French, to whom my story belongs, became the pet colony of the motherland. Guarded by peculiar privileges, enriched by the scions of wealthy houses, aided by the unmatched fertility of the soil, it soon was the richest gem in the Bourbon crown; and at the period to which I call your attention, about the era of our Constitution, 1789, its wealth was almost incredible. The effeminacy of the white race rivaled that of the Sybarite of antiquity, while the splendor of their private life outshone Versailles, and their luxury found no mate but in the mad prodigality of the Caesars.

At this time the island held about thirty thousand whites, twenty or thirty thousand mulattoes, and five hundred thousand slaves. The slave trade was active. About twenty-five thousand slaves were imported annually; and this only sufficed to fill the gap which the murderous culture of sugar annually produced. The mulattoes, as with us, were children of the slaveholders, but, unlike us, the French slaveholder never forgot his child by a bondwoman. He gave him everything but his

name—wealth, rich plantations, gangs of slaves; sent him to Paris for his education, summoned the best culture of France for the instruction of his daughters, so that in 1790 the mulatto race held one third of the real estate and one quarter of the personal estate of the island. But though educated and rich, he bowed under the same yoke as with us. Subjected to special taxes, he could hold no public office, and, if convicted of any crime, was punished with double severity. His son might not sit on the same seat at school with a white boy; he might not enter a church where a white man was worshipping; if he reached a town of horseback, he must dismount and lead his horse by the bridle; and when he died, even his dust could not rest in the same soil with a white body. Such was the white race and the mulatto—the thin film of civilization beneath which surged the dark mass of five hundred thousand slaves.

It was over such a population—the white man melted in sensuality; the mulatto feeling all the more keenly his degradation from the very wealth and culture he enjoyed; the slave, sullen and indifferent, heeding not the quarrels or the changes of the upper air—it was over this population that there burst, in 1789, the thunder-storm of the French Revolution. The first words which reached the island were the motto of the Jacobin Club—“Liberty, Equality.” The white man heard then aghast. He had read the streets of Paris running blood. The slave heard them with indifference; it was a quarrel in the upper air, between other races, which did not concern him. The mulatto heard them with a welcome which no dread of other classes could quell. Hastily gathered into conventions, they sent to Paris a committee of the whole body, laid at the feet of the National Convention the free gift of six millions of francs, pledged one fifth of their annual rental toward the payment of the national debt, and only asked in return that this yoke of civil and social contempt should be lifted from their shoulders.

You may easily imagine the temper in which Mirabeau and Lafayette welcomed his munificent gift of the free mulattoes of the West Indies, and in which the petition for equal civil rights was received by a body which had just resolved that all men were equal. The Convention hastened to express its gratitude, and issued a decree which commences thus: “All freeborn French citizens are equal before the law.” Oge was selected—the friend of Lafayette, a lieutenant-colonel in the Dutch service, the son of a wealthy mulatto woman, educated in Paris, the comrade of all the leading French Republicans—to carry the decree and the message of the French Democracy to the island. He landed. The decree of the National Convention was laid on the table of the General Assembly of the island. One old planter seized it, tore it in fragments, and trampled it under his feet, swearing by all the saints in the calendar that the island might sink before they would share their rights with bastards. They took an old mulatto, worth a million, who had simply asked for his rights under that decree, and hung him. A white lawyer of seventy, who drafted the petition, they hung at his side.

They took Oge, broke him on the wheel, ordered him to be drawn and quartered, and one quarter of his body to be hung up in each of the four principal cities of the island; and then they adjourned. You can conceive better than I can describe the mood in which Mirabeau and Danton received the news that their decree had been torn in pieces and trampled under foot by the petty legislature of an island colony, and their comrade drawn and quartered by the orders of its Governor. Robespierre rushed to the tribune and shouted, “Perish the colonies rather than sacrifice one iota of our principles!” The Convention reaffirmed their decree, and sent it out a second time to be executed.

But it was not then as now, when steam has married the continents. It took months to communicate; and while this news of the death of Oge and the defiance of the National Convention was going

to France, and the answer returning, great events had taken place in the island itself. The Spanish or the eastern section, perceiving these divisions, invaded the towns of the western and conquered many of its cities. One half of the slaveholders were Republicans, in love with the new constellation which had just gone up in our Northern sky, seeking to be admitted a State in this Republic, plotting for annexation. The other half were loyalists, anxious, deserted as they supposed themselves by the Bourbons, to make alliance with George III. They sent to Jamaica, and entreated its Governor to assist them in their intrigue. At first, he lent them only a few hundred soldiers. Some time later, General Howe and Admiral Parker were sent with several thousand men, and finally, the English government entering more seriously into the plot, General Maitland landed with four thousand Englishmen on the north side of the island, and gained many successes. The mulattoes were in the mountains, awaiting events. They distrusted the government, which a few years before they had assisted to put down an insurrection of the whites, and which had forfeited its promise to grant them civil privileges. Deserted by both sections, Blanchelande, the Governor, had left the capital, and fled for refuge to a neighboring city.

