

from danger and near the city of Jérémie. In this manner we reached the long plain called *Jeames*, through which a straight dry road had been built, being about 150 feet wide, and 2 miles long. Enhardened by war and its fatigues, with a mind highly excited by irreparable disasters, the terrors and agonies of death, the cries of despair and helplessness I had before this witnessed, I thought I could now subdue my natural sensitive feelings; but, on reaching this plain, I beheld the wide expanse of its road literally crowded with a disheartened multitude. I felt overpowered with irresistible emotions; my heart swelled as if ready to burst. What a heart-rending scene! Countless number of females, of all colors, old and young, dragging along, as it were, their weary bodies—some carrying their babes and children, others measuring their steps to avoid precipitating the tardy steps of their grandmothers and grandfathers—many of whom were more than seventy years old! Exhausted by a meridian heat, by thirst and hunger, they had in their flight thrown down along the road all the articles which they thought would impede or retard their march. This distressing sight enkindled my anger and inflamed my indignation at Sarrazin's treason; I felt impatient to reach head quarters; and, leaving my companions as a rear guard to protect those unfortunate victims, I rode as fast as my first rate pacing horse could possibly go. It was four o'clock P.M. when I arrived at head quarters.

I found General Sarrazin surrounded by a large number of planters and merchants, who were very clamorous. On my entering the hall, excited as I was, I rather addressed the General in the high tone of a superior, than in the humble language of a subaltern. I reproached him with the infamy of his conduct for withdrawing our frontier posts; but above all, for his not sending a single soldier, after having been apprised of the invasion, to protect, at least, the lives of old men, women and children, whom his odious duplicity had exposed to utter destruction. I was not allowed to speak a long while; a kind of phrenzy got hold of the persons present, and had not a company of grenadiers been instantly called up to rescue him, that fiend in human shape would not have survived the consummation of his perfidious policy. There being an armed brig in the port, at five o'clock, an hour after this warm altercation, this treacherous villain, protected by two pieces of artillery and one hundred grenadiers, embarked on board that brig, and made his way to Port au Prince.

Thus within less than five days was entirely destroyed by the most odious and unheard of treason in a French General of rank, the only section of the French possessions in St. Domingo that had, during the whole course of thirteen years' civil wars and revolutions in that Island, constantly maintained its integral state, and preserved its peace and riches; and which, at

this time, could produce more coffee than all the other parts put together. (*Historical Sketches*, 31–34)

THE MASSACRE IN JÉRÉMIE IN MARCH 1804

The sun rose on the morning of [March] 6th [1804] with a threatening aspect. The eastern horizon appeared inflamed; detached, heavy clouds with crimson borders portrayed by their mixtures and shapes the arrays of armies, the conflict of warriors, the blood of the slain and the mourning of the conquered; a sight so rarely seen in the East, although frequently exhibited in the West, astonished every one. The blacks viewed it generally as the foreboding of a new and sanguinary war with France, and the whites, as a gloomy announcement of their own approaching torture and death. During this day it was publicly announced that Governor Dessalines would arrive in town on the morrow at ten o'clock in the morning.

Little or no intercourse took place during this day between the three distinctive colors. It was, however, agitated among the merchants whether it would not be proper on their part, to appoint a deputation to wait on Dessalines immediately after his arrival, and by humble tokens, offers of money and services to avert the danger of being all involved in the same ruin. After mature consideration, the intention was given up as being entirely out of season. . . .

At half past ten in the morning of the 7th, Dessalines made his entry into the town through the rue Basse du Commerce, all the white and other people residing in that street, stood with the best possible countenance, in front of their dwellings and saluted him as he passed;—but he returned not the salute; it was, on the contrary, observed that he surveyed the white people with the ferocious eyes of a famished tiger. This was interpreted as being the worst of omens. The remainder of the day was, however, passed much more quietly than could have been expected; and, with the exception of some few houses, which were plundered at the out ends and skirts of the town nothing remarkable took place.

On the morrow, the 8th of March, a proclamation was promulgated with beating of drums throughout every street and lane. It was conceived in the following words:—

“By order of the Governor-General of the Island of St. Domingo: all white male inhabitants of whatever nation or country they may be natives, are commanded to appear tomorrow, the 9th of March, at eight in the morning, at the Place of Arms, for the Government to take a census of their number.

At nine o'clock, domiciliary visits shall be made by armed patrols, throughout the town, and every white man found concealed in any place, shall instantly be put to death in front of the place of his concealment.^d

A thunder bolt falling amongst a flock of bewildered and frightened sheep could not have produced a greater terror and dismay than did this proclamation amongst the white inhabitants.^d One of a few brave, but incautious young men on hearing this death-like announcement exclaimed: "If I must die, my life shall be dearly paid for!" These words were uttered in the presence of white men only, and yet before noon he and his companions, being yet unprepared, had been separately taken and murdered. This sudden execution caused a still greater consternation and panic; grim death seemed as if already staring at every white man's face. Had not these unhappy young men been betrayed? A white merchant, named Brunet, was the villain who denounced these young men; he was a white livered and envious fellow, with a pale countenance, jealous and vindictive. He had married his daughter with Gen. Ferroux, and he expected that by betraying these young men, he would be retained as a patent [licensed] merchant. . . .

On the afternoon of this day, I received a verbal message from Jeffrard.¹⁰ The bearer was, if I recollect right, Major Boyer, now the President of Haiti.^e It was conceived in these laconic words: "Commandant Borgelias (sic: Borgella) sends you his compliments. He is not here, but General Jeffrard sends you word to remain quietly at home. At eight o'clock tomorrow he will send you an officer to accompany you to the Place of Arms. Adieu!" He did not give me time to answer, and went off in a hurry.

