



The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture, The Negro Patriot of Hayti: Comprising an Account of the Struggle for Liberty in the Island, and a Sketch of Its History to the Present Period

By J. R. Beard

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I AM about to sketch the history and character of one of those extraordinary men, whom Providence, from time to time, raises up for the accomplishment of great, benign, and far-reaching results. I am about to supply the clearest evidence that there is no insuperable barrier between the light and the dark-coloured tribes of our common human species. I am about to exhibit, in a series of indisputable facts, a proof that the much misunderstood and downtrodden negro race are capable of the loftiest virtues, and the most heroic efforts. I am about to present a tacit parallel between white men and dark men, in which the latter will appear to no disadvantage. Neither eulogy, however, nor disparagement is my aim, but the simple love of justice. It is a history--not an argument--that I purpose to set forth. In prosecuting the narrative, I shall have to conduct the reader through scenes of aggression, resistance, outrage, revenge, bloodshed, and cruelty, that grieve and wound the hear, and exciting the deepest pity for the sufferers, raise irrepressible indignation against ambition, injustice and tyranny--the scourges of the world, and specially the sources of complicated and horrible calamities to the natives of Africa. The western portion of the North Atlantic Ocean is separated from the Caribbean Sea on the south, and the Gulf of Mexico on the north, by a succession of islands which, under the name of the West India Isles, seem to unite in a broken and waving line, the two great peninsulas of South and North America. Of these islands, which, under the general title of the Antilles, are divided into several groups, the largest and the most important are, Porto Rico on the east, Cuba on the west, and St. Domingo between the two, with Jamaica laying on the western extremity of the latter. Situated between the seventeenth and twentieth degree of north latitude, Saint Domingo stretches from east to west about 390 miles, with an average breadth, from north to south, of 100 miles, and comprises about 29,000 square miles, or 18,816,000 square acres;--being four times as large as Jamaica, and nearly equal in extent to Ireland. Its original name, and that by which it is now generally known, Hayti--which, in the Caribbean tongue, signifies a land of mountains--is truly descriptive of its surface and general appearance. From a ventral point, which near the middle of the island rises to the height of some 6,000 feet above the level of the sea, branches, having

parallel ranges on the north and on the south, run through the whole length of the island,-- giving it somewhat the shape and aspect of a huge tortoise. The mountain ridges for the most part extend to the sea, above which they stand in lofty precipices, forming numerous headlands and promontories; or, retiring before the ocean, give place to ample and commodious bays. Of these bays and harbours, three deserve mention; not only for their extraordinary natural capabilities, but for the frequency with which two of them, at least, will appear in these pages. On the north-west of Hayti, is the Bay of Samana, with its deep recesses and curving shores, terminating in Cape Samana on the north, and Cape Raphail on the south. At the opposite end of the country, is the magnificent harbour called the Bay Port au Prince, enclosing the long and rocky isle Gonave--on the north of which is the channel St. Marc, and on the south the channel Gonave. Important as is the part which this harbour sustains in the history of the land, scarcely, if at all less important, is the bay which has Cape François for its western point, and Grange for its eastern, comprising on the latter side the minor, but well-sheltered Bay of Mancenille; and in the former, the large roadstead of Cape François.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

John Rely Beard (1800-1876) was an English Unitarian minister who wrote more than thirty books in his lifetime, including The Life of Toussaint L'Ouverture (1853) and several reference volumes on a variety of topics.

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