In this state of affairs, the second decree reached the island. The whites forgot their quarrel, sought out Blanchelande, and obliged him to promise that he never would publish the decree. Affrighted, the Governor consented to that course, and they left him. He then began to reflect that in reality he was deposed, that the Bourbons had lost the scepter of the island. He remembered his successful appeal to the mulattoes, five years before, to put down an insurrection. Deserted now by the whites and by the mulattoes, only one force was left him in the island—that was blacks: they had always remembered with gratitude the code noir, black code, of Louis XIV, the first interference of any power in their behalf. To the blacks Blanchelande appealed. He sent a deputation to the slaves. He was aided by the agents of Count d'Artois, afterward Charles X, who was seeking to do in St. Domingo what Charles II did in Virginia, (whence its name of Old Dominion,) institute a reaction against the rebellion at home. The two joined forces, and sent first to Toussaint. Nature made him a Metternich, a diplomatist. He probably wished to avail himself of this offer, foreseeing advantage to his race, but to avail himself of it so cautiously as to provide against failure, risking as little as possible till the intentions of the other party had been tested, and so managing as to be able to go on or withdraw as the best interest of his race demanded. He had practiced well the Greek rule, "Know thyself," and thoroughly studied his own part.

Later in life, when criticizing his great mulatto rival, Rigaud, he showed how well he knew himself. "I know Rigaud," he said; "he drops the bridle when he gallops, he shows his arm when he strikes. For me, I gallop also, but know where to stop: when I strike I am felt, not seen. Rigaud works only by blood and massacre. I know how to put the people in movement: but when I appear, all must be calm." He said therefore, to the envoys, "Where are your credentials?" "We have none." "I will have nothing to do with you." They then sought Francois and Biassou, two other slaves of strong passions, considerable intellect, and great influence over their fellow-slaves, and said, "Arm, assist the government, put down the English on the one hand, and the Spanish on the other"; and on the 21st of August, 1791, fifteen thousand blacks, led by Francois and Biassou, supplied with the arms from the arsenal of the government, appeared in the midst of the colony. It is believed that Toussaint, unwilling himself to head the movement, was still desirous that it would result in benefit to his race. He is supposed to have advised Francois in his course—saving himself for a more momentous hour. This is what Edward Everett calls the Insurrection of St. Domingo. It bore for its motto on one side of its banner, "Long live the King"; and on the other, "We claim the Old Laws." Singular mottoes for a rebellion! In fact, it was the posse comitatus; it was the only French army on the island; it was the only force that had the right to bear arms; and what it undertook, it achieved. It put Blanchelande in his seat; it put the island beneath his rule. When it was done, the

blacks said to the Governor they had created, "Now, grant us one day in the seven; give us one day's labor; we will buy another, and with the two by a third,"—the favorite method of emancipation at that time. Like the Blanchelande of five years before, he refused. He said, "Disarm! Disperse!" and the blacks answered, "The right hand that has saved you, the right had that has saved the island for the Bourbons, may perchance clutch some of our own rights"; and they stood still. This is the first insurrection, if any such there were in St. Domingo—the first determined purpose on the part of the Negro, having saved the government, to save himself. Now let me stop a moment to remind you of one thing. I am about to open to you a chapter of bloody history—no doubt of it. Who set the example? Who dug up from its grave of a hundred years the hideous punishment of the wheel, and broke Oge, every bone, a living man? Who flared in the face of indignant and astonished Europe the forgotten barbarity of quartering the yet palpitating body? Our race. And if the black man learned the lesson but too well, it does not lie in our lips to complain. During this whole struggle, the record is—written, mark you, by the white man—the whole picture from the pencil of the white race—that for one life the negro took the battle, in hot and bloody fight, the white race took, in the cool malignity of revenge, three to answer for it. Notice, also, that up to this moment the slave had taken no part in the struggle, except at the bidding of the government; and even then, not for himself, but only to sustain the laws.