My friend Onfroy,^f who was the only person present when this message was delivered, exclaimed, "You are saved! Ah! Borgelias! One great action will be repaid by another. But I."

These two words, *but I!* stung me to the heart. The bravest of the bravest in the French army of the West, could not appear at the review without be-

d. The gathering of the inhabitants of a town for a "census" was the customary and convenient prelude to a massacre.

e. Some years later, president of Haiti. [Jean-Pierre Boyer was president of Haiti from 1818 to 1843. See David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 60-77.]

f. Mr. Onfroy, a native of a village in the neighborhood of the city of Rouen, in France; he was then about fifty-five years of age, and a planter, a mile distant from my own estate; his temper was that of a lamb, but in danger he had the courage and magnanimity of a lion. The title of the "bravest of the bravest" was given to him for delivering alone and conducting in safety a whole regiment of Polish troops, by passing with my famous pacing horse through ambushes, six miles in length, and for his undertaking this, after several hundred men had lost their lives in the attempt.

ing pointed out to Dessalines, and instant death would have been the inevitable consequence of it. He must not appear at the review; a place of safety must be sought for him. There were between my house and the next to the west, occupied by Mr. Stacco, an Italian merchant, two high parting masonry walls, about three feet apart, that had originally been made with a covered way, to conceal contraband goods. This could be entered only by a secret door, so made as to form a part of the lower wainscot. We spent the night of the 8th and 9th in placing in this secret refuge, two mattresses and beddings; biscuits, water, wine, to last for ten days, sufficiently for three persons, with one pair of pistols, ammunition, and two swords. In this I also deposited my papers and most precious effects. Raynal alone was privy to this, and the survivor, in case of any of these three falling, should watch over the safety and property of others.

The dreaded 9th of March came at last. It was ushered in by the roar of cannon from the citadel and other forts. The several black regiments were put in motion in their respective quarters, and very soon after this they began to march by large detachments through the several streets leading to the Place of Arms, the general rendezvous. The sun, as on the preceding days, refused to show his enlivening countenance; and, as if ashamed to witness the horrors about to be perpetrated, it remained enveloped in triple folds of black clouds; for so narrow had the horizon become and such was the calm in the air above, that a whisper was echoed in several places, and the steps of the soldiery marching, as if by stealth, without music or drum beating, resounded through the stillness of the air. All the houses in the city had their fronting sides closed. The doors were opened only to let out the unhappy and half-distracted victim, who dragged himself along the street to the place of execution. I saw those who, on their way, had to pass through the Rue de Commerce. Their number increased as they went on. When they passed by my door they numbered about three hundred, most of them old men, with grey and white locks hanging down upon their shoulders; some were so weak as to be almost unable to move their legs forward, and were supported as they walked by their friends. The sight of these innocent victims wrought upon my mind the most wretched reflections; my heart began to swell, and it would have burst had I not been relieved by a torrent of tears. I had kept my door half opened to see them; they all saluted me, and this salute was the last they made to any living mortal. The moment I felt my heart overpowered by so many irresistible emotions, I closed the door and strove to subdue my feelings, ere I could conquer and wind up my mind to its usual firmness and deliberation.

A little while after this, I heard a rap at my door—I opened it. It was an

aid-de-camp from General Jeffrard and my friend Raynal, who called to accompany me to the Place of Arms. We started immediately, and took along with us my intimate friend, Mr. Barthelemy Page, and Mr. Stacco, an Italian merchant, who lived in a house next to mine.

We soon arrived at the dreaded spot, and were placed at the head of the line that had been formed of all the white men. . . . The black army was drawn up so as to form a hollow square, fronting [facing] inside, and so compact as to leave no opening, except at the north-eastern point fronting Adjutant Raynal.

The white male inhabitants formed a line three deep on the north side within the hollow square, the head resting at the north-east end. The merchants first, the doctors the second, the planters the third, and the other white men, of all professions and trades, were promiscuously arranged in the line. It was at the head of this column that my friend and myself were placed on our arrival on the spot.

About fifteen minutes after this, the eastern line of the army opened in its center, and, attended by several generals and other officers, Governor Dessalines made his appearance on foot. They were all dressed in the highest military style. The line closed again, and a strong detachment appeared, and shut the opening at the north-east point, so that there was no possibility for a single white man to effect his escape.

Dessalines, instead of commencing his review at the head of the line, walked in front, having the ranks on his left. When he reached the white men's line, he surveyed them with a ferocious look, but without uttering a word. He then made his stand at about fifteen feet distant from me, and in front of the merchants. After having viewed us for about five minutes, he then passed his right hand several times over his upper lip, took large pinches of snuff, and commenced his harangue in the following words, in the creole dialect, mixed with bad French.