At this moment, then, the island stands thus: The Spaniard is on the east triumphant; the Englishman is on the northwest in trenches; the mulattoes are in the mountains waiting; the blacks are in the valleys victorious; one half of the French slaveholding element is republican, the other half royalist; the white race against the mulatto and the black; the black against both; the Frenchman against the English and Spaniard; the Spaniard against both. It is a war of races and a war of nations. At such a moment Toussaint l'Ouverture appeared. He had been born a slave on a plantation in the north of the island—and unmixed negro—his father stolen from Africa. If anything, therefore, that I say of him tonight moves your admiration, remember, the black race claims it all—we have no part nor lot in it. He was fifty years old at this time. An old negro had taught him to read. His favorite books were Epictetus, Raynal, Military Memoirs, Plutarch. In the woods, he learned some of the qualities of herbs, and was village doctor. On the estate, the highest place he ever reached was that of the coachman. At fifty, he joined the army as physician. Before he went, he placed his mother and mistress on shipboard, freighted the vessel with a cargo of sugar and coffee, and sent them to Baltimore, and never afterward did he forget to send them, year-by-year, ample means of support. And I might add, that, of all the leading negro generals, each one saved the man under whose roof he was born, and protected the family.

Let me add another thing. If I stood here tonight to tell the story of Napoleon, I should take it from the lips of Frenchmen, who find no language rich enough to paint the great captain of the nineteenth century. Were I here to tell you the story of Washington, I should take it from your hearts—you, who think no marble white enough on which to carve the name of the Father of his Country. I am about to tell you the story of a negro who has left hardly one written line. I am to glean it from the reluctant testimony of Britons, Frenchmen, Spaniards—men who despised him as a negro and a slave, and hated him because he had beaten them in many a battle. All the materials for his biography are from the lips of his enemies.

The second story told of him is this. About the time he reached the camp, the army had been subjected to two insults. First, their commissioners, summoned to meet the French Committee, were ignominiously and insultingly dismissed; and when, afterward, Francois, their general, was summoned to a second conference, and went to it on horseback, accompanied by two officers, a

young lieutenant, who had known him as a slave, angered at seeing him in the uniform of an officer, raised his riding whip and struck him over the shoulders. If he had been the savage which the negro painted to us, he had only to breathe the insult to his twenty-five thousand soldiers, and they would have trodden out the Frenchmen in blood. But the indignant chief rode back in silence to his tent, and it was twenty-four hours before his troops heard of this insult to their general. Then the word went forth, "Death to every white man!" They had fifteen hundred prisoners. Ranged in front of the camp, they were about to be shot. Toussaint, who had a vein of religious fanaticism, like most great leaders—like Mohammed, like Napoleon, like Cromwell, like John Brown—he could preach as well as fight—mounting a hillock, and getting the ear of the crowd, exclaimed: "Brothers, this blood in yonder French camp can wipe it out. To shed that is courage; to shed this is cowardice and cruelty beside",--and he saved fifteen hundred lives.

I cannot stop to give in detail every one of his efforts. This was in 1793. Leap with me over seven years; come to 1800; what has he achieved? He has driven the Spaniard back into his own cities, conquered him there, and put the French banner over every Spanish town; and for the first time, and almost the last, the island obeys one law. He had put the mulatto under his feet. He has attacked Maitland, defeated him in pitched battles, and permitted him to retreat to Jamaica; and when the French army rose upon Laveaux, their general, and put him in chains, Toussaint defeated them, took Laveaux out of prison, and put him at the head of his own troops. The grateful French in return named him General-in-Chief, *Cet homme fait l'ouverture partout*, said one—"This man makes an opening everywhere,"—hence his soldiers name him *l'Ouverture*, the opening.

This was the work of seven years. Let us pause a moment, and find something to measure him by. You remember Macaulay says, comparing Cromwell with Napoleon, that Cromwell showed the greater military genius, if we consider that he never saw an army till he was forty; while Napoleon was educated from a boy in the best military schools in Europe. Cromwell manufactured his own army; Napoleon at the age of twenty-seven was placed at the head of the best troops Europe ever saw. They were both successful; but, says Macaulay, with such disadvantages, the Englishman showed the greater genius. Whether you allow the inference or not, you will at least grant that it is a fair mode of measurement. Apply it to Toussaint. Cromwell never saw an army till he was forty; this man never saw a soldier till he was fifty. Cromwell manufactured his own army—out of what? Englishmen—the best blood in Europe. Out of the middle class of English-men—the best blood of the island. And with it he conquered what? Englishmen—their equals. This man manufactured his army out of what? Out of what you call the despicable race of Negroes, debased, demoralized by two hundred years of slavery, one hundred thousand of them imported into the island within four years, unable to speak the dialect intelligible even to each other. Yet out of this mixed, and, as you say, despicable mass, he forged a thunderbolt and hurled it at what? At the proudest blood in Europe, the Spaniard, and sent him home conquered; at the most warlike blood in Europe, the French, and put them under his feet; at the pluckiest blood in Europe, the English, and they skulked home to Jamaica. Now if Cromwell was a general, at least this man was a soldier. I know it was a small territory; it was not as large as the continent; but it was as large as that Attica, which, with Athens for a capital, has filled the earth with its fame for two thousand years. We measure genius by quality, not by quantity.