*"Wous blancs de Jérémie, moue conne wous hai moue—*You white men of Jérémie, I know you hate me. I know you hated the law that made black men free. When Polverel and Sonthonax were about coming here to promulgate that law, you refused to receive them, and delivered yourselves to the British, who then took possession of La Grande Anse, and you helped them to fight the blacks and the mulattoes. But at last the English betrayed you into the hands of the mulatto Rigaud. You know well that we negroes conquered that renegade mulatto; took Aux Cayes from him, and the southwestern department. He was obliged to make his escape from the island. I then (middle of 1800) passed through your country, destroying the mulattoes, your enemies. At that time I did you no harm. I only required of you to furnish me

with money to pay my soldiers. The merchants always get into their hands all the money that is in the country. Fear made you give me what I required, but you grumbled like dogs when someone tries to wrest a bone from their mouths. Before I left you I placed black commandants in every quarter (district). I formed black companies of inspectors to compel *les citoyens nègres* i.e. the black citizens to labor more than they did before. I left with you, as your chief, my cousin Damage. Damage! I loved him more than myself! I shall be revenged upon you all for his treason. Your merchants found plenty of money to corrupt him and his soldiers. I know that you protected him afterwards and treated him well. But when he received orders from General Toussaint to cause the cannon to be fired throughout his command on the first arrival of the French army and to execute his ultimate orders,^g he trusted this secret to some of you; you flattered him and made him a traitor to his superior's orders and to his own color. Our grand scheme averted here, the French landed without trouble and without fight. I shall be revenged for this! The blood of you all shall pay for Damage's treacherous conduct." At this moment he had worked himself up to the extreme of a maniac's fury; his eyes were blood red, which Jeffrard observing, he interrupted him, and turned his attention to three of his aids-de-camp in waiting, to deliver him the census taken of the white inhabitants then on the place.

Lorette, his first aid-de-camp and secretary, read in a loud voice, "There are 1436 white men of all description, including six doctors and fifty-six merchants." Dessalines rubbed his upper lip and chin, took snuff and, with a voice resembling the howling of a famished wolf, cried out, "Cut the line from the doctors, then divide the left line into parts—surround each part by detachments so that none can escape." This maneuver was effected in less than ten minutes. This being done, there was a pause. After which he howled, "Parquez iou les tous! Parquez iou les tous!" i.e. "Put them all in the cattle fold!"—that is, the prisons. As the detachments began to move off, he advanced towards them and bid them stop. He stood a while, gazing on the whites, as if calculating on some advantage to be derived from some redeeming promises, when he exclaimed: "Moue conne qui ya blancs qui sont pas mechans. Fates vous connaitre, donne l'argent pour moue paye mes soldats. J'enverre officers a moue a la prison pour cela, et pitetre—que"—"I know there are white men who are not bad; make yourselves known: give money to pay my soldiers. I shall send my officers to the prison for it, and perhaps—that—"

g. The orders were as in the north, to kill the white inhabitants, and oppose the landing of the French. Damage was born with a most excellent heart, his humanity forbade him, and he united with the whites.

This that died on his lips. The detachments moved off towards the prisons, and he came back to his former stand opposite the merchants.

Dessalines eyed us all separately, and then appearing as one resolving on some sinister purpose, his face offered the very countenance of a tiger, and he screamed out: "Fifty-six merchants! Oh! oh! The whole island does not require so many! *Marchands d'imbats!* (Salt-fish retailers!) Why, our negroes can do better than they! I do not want such merchants!" The officers took all these out of the ranks and formed into a new line apart. The remainder were counted, and twenty-seven were still found in the first line; hereupon he cried out that he wanted "no retailer of any kind." These were taken out of the line of merchants and placed with the fish-dealers. Our line was again counted, and eighteen were found calling themselves merchants. He again said "there was too too many by half—he would keep no others but such as dealt by the cargo with foreign vessels." A new examination was made, seven were taken out, and eleven still remained in the first line. I stood ahead of the merchants trading with foreigners, for, in fact, I was the only man present who spoke English. The great crisis was approaching. Some deliberation took place among the head officers. After a few minutes passed in a dreadful suspense, Dessalines again exclaimed: "Eleven merchants are too many for such a place as this. I will keep but such of them as never owned a plantation or had a black man as his slave." At these words, Mr. Stacco, the Italian merchant, and Mr. Brunet, the latter being father-in-law to General Ferroux, who stood next to me, being overpowered by fright, fell half dead on the ground; the first died two hours afterwards, the second recovered. They were instantly removed by their protectors. After a solemn pause all the merchants were taken out of the first line. I stood alone for about five minutes, when a black officer, a colonel, came directly to me, and said to Dessalines, "I know this one—he helped defeat me at Cape Tiburon, and know, besides, that he owns three plantations." I was then placed with the condemned merchants. None remained on the first line where I had just stood alone. At this critical moment, General Jefferard stepped towards me and taking hold of my hand led me directly to Dessalines, whom he addressed thus:

"I present you an American. It is true that by heritage he had become owner of several estates; but, for all that, he is not the less an American. He is the only person here who speaks English. Besides, he saved my cousin Borgelias's life, who had it not been for him, would have been drowned by the French." Dessalines, during General Jefferard's address, looked sharp in my eyes, and then said in a loud voice, "Select an officer and twenty men as a guard for this American; and let their lives be forfeited if any harm is done

to his person or property. We need show favor to Americans, with whom alone, we at this moment have any trade."

The officer and guard were very soon selected. They led me to my house; but, ere I opened the door, I consulted with the officer, with whom I was well acquainted. It was agreed to place his men under the gallery fronting the house, to prevent anyone from breaking into it. I gave money to purchase every thing requisite to treat and feed the guard, enjoining them to keep a strict watch over this American store, as it was called. Knowing that I would be safer at Raynal's, the officer, with four men conducted me thither. Adju-tant Raynal was waiting for me; and, to take me out of the public view, he placed me in the latticed gallery, in the second story, facing the very trying scene I had left but a quarter of an hour before. From this place I could see and hear every thing without being seen.