Further—Cromwell was only a soldier; his fame stops there. Not one line in the statute book of Britain can be traced to Cromwell; not one step in the social life of England finds its motive power in his brain. The state he founded went down with him to his grave. But this man no sooner put his hand on the helm of state, than the ship steadied with an upright keel, and he began to evince a statesmanship as marvelous as his military genius. History says that the most statesmanlike act of

Napoleon was his proclamation of 1802, at the peace of Amiens, when, believing that the indelible loyalty of a native-born heart is always a sufficient basis on which to found an empire, he said: "Frenchmen, come home. I pardon the crimes of the last twelve years; I blot out its parties; I found my throne on the hearts of all Frenchmen,"—and twelve years of unclouded success showed how wisely he judged. That was in 1802. In 1800 this negro made a proclamation; it runs thus: "Sons of St. Domingo, come home. We never meant to take your houses or your lands. The negro only asked that liberty which God gave him. Your houses wait for you; your lands are ready; come and cultivate them";--and from Madrid and Paris, from Baltimore and New Orleans, the emigrant planters crowded home to enjoy their estates, under the pledged word that was never broken of a victorious slave.

Again, Carlyle has said, "The natural king is one who melts all wills into his own." At this moment he turned to his armies—poor, ill-clad, and half-starved—and said to them: Go back and work on these estates you have conquered; for an empire can be founded only on order and industry, and you can learn these virtues only there. And they went. The French Admiral, who witnessed the scene, said that in a week his army melted back into peasants. It was 1800. The world waited fifty years before, in 1846, Robert Peel dared to venture, as a matter of practical statesmanship, the theory of free trade. Adam Smith theorized, the French statesmen dreamed, but no man at the head of affairs had ever dared to risk it as a practical measure. Europe waited till 1846 before the most practical intellect in the world, the English, adopted the great economic formula of unfettered trade. But in 1800 this black, with the instinct of statesmanship, said to the committee who were drafting for him a Constitution: "Put at the head of the chapter of commerce that the ports of St. Domingo are open to the trade of the world." With lofty indifference to race, superior to all envy or prejudice, Toussaint had formed this committee of eight white proprietors and one mulatto—not a soldier nor a negro on the list, although Haytian history proves that, with the exception of Rigaud, the rarest genius has always been shown by pure Negroes.

Again, it was 1800, at a time when England was poisoned on every page of her statute-book with religious intolerance, when a man could not enter the House of Commons without taking an Episcopal communion, when every State in the Union, except Rhode Island, was full of the intensest religious bigotry. This man was a negro. You say that it is a superstitious blood. He was uneducated. You say that makes a man narrow-minded. He was a Catholic. May say that is but another name for intolerance. And yet—negro, Catholic, slave—he took his place by the side of Roger Williams, and said to his committee: "Make it the first line of my Constitution that I know no difference between religious beliefs."

Now, blue-eyed Saxons, proud of your race, go back with me to the commencement of the century, and select what statesman you please. Let him be either American or European; let him have a brain the result of six generations of culture; let him have the ripest training of university routine; let him add to it the better education of practical life; crown his temples with the silver of seventy years; and show me the man of Saxon Lineage for whom his most sanguine admirer will wreath a laurel rich as embittered foes have places on the brow of this negro—rare military skill, profound knowledge of human nature, content to blot out all party distinctions, and trust a state to the blood of its sons—anticipating Sir Robert Peel fifty years, and taking his station by the side of Roger Williams before any Englishman or American had won the right;--and yet this is the record which the history of rival states makes up for this inspired black of St. Domingo.

It was 1801. The Frenchmen who lingered on the island described its prosperity and order as almost incredible. You might trust a child with a bag of gold to go from Samana to Port-au-Prince