I saw that the merchants were still in the same place and order as when I quitted them. Dessalines was then engaged with the doctors. There were among them two young and good looking doctors who had been left behind by the French army. He appeared to give them a preference, on account of their never having owned any slaves, and also because of their being *Dandere*, which means, ignorant of everything appertaining to the country. Besides these two, another excellent man, whose name was Sauvé, i.e., the saved, whom, he said, on account of his name, must be saved.

After this, a long consultation took place among the superior officers; when Dessalines, advanced towards the merchants, and said, with a loud voice, "I am willing to remit and forgive all your old sins against me, provided you all get yourselves naturalized [as] citizens of Haiti, and pay each twelve hundred dollars for the privilege of being acknowledged and protected as merchants. I allow you four days to procure the money, and when paid into the hands of Jean Jacques, the treasurer, you will appear on the fourth day, in the afternoon, with the receipt in your hands, and I shall deliver to you your certificates of naturalization." The doctors were dealt with in the same manner, except the two young French doctors, already spoken of, and Doctor Sauvé, who were let off free from taxation. Besides this, Dessalines gave a guard of five men to each of them. These soldiers were to be billeted in their houses until the money was paid.

As these fifty-nine white men were marching with their respective guards towards their home, there was brought before Dessalines a holy character, whom I had not seen at the review. It was the Reverend Father Barbier, a monk (I do not at this moment recollect the order). He was habited in the dress of his order; he had officiated as curate for the parishes of Jérémie and Donna Maria. His long and folding white serge robe and his hood, over

which hung long silver locks; together with his high stature, and seventy winters marked on his head, made his appearance highly venerable. I heard Dessalines burst into a savage laughter at the old man's face, but I could not hear what he told him, as at this moment they were moving off from the place they had occupied in front of me. This father Barbier had, by economy, accumulated a large fortune in ready money. Dessalines accompanied him to the presbytery-house, and got his money from him. The monk made his escape, and took refuge under the altar in the church. They placed a guard around to prevent his escape. Immediately after dusk, I heard the report of three guns fired at the same time, and was told that the soldiers had, by order, dragged him out from under the altar and shot him dead in the cemetery, in the middle of which the church stood.

It was about one P.M. when the army were dismissed, and sent to their respective quarters. It appeared from all that I had heard, till now, that money or death was the ultimatum. I was mistaken; money could not save; death was inevitable.

While I stood in the latticed piazza having a commanding view of the whole place, I did not observe above twenty men, colored and black, brought there through mere curiosity. All the country negroes had disappeared as soon as they delivered their loads of provisions; they would not witness the destruction of their former masters, whom they still cherished. Notwithstanding the severe trial I had just passed through, I felt the want of some nourishment; I was making my way down stairs, when I heard several voices in the apartments below, speaking about what was then occurring at the prisons. I retreated to my place of concealment; half an hour afterwards adjutant Raynal came up with a servant bringing food for me; he desired me to remain quiet in the place I was, as it would be dangerous at this moment to be seen by the soldiery; he then told me that upwards of two hundred white men, having no money to give, had already been massacred in front of the prisons, and their naked bodies thrown in the Dock at the City Wharf. That the prisons were not large enough, and that some of the prisoners, who still retained both vigor of body and mind, were struggling against the assassins; but, being unarmed, they were immediately destroyed with the bayonets and swords of the soldiers. Raynal stayed with me but a few minutes, entreating me again not to quit my place, that no one would have access to it but himself.

It was about half past three o'clock when I observed a number of officers making their way towards the prisons; I thought they were going to rescue some of the miserable victims; in less than twenty minutes I saw many of them returning with white men along with them; my heart leaped with joy at this sight; the number increased; they all took the way leading to

the dwellings of their respective prisoners, and one whom I particularly remarked was the head commercial man, named Sterling, a Frenchman, although his name proved his English origin, he was known to be rich, in consequence of which he was led on by a superior officer.^h Ere it was dark, I saw the same officers and white men returning towards the prisons. I learned, shortly after this, that these unfortunate white men, having given to their conductors all the money and jewels they had, were told they could not be left at home because of the soldiery, but must, for their safety, return to the prisons.

Night came: it covered with its black mantle such homicides and diabolical crimes as light refuses to witness, and nature abhors. And, indeed, so heinous and fiend-like were they thought by the perpetrators themselves, that they dreaded to be seen, and were ashamed to commit them in the light of day.

It was half past nine and in the silence of the night, when four hundred wretched innocent white men who, on this afternoon, had given up all they possessed to save their lives, now stripped of all their clothes, their arms fastened behind their backs, and tied two by two with cords, headed by black *sapeurs*, with large axes on their shoulders, and accompanied by a black regiment with bayonets and swords in their hands, were seen marching, or, to speak more properly, were seen dragged along, through the place, lighted by numerous torches. They made a halt in front of Dessalines's headquarters for him to behold the white victims, offered as a sacrifice to propitiate the promised favors of his sanguinary god, Wilberforce.ⁱ So near to my place of refuge was this appalling and heart-rending scene occurring, that I heard the piercing cries of despair, the lamentations, the agonies of death, and the harsh rebukes and vociferations of the soldiery. Then I heard a voice ordering them off. They took the street leading into the great road along the western coast. Thus closed the ever memorable 9th of March, 1804.

h. This Mr. Sterling, as I learned from him afterward, was led to his house. He unburied his money and gave five hundred doubloons. The officer, having received this, was trying to force him back to prison, when the colored woman who lived with him took his part; they wrestled and he made his escape. He remained concealed about sixty-five days, and ultimately arrived safe in Baltimore, where I met with him.

i. They were dragged half a mile beyond Lanoux's fountain and country seat. They stopped on the north side of the road, opposite the block house on the southern hill. They began by placing their heads upon blocks of wood, and they decapitated them with the *sapeurs'* axes; but this requiring too much time the regiment fell upon them with the bayonets and swords; none escaped. After which their bodies were thrown one above the other so as to form a mound of dead bodies, for the country negroes, as Dessalines said, to look at their masters and no longer depend on them. I had these details from three colored officers who followed in the hope of reaching their fathers, but could not succeed.

The sun rose on the 10th of March, but not brighter than it had done for several days. It seemed that this great luminary of the world, that beneficent and visible eye of the Supreme Being, refused, as an unerring warning of his wrath and displeasure, to lend his light, or view those horrible scenes of human butcheries. I shall offer here no reflection, not even to portray my feelings. The reader is now present with me; he has already seen some of the horrible and inhuman bloody effects of Wilberforce's regenerating principles; but even these are nothing in comparison with what remains for him to witness; and if he be an honest and sensible man; or if his hands have not as yet been imbrued in the crimsoned blood of a father, a mother, sisters, brothers, friends and neighbors, I leave him to make his own thoughts and reflections;—but, if he is a monster, now guilty of homicide, or thirsting, as the abolitionists do, for the commission of all those heinous crimes, let him enjoy his bloody triumph, and revel for joy over the bodies of so many human victims!

Immediately after breakfast, I resumed my seat in the latticed piazza. I observed many white men moving from the prisons, accompanied by black and colored officers, or returning there, as on the preceding afternoon. This continued until about four o'clock, when my attention was diverted by a new scene. I saw passing close in front of my retreat a mulatto, leading a white man, and a young and delicate white female hanging on the mulatto's left arm—she was begging, crying, entreating him to spare her husband's life. I recognized her; it was Mrs. D——, a young and rich heiress, and her husband. They had been but eighteen months united in wedlock. I followed them with my eyes, and saw them stop under a tree in front of the commandant of the place's quarters. Mr. D—— was left under the tree, surrounded by soldiers, and I saw her led into the house by the mulatto. I was intent in observing the *denouement* of this painful occurrence, when after about fifteen minutes, I perceived a man rising up in the air under a tree. It was Mr. D——, whom they had hung to a limb, and who appeared struggling with death. At this moment, the soldiers drew back, as if to make room for some person approaching. It was Mrs. D——, held by the arm by the same fiendish mulatto, who was pointing to her husband, hanging dead from the tree. Piercing shrieks were heard sounding through the whole square place. She fell to the ground: they carried her away. I heard, afterwards, that this mulatto monster had promised to rescue her husband, if she would listen to his proposals. She submitted—and then the signal was given to run up her husband. Horrible! horrible!!

I was in a great agitation of mind and my heart was struck with horror at the odious scene I had just beheld, when my attention was attracted to an

other place, by a rush of people hurrying towards a building constructed in the form of a block house, with circular galleries, and which I knew to be the residence of Colonel Gaston. The number of colored people pressing forward was very great, and continually increasing, and there appeared to be great demonstrations of passion, anger, gesticulations and threats. The drums at Dessalines's quarters beat to arms; patrols were instantly started toward different points; they all marched in great haste, and were entirely composed of blacks, with black officers. I could not divine the cause of this unexpected commotion, nor what could have given occasion for the threats apparently passing between the mulattos and the blacks. I remained perplexed with my own conjectures for more than two hours. At last, an aide-de-camp from General Jefferard was introduced into my retreat, by Adjutant Raynal. The General was sending me word that he had intended to pay me a visit on that afternoon, but owing to the sad event which had just taken place, he would delay his visit for two or three days. I shall here recount what I was [told] by the above named officers concerning the cause of the movements I had observed.

Jérémie had a great many respectable and rich families of colored people, who had taken no part thus far in the massacre, and Gaston, who was beloved and highly esteemed by the white, colored and black people, had, on pretense of sickness, kept himself closely confined in his house. Dessalines, who would have those colored men to dip their hands also in the blood of the white men, in order that they might not say afterwards they were innocent, and thus lay all the murders perpetrated on the shoulders of the blacks alone. These remarks had been made at table, at head quarters. After dinner, Dessalines sent orders to Gaston to keep himself prepared to attend personally the execution of the white men, who were to be butchered that evening. Gaston sent back a reply in the following words:—"Tell Governor Dessalines, that I feel too unwell to leave my chamber;—tell him, besides, that he knows me, ere this, to be ready at all times to fight an armed enemy, but I cannot reconcile my ideas of honor and bravery with the murdering, in cold blood, of men who have done us no harm,—men in a forlorn situation,—prisoners and disarmed: tell him that I will not be a murderer!"

This message was delivered, word for word, to Dessalines, who flew in a rage and ordered forthwith a detachment to take Gaston, and bring him into his presence, to have him instantly shot for disobedience. This detachment marched in haste to secure him; but the doors and windows in the basement story were closed and fastened. Gaston, undaunted, appeared on the balcony, spoke to the detachment, and ended his address by saying—"I will show you, and I order you to report to Governor Dessalines that I rather die

by my own hand than be concerned in, or be guilty of any murder." He held a pistol in his right hand, pointed it to his heart, and shot himself dead.