without risk. Peace was in every household; the valleys laughed with fertility; culture climbed the mountains; the commerce of the world was represented in its harbors. At this time Europe concluded the Peace of Amiens, and Napoleon took his seat on the throne of France. He glanced his eyes across the Atlantic, and, with a single stroke of his pen, reduced Cayenne and Martinique back into chains. He then said to his Council, "What shall I do with St. Domingo?" The slaveholders said, "Give it to us." Napoleon turned to the Abbe Gregoire, "What is your opinion?" "I think those men would change their opinions, if they changed their skins." Colonel Vincent, who had been private secretary to Toussaint, wrote a letter to Napoleon, in which he said: "Sire, leave it alone; it is the happiest spot in your dominions; God raised this man to govern; races melt under his hand. He has saved you this island; for I know of my own knowledge that, when the Republic could not have lifted a finger to prevent it, George III offered him any title and any revenue if he would hold the island under the British crown. He refused, and saved it for France." Napoleon turned away from his Council, and is said to have remarked, "I have sixty thousand idle troops; I must find them something to do." He meant to say, "I am about to seize the crown; I dare not do it in the faces of sixty thousand republican soldiers: I must give them work at a distance to do." The gossip of Paris gives another reason for his expedition against St. Domingo. It is said that the satirists of Paris had christened Toussaint, the black Napoleon; and Bonaparte hated his black shadow. Toussaint had unfortunately once addressed him a letter, "The first of the blacks to the first of the whites." He did not like the comparison. You would think it too slight a motive. But let me remind you of the present Napoleon, that when the epigrammatists of Paris christened his wasteful and tasteless expense at Versailles, *Soulouquerie*, from the name of *Soulouque*, the Black Emperor, he designed to issue a specific order forbidding the use of the word. The Napoleon blood is very sensitive. So Napoleon resolved to crush Toussaint from one motive or another, from the prompting of ambition, or dislike of this resemblance—which was very close. If either imitated the other, it must have been the white, since the negro preceded him by several years. They were very much alike, and they were French—French even in vanity, common to both. You remember Bonaparte's vainglorious words to his soldiers at the Pyramids: "Forty centuries look down upon us." In the same mood, Toussaint said to the French captain who urged him to go to France in his frigate, "Sir, your ship is not large enough to carry me." Napoleon, you know, could never bear the military uniform. He hated the restraint of his rank; he loved to put on the gray coat of the Little Corporal, and wander in camp. Toussaint also never could bear a uniform. He wore a plain coat, and often the yellow Madras handkerchief of the slaves. A French lieutenant once called him a maggot in a yellow handkerchief. Toussaint took him prisoner next day, and sent him home to his mother. Like Napoleon, he could fast many days; could dictate to three secretaries at once; could wear out four or five horses. Like Napoleon, no man ever divined his purpose or penetrated his plan. He was only a negro, and so, in him, they called it hypocrisy. In Bonaparte we style it diplomacy. For instance, three attempts made to assassinate him all failed, from not firing at the right spot. If they thought he was in the north in a carriage, he would be in the south on horseback; if they thought he was in the city in a house, he would be in the field in a tent.

They once riddled his carriage with bullets; he was on horseback on the other side. The seven Frenchmen who did it were arrested. They expected to be shot.

The next day was some saint's day; he ordered them to be placed before the high altar, and, when the priest reached the prayer for forgiveness, came down from his high seat, repeated it with him, and permitted them to go unpunished. He had that wit common to all great commanders, which makes its way in a camp. His soldiers getting disheartened, he filled a large vase with powder, and, scattering six grains of white rice in it, shook them up, and said: "See, there is a white, there is a black; what are you afraid of?" So when people came to him in great numbers

for office, as it is reported they do sometimes even in Washington, he learned the first words of a Catholic prayer in Latin, and repeating it, would say, "Do you understand that?" "No, sir." "What! Want an office, and not know Latin? Go home and learn it!"

Then, again, like Napoleon—like genius always—he had confidence in his power to rule men. You remember when Bonaparte returned from Elba, and Louis XVIII sent an army against him, Bonaparte descended from his carriage, opened his coat, offering his breast to their muskets, and saying, "Frenchmen, it is the Emperor!" and they ranged themselves behind him, his soldiers, shouting, "Vive! l'Empereur!" That was in 1815. Twelve years before, Toussaint, finding that four of his regiments had deserted and gone to Leclerc, drew his sword, flung it on the grass, went across the field to them, folded his arms, and said, "Children, can you point a bayonet at me?" The blacks fell on their knees, praying his pardon. His bitterest enemies watched him, and none of them charge him with love of money, sensuality, or cruel use of power. The only instance in which his sternest critic has charged him with severity is this. During a tumult, a few white proprietors who had returned, trusting his proclamation, were killed. His nephew, General Moise, was accused of indecision in quelling the riot. He assembled a court-martial, and, on its verdict, ordered his own nephew to be shot, sternly Roman in thus keeping his promise of protection to the whites. Above the lust of gold, pure in private life, generous in the use of his power, it was against such a man that Napoleon sent his army, giving to General Leclerc, the husband of his beautiful sister Pauline, thirty thousand of his best troops, with orders to reintroduce slavery. Among these soldiers came all of Toussaint's old mulatto rivals and foes.