This extraordinary suicide, produced by such a cause, and at such a moment, made a revolution in the colored peoples' minds. A magnanimous example was here given to them; it exalted their hearts, and made them proud of having had among them a man of such moral courage. The presence of the black army compelled them to stifle their feelings; they were obliged to quail; but the confidence heretofore existing vanished; suspicion was engendered: Dessalines continued to be obeyed; but hatred and disgust filled the hearts of his colored attendants, and the mass of the colored people.

About two hours after dark, I heard a noise in the apartment at the foot of the stairs. My name was distinctly articulated. It appeared as if some opposition was made to prevent any one seeing me. Their entreaties, however, prevailed. The outer door of the apartment they were in having been closed, so that no one else should be present but Raynal, I was invited to come down. The persons in waiting were my freed-man Jean Pierre and a Captain Page, the colored commandant of the Abricots [les Abricots]. The latter, with whom I was unacquainted, had, on the representation of my former slaves, and the entreaties of the colored men of my district, been prevailed upon to come unobserved through the night to take me into the country, fearing, they said, that in spite of my present protectors, I might in some way or other be betrayed into the hands of assassins. They had brought with them my famous pacing horse and clothes to disguise me. They were in a hurry to return, lest the commandant's absence from his post should be observed. I thanked them both, as I ought, for their generous marks of attachment and devotion; and upon my assuring them that I felt no uneasiness for my personal safety—a thing which they doubted, and which they made me repeat several times—they shook hands with me, retired, and instantly rode off.

Overwhelmed with the labor of my own mind, I retired up stairs, and sought for some rest by laying without undressing, upon a cot bed. I had already fallen into a doze, when sudden loud screams started me up. Cries of murder, defiance, despair, rage, and vociferations, intermixed with the groans and lamentations of the wounded and the dying, resounded through the whole place. I got up from my couch with a heart ready to burst. I made an effort to reach my window through the lattice, and saw upwards of four hundred white men, quite naked, dragged forcibly on the rough stones, by soldiers, lighted by innumerable torches. . . . They stopped in front of Dessalines's quarter (thirty paces from the place I stood). Must I relate what

I viewed? I must; but I will withhold their names. I saw several fine and well brought up colored young men, who, to save their own lives, were forced to plunge their swords in the hearts of those whom they used to call by the endearing names father, brothers, uncles, friends, and whom they, in vain, had made their utmost to protect and save! I hid my eyes with my hands. I looked again; I saw the blood gushing out of the inflicted wounds. I could see no longer; I fainted and fell. I knew not how long I remained insensible. When I began to recover, the first motions I made were to carry my hand over my heart, as if to feel my wounds; but as one who being deceived by a dream of personal danger and death, seeks, on his awaking, to feel his body, in order to ascertain whether he is really alive or dead. After a while, I struggled to reach my couch, I felt very weak and exhausted. I was overpowered by sleep and remained unconscious until next morning at eight o'clock. . . .

As one may well imagine, I was deterred by the preceding night's executions, and their effects upon me, from prying again into the nocturnal deeds of the assassins. I heard, on the next morning, that almost all the miserable beings that had, for four days been confined in the prisons, had ceased to exist.

In the morning of this day, the 12th of March, there was a general stillness; little or no noise was heard until about nine o'clock, and indeed one might have supposed the town to be uninhabited; but at this time black men loaded with sacks full of money and accompanied by officers, began to pass in great numbers on their way to Dessalines's headquarters; this reminded me of the merchants' day of payment for their taxes of twelve hundred dollars each. These unhappy men had, previous to the passing events, hidden their treasures in safe places: but unluckily most of them had hid or buried their all in the same place. The guard placed over them watched them so closely that they could not stir without being followed by some of them. . . . The hope of saving one's life clings to a man even on the very verge of his dissolution. They opened their treasures—the whole was wrested from them; and they were left to mourn over their departed means of support. Upward of five hundred thousand dollars in gold and silver were carried to head quarters. . . .

About noon I heard below stairs the commandant of the place enquiring after me. I was called down. With a Mr. Maas, a colored man, who spoke a few broken English words, appeared a good looking tall gentleman. It was Mr. William Gordon, of Baltimore, the supercargo of [a] vessel that had been captured in sight of the town the day before. On his request, and not knowing what was then passing on shore, he had desired the captors to land him

on the coast, he had made his way to the town; and owed his safety to this simple fact, that he could not speak a single word in the French language, and called himself an American.

The commandant desired me to inquire about his business, the place he came from, and how he had come to the island. I translated for him in French all the particulars stated by Mr. Gordon. He appeared to be satisfied, left him with me, and went to make his report to Dessalines. A few minutes after this, an aid-de-camp from head quarters, came with Mr. Maas and requested me to inform Mr. Gordon that Mr. Maas, on account of his speaking a little English, was charged to lodge and enter him at his house until further orders.

To tell how Mr. Gordon felt, I shall not certainly attempt to describe— suffice it to state, that his countenance betrayed great uneasiness and anxiety. Before he left me, I advised him to make no enquiries from any one, to keep his mouth closed, to express neither surprise nor opinion, to eat, drink, and sleep as much [as] he thought proper; but what pleased him most was the assurance that his life was safe. This soothed his apprehensions, and he retired with his host.

On this afternoon I received General Jeffrard's visit; he was very friendly to me, and refused to hear my thanks. There was no longer any necessity for me, he said, to keep myself out of sight, provided I did not expose myself by going out during the night.