Holland lent sixty ships. England promised by special message to be neutral; and you know neutrality means sneering at freedom, and sending arms to tyrants. England promised neutrality, and the black looked out on the whole civilized world marshaled against him. America, full of slaves, of course was hostile. Only the Yankee sold him poor muskets at a very high price. Mounting his horse, and riding to the eastern end of the island, Samana, he looked out on a sight such as no native had ever see before. Sixty ships of the line, crowded by the best soldiers of Europe, rounded the point. They were soldiers who had never yet met an equal, whose tread, like Caesar's, had shaken Europe—soldiers who had scaled the Pyramids, and planted the French banners on the walls of Rome.

He looked a moment, counted the flotilla, let the reins fall on the neck of his horse, and, turning to Christophe, exclaimed: "All France is come to Hayti; they can only come to make us slaves; and we are lost!" He then recognized the only mistake of his life—his confidence in Bonaparte, which had led him to disband his army. Returning to the hills he issued the only proclamation which bears his name and breathes vengeance: "My children, France comes to make us slaves. God gave us liberty; France has no right to take it away. Burn the cities, destroy the harvests, tear up the roads with cannon, poison the wells, show the white man the hell he comes to make"—and he was obeyed. When the great William of Orange saw Louis XIV cover Holland with troops, he said, "Break down the dikes, give Holland back to ocean"; and Europe aid, "Sublime!" When Alexander saw the armies of France descend upon Russia, he said, "Burn Moscow, starve back the invaders"; and Europe said, "Sublime!" This black saw all Europe marshaled to crush him, and gave to his people the same heroic example of defiance.

It is true, the scene grows bloodier as we proceed. But, remember, the white man fitly accompanied his infamous attempt to reduce freemen to slavery with every bloody and cruel device that bitter and shameless hate could invent. Aristocracy is always cruel. The black man met the attempt, as every such attempt should be met, with war to the hilt. In his first struggle to gain

freedom, he had been generous and merciful, save lives and pardoned enemies, and the people in every age and clime have always done when rising against aristocrats. Now, to save his liberty, the negro exhausted every means, seized every weapon, and turned back the hateful invaders with a vengeance as terrible as their own, though even now he refused to be cruel.

Leclerc sent word to Christophe that he was about to land at Cape City. Christophe said, "Toussaint is governor of the island. I will send to him for permission. If without it a French soldier sets foot on shore, I will burn the town, and fight over its ashes." Leclerc landed. Christophe took two thousand white men, women, and children, and carried them to the mountains in safety, then with his own hands set fire to the splendid palace which French architects had just finished for him, and in forty hours the place was in ashes. The battle was fought in its streets, and the French driven back to their boats. Wherever they went, they were met with fire and sword. Once, resisting an attack, the blacks, Frenchmen born, shouted the Marseilles Hymn, and the French soldiers stood still; they could not fight the Marseillaise. And it was not till their officers sabred them on that they advanced, and they were beaten. Beaten in the field, the French then took to lies. They issued proclamations, saying, "We do not come to make you slaves; this man Toussaint tells you lies. Join us, and you shall have the rights you claim." They cheated every one of his officers, except Christophe and Dessalines, and his own brother Pierre, and finally these also deserted him, and he was left alone. He then sent word to Leclerc, "I will submit. I could continue the struggle for years—could you prevent a single Frenchman from safely quitting your camp. But I hate bloodshed. I have fought only for the liberty of my race. Guarantee that, I will submit and come in." He took the oath to be a faithful citizen; and on the same crucifix Leclerc swore that he should be faithfully protected, and that the island should be free.

As the French general glanced along the line of his splendidly equipped troops, and saw, opposite, Toussaint's ragged, ill-armed followers, he said to him, "If Overture had you continued the war, where could you have got arms?" "I would have taken yours," was the Spartan reply. He went down to his house in peace; it was summer. Leclerc remembered that the fever months were coming, when his army would be in hospitals, and when one motion of that royal hand would sweep his troops into the sea. He was too dangerous to be left at large. So they summoned him to attend a council; and here is the only charge made against him—the only charge. They say he was fool enough to go. Grant it; what was the record? The white man lies shrewdly to cheat the negro. Knight-errantry was truth. The foulest insult you can offer a man since the Crusades is, you lie. Of Toussaint, Hermona, the Spanish general, who knew him well, said, "He was the purest soul God ever put into a body." Of him history bears witness, "He never broke his word." Maitland was traveling in the depths of the woods to meet Toussaint, when he was met by a messenger, and told that he was betrayed. He went on, and met Toussaint, who showed him two letters—one from the French general, offering him any rank if he would put Maitland in his power, and the other his reply. It was, "Sir, I have promised the Englishman that he shall go back." Let it stand, therefore, that the negro, truthful as a knight of old, was cheated by his lying foe. Which race has reason to be proud of such record?