On this assurance, and accompanied by Adjutant Raynal, I went to my dwelling house and store. We were anxious to see Onfroy, and calm his mind. The poor old man was well, although emaciated by the tribulations of his own mind; our presence relieved him. We related to him a part of the horrors that had taken place, but concealed the more dreadful scenes, the recital of which might have preyed too severely upon his heart. We said enough to reconcile him to his lonesome place, and the necessity we were in of continuing him in it until Dessalines had left the town. After having embraced him we again secured the secret door, shut the house, and left in front of it the guard placed there to watch over and protect the only American store in the place.

We had hardly returned to the square at Raynal's, when I saw Dessalines on horseback, in full uniform, attended by his staff of Generals, crossing the Place of Arms and going toward the prisons. They were absent about an hour.

Early in the evening, Mr. Lorette, Dessalines's aid-de-camp and secretary, whom I have already introduced to the reader, called on me; I had left my retreat and sat in the large basement apartment. He unbosomed himself to

me, and told me things which I do not like to repeat, for reasons better understood by many nameless persons still living; but this I can say, he had accompanied Dessalines on his excursion, and had observed him very closely. When they entered the prisons, they viewed many corpses, besmeared with gore; in every apartment, the floor was, two inches deep, incrustated with coagulated blood; the walls were dark crimsoned with the gushes of human blood. Having viewed this slaughter-house of human bodies, they had again mounted their horses and had ridden to the place on the western road, where upwards of 400 bodies lay heaped on one another in two high mounds.¹² The blood flowing from beneath had made an issue crossing the road, and formed a bar of coagulated blood 40 feet wide. The negroes from the country would not stamp their feet on that blood; they had practised a by-path, reaching the block-houses on the southern hill, and thereby manifested their horror at Dessalines's deeds. This bloody chieftain expressed his displeasure for the love the negroes of Jérémie still held for their white masters. However, addressing his generals, he declared himself perfectly satisfied with the massacre already committed, and added that he would, on the next day, proclaim an armistice, promising life to them who had been fortunate enough to escape unhurt; but, added Lorette, do not believe in this declaration. . . .

Mr. Lorette inquired of me whether it was true, as he had been told, that the present government owed me for provisions and clothing furnished to the army stationed in the place. I answered in the affirmative, observing at the same time, that I did not think the present moment a favorable one for such a demand. He replied, "Draw a petition, state the facts, accompany them with the accounts, audited by the commissary of the revenues. Dessalines will immediately give orders for you to be paid in coffee, in order to show and furnish evidence to the Americans, through you, that he will faithfully pay all that will be purchased by them from his government."

I labored through the night to have my petition ready for the morrow in the morning. I experienced considerable difficulty in wording my demands. However, finally I drafted it in such a manner, as by making two paragraphs and leaving a space between them, I might, after the petition should be returned with the necessary superior orders, fill the blank so as to make its contents appear both an order for payment of what was due to me, and also a passport to absent myself from the island to go to Baltimore, and there make arrangements with my principals, after which I was to return. Success crowned my scheme!

On the morning of the 13th of March, Mr. Lorette called on me, took my petition and went to deliver it to Dessalines. He returned in less than half an hour, and informed me that the Governor wished to see me immediately,

and ere he began any other business. I felt some rather strong pulsations at my heart. However, I summoned sufficient resolution to appear unmoved. As we passed through the thick ranks of soldiers leading to his quarters (for he kept a guard, five hundred men strong to close all the avenues to his person), I heard the soldiers enquiring of each other in creole—*Who-i-il iou mene Americain la?* i.e., “Where are they taking the American?” This gave a new impulse to my resolution; for I said to myself, if these soldiers take me at first sight to be an American, Dessalines will likewise do the same; and indeed it occurred to me instantly, that I ought to speak with him in the creole language, in which I was not proficient, and spoke it as badly as Americans do after a year’s residence in the country.

Having ascended the stairs, I was ushered into his presence. He was undressed and wrapped in a morning gown, and seated on a sofa. He got up on my coming in and desired me to sit at the other end of the same. He commenced by telling me “that what he had done, and I had witnessed was to revenge the wrongs Bonaparte had done to him and the colony.” He instantly changed the subject, and said: “But I love the Americans;—to prove this, I have already given orders to pay your claim, even this day, if you are prepared to receive the coffee. I require you to write to America, and make it publicly known, that all contracts entered into with my government shall, henceforth be faithfully fulfilled, and as fast as the coffee shall come down from the mountains.” He again changed the drift of the conversation, and said: “You Americans bring to this country nothing but fish, pork, beef, flour, rice and some dry goods; we are glad to exchange those things for coffee; but we also want gunpowder, shot, muskets, swords and all kinds of ammunition; and above all some strongly built and fast sailing vessels, pierced for cannon, to guard our coasts and protect them against the French privateers. Write, write to your friends—let them send all those things whatever may be the cost, I will pay them well and make their fortunes, &c.”

One may well imagine that no man was ever more disposed and ready to make fine promises than I was at this moment. I engaged to surpass even his most sanguine expectations, and to have, very soon, vessels loaded with every thing he desired. After this he ordered a stand to be placed before him. The petition on which Lorette had already written his order was handed to him, and he signed his name to it.^j He then handed it to me, saying, “You see that I don’t deceive you.” I bowed and thanked him for this, as well as for the protection he had so signally given me; after which I withdrew, attended by the same officer, who, on having reached Raynal’s house, wrote, at my re-

j. By dint of practice he had learned to sign his name, but he could not read.

quest, with perfect good humor, over Dessalines’s signature: “Voulons que la presente lui serve de passe-port pour s’en aller, et de lettre de sureté à son retour.” i.e., “It is our will that the present document may be used by him as a passport for his departure, and as a letter of safety on his return.” Mr. Lorette then advised me to wait until Dessalines had left town ere I required the payment of the coffee: he also intimated that General Ferroux was unfriendly to me and should not be apprised of this order, as he might require some explanation from Governor Dessalines, which, perchance, might turn to my disadvantage. After Lorette had left me, I filled the place left in blank, and thus found myself in possession of a very valuable document.