But he was not cheated. He was under espionage. Suppose he had refused: the government would have doubted him—would have found some cause to arrest him. He probably reasoned thus: "If I go willingly, I shall be treated accordingly"; and he went. The moment he entered the room, the officers drew their swords, and told him he was prisoner; and one young lieutenant who was present says, "he was not at all surprised, but seemed very sad." They put him on shipboard, and weighed anchor for France. As the island faded from his sight, he turned to the captain, and said, "You think you have rooted up the tree of liberty, but I am only a branch; I have planted the

tree so deep that all of France can never root it up." Arrived in Paris, he was flung into jail, and Napoleon sent his secretary, Caffarelli, to him, supposing he had buried large treasures. He listened awhile, then replied, "Young man, it is true I have lost treasures, but they are not such as you come to seek." He was then sent to the Castle of St. Joux, to a dungeon twelve feet by twenty, built wholly of stone, with a narrow window, high up on the side, looking out on the snows of Switzerland. In winter, ice covers the floor; in summer, it is damp and wet. In this living tomb the child of the sunny tropic was left to die. From this dungeon he wrote two letters to Napoleon. One of them ran thus:-- "Sire, I am a French citizen. I never broke a law. By the grace of God, I have saved for you the best island of your realm Sire, of your mercy grant me justice." Napoleon never answered the letters. The commandment allowed him five francs a day for food and fuel. Napoleon heard of it, and reduced the sum to three. The luxurious usurper, who complained that the English government was stingy because it allowed him only six thousand dollars a month, stooped from his throne to cut down a dollar to a half, and still Toussaint did not die quick enough.

This dungeon was a tomb. The story told that, in Josephine's time, a young French marquis was placed there, and the girl to whom he was betrothed went to the Empress and prayed for his release.

Said Josephine to her, "Have a model of it made, and bring it to me." Josephine placed it near Napoleon. He said, "Take it away—it is horrible!" She put it on his footstool, and he kicked it from him. She held it to him the third time, and said, "Sire, in this horrible dungeon you have put a man to die." "Take him out," said Napoleon, and the girl saved her lover. In this tomb Toussaint was buried, but he did not die fast enough. Finally, the commandment was told to go into Switzerland, to carry the keys of the dungeon with him, and to stay four days; when he returned, Toussaint was found starved to death. That imperial assassin was taken twelve years after to his prison at St. Helena, planned for a time, as he had planned that of Toussaint, and there he whined away his dying hours in pitiful complaints of curtains and titles, of dishes and rides. God grant that when some future Plutarch shall weigh the great men of our epoch, the whites against the blacks, he do not put that whining child of St. Helena into one scale, and into the other the negro meeting death like a Roman, without a murmur, in the solitude of his icy dungeon!

From the moment he was betrayed, the Negroes began to doubt the French, and rushed to arms. Soon every negro but Maurepas deserted the French. Leclerc summoned Maurepas to his side. He came, loyally bringing with him five hundred soldiers. Leclerc spiked his epaulettes to his shoulders, shot him, and flung him into the sea. He took his five hundred soldiers on shore, shot them on the edge of a pit, and tumbled them in. Dessalines from the mountain saw it, and, selecting five hundred French officers from his prisons, hung them on separate trees in sight of Leclerc's camp; and born, as I was, not far from Bunker Hill, I have yet found no reason to think he did wrong. They murdered Pierre Toussaint's wife at his own door, and after such treatment that it was mercy when they killed her. The maddened husband, who had but a year before saved the lives of twelve hundred white men, carried his next thousand prisoners and sacrificed them on her grave.

The French exhausted every form of torture. The Negroes were bound together and thrown into the sea; any one who floated was shot—others sunk with cannon balls tied to their feet; some smothered with sulphur fumes—others strangled, scourged to death, gibbeted; sixteen of Toussaint's officers were chained to rocks in desert islands—others in marshes, and left to be devoured by poisonous reptiles and insects. Rochambeau sent to Cuba from bloodhounds. When they arrived, the young girls went down to the wharf, decked the hounds with ribbons and

flowers, kissed their necks, and, seated in the amphitheatre, the women clapped their hands to see the negro thrown to these dogs, previously starved to rage. But the Negroes besieged this very city so closely that these same girls, in their misery, at the very hounds they had welcomed.

Then flashed forth that defying courage and sublime endurance which show how alike all races are when tried in the same furnace. The Roman wife, whose husband faltered when Nero ordered him to kill himself, seized the dagger, and, mortally wounding her own body, cried, "Poetus, it is not hard to die." The world records it with proud tears. Just in the same spirit, when a negro colonel was ordered to execution, and trembled, his wife seized his sword, and, giving herself a death-wound, said, "Husband, death is sweet when liberty is gone."

The war went on. Napoleon sent over thirty thousand more soldiers. But disaster still followed his efforts. What the sword did not devour, the fever ate up. Leclerc died. Pauline carried his body back to France. Napoleon met her at Bordeaux, saying, "Sister, I gave you an army—you bring me back ashes." Rochambeau—the Rochambeau of our history—left in command of eight thousand troops, sent word to Dessalines: "When I take you, I will not shoot you like a soldier, or hang you like a white man; I will whip you to death like a slave." Dessalines chased him from the battlefield, from fort to fort, and finally shut him up in Samana. Heating cannon balls to destroy his fleet, Dessalines learned that Rochambeau had begged of the British admiral to cover his troops with the English flag, and the generous negro suffered the booster to embark undisturbed.

Some doubt the courage of the negro. Go to Hayti, and stand on those fifty thousand graves of the best soldiers France ever had, and ask them what they think of the negro's sword. And if that does not satisfy you, go to France, to the splendid mausoleum of the Counts of Rochambeau, and to the eight thousand graves of Frenchmen who skulked home under the English flag, and ask them. And if that does not satisfy you, come home, and if it had been October, 1859, you might have come by way of quaking Virginia, and asked her what she thought of negro courage.

You may also remember this—that we Saxons were slaves about four hundred years, sold with the land, and our fathers never raised a finger to end that slavery. They waited till Christianity and civilization, till commerce and the discovery of America, melted away their chains. Spartacus in Italy led the slaves of Rome against the Empress of the world. She murdered him, and crucified them. There never was a slave rebellion successful but once, and that was in St. Domingo. Every race has been, sometime or other, in chains. But there never was a race that, weakened and degraded by such chattel slavery, unaided, tore off its own fetters, forged them into swords, and won its liberty on the battlefield, but one, and that was the black government may avert that necessity from our land—may raise into peaceful liberty the four million committed to our care, and show under democratic institutions as statesmanship as farsighted as that of England, as brave as the negro of Hayti!

So much for the courage of the negro. Now look at his endurance. In 1805 he said to the white men, "This island is ours; not a white fool shall touch it." Side by side with him stood the South American republics, planted by the best blood of the countrymen of Lope de Vega and Cervantes. They topple over so often that you could no more daguerreotype their crumbling fragments than you could the waves of the ocean. And yet, at their side, the negro has kept his island sacredly to himself. It is said that at first, with rare patriotism, the Haytian government ordered the destruction of all the sugar plantations remaining, and discouraged its culture, deeming that the temptation which lured the French back again to attempt their enslavement. Burn over New York tonight, fill up her canals, sink every ship, destroy her railroads, blot out every

remnant of education from her sons, let her be ignorant and penniless, with nothing but her hands to begin the world again—how much could she do in sixty years? And Europe, too, would lend you money, but she will not lend Hayti a dollar.

Hayti, from the ruins of her colonial dependence, is become a civilized state, the seventh nation in the catalogue of commerce with this country, inferior in morals and education to none of the West Indian isles. Foreign merchants trust her courts as willingly as they do our own. Thus far, she has foiled the ambition of Spain, the greed of England, and the malicious statesmanship of Calhoun. Toussaint made her what she is. In this work there was grouped around him a score of men, mostly of pure negro blood, who ably seconded his efforts.

They were able in war and skillful in civil affairs, but not, like him, remarkable for that rare mingling of high qualities which alone makes true greatness, and insures a man leadership among those otherwise almost his equals. Toussaint was indisputably their chief. Courage, purpose, endurance—these are the tests. He did plant a state so deep that all the world has not been able to root it up.

I would call him Napoleon, but Napoleon made his way to empire over broken oaths and through a sea of blood. This man never broke his word. “No RETALIATION” was his great motto and the rule of his life; and the last words uttered to his son in France were these: “My boy, you will one day go back to St. Domingo; forget that France murdered your father.” I would call him Cromwell, but Cromwell was the only soldier, and the state he founded went down with him into his grave. I would call him Washington, but the great Virginian held slaves. This man risked his empire rather than permit the slave trade in the humblest village of his dominions.

You think me a fanatic tonight, for you read history, not with your eyes, but with your prejudices. But fifty years hence, when Truth gets a hearing, the Muse of History will put Phocion of the Greek, and Brutus for the Roman, Hampden for England, Fayette for France, choose Washington as the bright, consummate flower of our earlier civilization, and John Brown the ripe fruit of our noonday, then, dipping her pen in the sunlight, will write in the clear blue, above them all, the name of the soldier, the statesman, the martyr, Toussaint l’Ouverture.