I felt somewhat elated with my success; but this elastic state of my mind was very short in its duration. I had very soon to deplore and weep for the destruction of several friends and acquaintances of mine among the merchants. The proclamation of pardon, mentioned before, was made at eleven o’clock in the forenoon. It enjoined on all those who had been left unhurt, to appear in front of head quarters at three o’clock of this same day, to receive individually their certificates of naturalization.

Mr. Lorette, on the preceding evening, as stated before, gave me to understand that no trust ought to be placed in this promise of pardon. This had induced me to send word to several friends, advising them to remain concealed at home, lest they should be betrayed in some new snares.

At the appointed hour, I took again my stand in the latticed gallery, to observe, unseen, what would take place. There appeared eighty-four or -five merchants and others. They were drawn up in line and counted; after which they were taken up by pairs, and in turns into Dessalines’s presence, for him—as I was told afterwards—to frighten them out and obtain more money, if they had any left. This lasted until it was nearly dark, when, suddenly, the soldiers in front of them wheeled about, surrounding them and commenced the slaughter. I rushed back into my apartment and closed the door to avoid hearing their cries of agony. . . .

The 14th of March appeared like a day of general mourning. All the houses were closed, and although a dead silence seemed to pervade the streets, yet every one fancied he heard the air resounding with secret murmurs. This was undoubtedly a mere fancy of the mind, and yet it produced, in fact, a general excitement.

Some uneasiness was manifest at head quarters. It was reported that a large number of colored men had got into town by stealth. Upwards of 2500 men, without the beating of drums, gathered in front of Dessalines’s quarters, and were there kept under arms, ready to act. After dark, a large number of horses were also brought thither. This painful state of suspense lasted

until midnight, when, suddenly, they loaded all the horses, and, at 1 o'clock, past midnight, Dessalines moved off, attended by his most confidential friends and protected by 2500 men, who drove in the centre eighty-seven pack-horses and mules, loaded with gold and silver, the spoils of the murdered white inhabitants.¹³

When it became known, early in the morning of the 15th, that Dessalines and his bloody satellites had left the town, there was an indescribable exhibition, a maniacal exultation of joy; the houses were thrown open, and women of all colors, with dishevelled hair, were seen dancing and cutting pranks, as if they had escaped from some madhouse; crying and laughing by turns; and then heaping execrations on the heads of the assassins; but as there were yet one thousand black soldiers stationed in the town, it was thought proper to suppress these public demonstrations; by sending patrols to command silence.

Dessalines had taken with him the former commandant of the place, a mulatto, and left a stout black man, with whom I was acquainted, to fill the same office. Raynal was appointed as his adjutant. This black man knew not how to read, consequently he must depend upon his adjutant to be informed of all the orders sent to his quarter. I rejoiced at this change, for then I would be apprised every thing in time to counteract any murderous measure.

On this day I left Raynal's quarter, and took again possession of my house and store. The guard placed in front was dismissed. Mr. William Gordon came to live with me. I waited till night, and when after the front door was closed, I liberated my old friend Onfroy. He emerged from his hiding place as a man who, having been several years entombed, would unexpectedly rise from silent death—for he could hardly believe what he was told. A few days had made such dreadful changes, operated so disastrous miracles, that, like the six brothers of the city of Ephesus, he thought he had slept for several hundred years. His friends were all gone. He enquired for this, for that, for those—and we answered, they have all departed. His surprise cannot be expressed; he was overwhelmed with the horrible tidings, and shed torrents of tears. (42–55)

CHAPTER 19

The Story of the Last French Survivors in Saint-Domingue

The Histoire des Mesdemoiselles de Saint-Janvier: Les deux seules blanches conservées à Saint-Domingue (The story of the Saint-Janvier girls, the only two white women saved in Saint-Domingue) purports to be the story of two white girls who were hidden by black rescuers after their parents had been killed in the massacres ordered by Dessalines in 1804. Attributed to an otherwise unknown Mlle de Palaiseau, the work was published in Paris in 1812. Some critics have read it as a novel rather than a true story, but the reviewer for the leading Paris newspaper of the time, the Journal de l'Empire, insisted that "it is no novel I present to the public, it is a story true in every detail," and a number of the persons mentioned in the book did exist. The black military officer Diakué, who rescues the two girls, may well be the same as the military officer Diaquoi, mentioned as being sympathetic to the whites in Descourtilz's narrative (see chapter 14). The story refers to a French diplomatic official, Félix Beaujour, who supposedly aided the two girls after they reached New York; he is listed in the New York City almanac for the period as the French consul general in Philadelphia. In New York, the girls were supposedly indentured to a French dressmaker named Mme Beuze; the same New York almanac lists a Beuze who ran a "musical and French drawing academy" in the city.¹

The story recounted in the *Histoire des Mesdemoiselles de Saint-Janvier* corresponds to the known historical facts about the 1804 massacres. Like some of the other whites who remained on the island after Rochambeau's withdrawal, the girls' father had thought that his friendly relations with members of the black population would protect him. Instead, he was imprisoned with other white men and then killed, leaving his wife and their two daughters defenseless. The account de-