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THE

WIT AND WISDOM

OF THE

HAYTIANS.

BY

JOHN BIGELOW.

NEW YORK:
SCRIBNER & ARMSTRONG.
1877.

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It was my fortune to pass a portion of the winter of 1854 in the island of Hayti, while it was still under the imperial sway of the late Faustin I. My own country, at that time, was beginning to be seriously occupied with the slavery problem, and one of my objects in visiting a place then difficult of access, and little frequented by tourists, was to inform myself personally of the condition and prospects of this struggling little empire which had successfully defied one of the best armies of the first Napoleon, and which for more than half a century had managed to maintain its political independence without the

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alliance or even the sympathy of any foreign state.

It is no part of my present purpose to set forth the results of my observations in Hayti farther than to give some account of the most interesting, if not the only truly indigenous and original product of the Haytian civilization of which I was fortunate enough to find any trace. As a stranger in cordial sympathy with the Haytian in his determination to maintain the political independence of his country, I naturally sought to bring away with me all the evidence I could find there, of the capacity of the African race for self-government.

The Haytian depends for his livelihood exclusively upon the products of the soil, the air, and the water. He manufactures nothing for export. With the richest sugar lands he imports all his fine sugar; he smokes cigars made of Kentucky tobacco, and eats salt fish cured in New England. Though I searched carefully I found nothing to bear away with me as a trophy of Hay-

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tian civilization that was wrought with Haytian hands, or was the fruit of Haytian industry.

What I did find, however, that was essentially Haytian, and as much the specialty of this island as the De Brie cheese, or the Valenciennes lace, or the Jersey cows, or Florentine mosaics are the specialties of the places of which they bear the name, were the proverbs with which the creole population are accustomed to garnish their conversation.

Proverbial forms of expression are used quite freely by all classes, but most abound in the mouths of the humble and unlettered peasants, who not only can not read themselves, but who probably never had an ancestor who could. To them they hold the place of books and libraries, in which they hoard up and minister to each other the wisdom and experience of ages.

Many of their proverbs struck me as so novel and so finely flavored with the soil of the island, or with the customs of its pecu-

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liar and simple-minded people, that I was tempted to make a memorandum of them. My interest in the subject attracting the attention of several intelligent Haytians of my acquaintance, they were good enough to ssist me iu enlarging my collection.

In this work I was under special obligations to Mr. B. P. Hunt, of Philadelphia, then the head of a large commercial house in Port-au-Prince, who to a general culture of high order added a familiarity with the history of Hayti and with the peculiarities of its people which is possessed by no other person to my knowledge. His collection of books relating to the Antilles is the most complete in this country, perhaps in the world. He has been good enough to increase my manifold obligations to him by looking over the following collection and making some notes the value of which I have taken the liberty of sharing with my readers.

A majority of the proverbs in common use among the Haytians had evidently cōme from the Old World, many, of course, from

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France — not the least valuable relic of French domination in the island — while others, and to me the more interesting portion, were obviously indigenous, and such as reflected the sentiments likely to be uppermost in the minds of people who were or had been bondmen. Were any apology needed for inviting the reader's attention to these specimens of the proverbial literature of the Haytians (if the colloquialisms of a people who neither read nor write may be called a literature), it will be found, I trust, in the fact that they are the highest expression of the purely intellectual activity of this people that exists, and are unquestionably the most interesting and characteristic production of their beautiful but very unfortunate island.

Victor Hugo, in one of his youthful productions, which, though now pretty much forgotten, predicted his literary eminence,[1] seized very successfully this feature of Haytian civilization. It has also attracted the

[1] *Bug Jargal.*

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attention of most foreigners who have written about this island. Pamphile de la Croix says that "Toussaint L'Ouverture, like all men who reflect much, but with whom education has not varied the language of genisu," had favorite sentences, which he often used. "I have frequently found in his correspondence," he says, "the original apologue which he used to excuse his refusals to spend money. 'Money,' he would often say, 'is an evil spirit; as soon as you touch it it disappears. Many precautions are required in opening its coffers.'"

"In prostrating me," he said, after his arrest by General Le Clerc, "they have only thrown down the tree of liberty in San Domingo. It will yet repel them with its roots, which are deep and numerous."

When Toussaint burned Cape Haytian, to prevent its occupation by Bonaparte's army, he is reported to have used in his justification an old French proverb thus Haytianized: *Pas capable faire omlet sans casser zef.*—

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One can't make an omelet without breaking the egg.[1]

The late Emperor Faustin I, more commonly known by his family name of Soulouque, whose parents were both brought as slaves from Africa, was much addicted to the use of proverbs. A friend of mine once heard him caution a rogue who, for some service to his majesty, had been provided with an office in which he failed to give entire satisfaction, by using a proverbial locution at least as old as the days of Richelieu. *Mon fils, déplumez l'oie sans faire crier.*— *My son, pluck the goose without making it scream*, another form of an equally felicitous exhortation to moderation in the exercise of power, of Latin extraction, Shear the sheep; don't skin it.

The following apologue, reported to me by a Haytian merchant who chanced to hear

[1] It has always been a matter of controversy whether Toussaint really did burn the Cape on the arrival of Le Clerc's expedition. He persistently denied it, but Madiou and most of the Haytian historians believe that it was burnt by his orders, and that he was justified in giving

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it, is singularly characteristic of the way events which impress the imagination of these people — I may say, perhaps, all Africans — are translated by them into abstract symbols:

In 1830 a Spanish frigate arrived in the harbor of Port-au-Prince to protest against the Haytian occupation of the eastern or Spanish part of the island — now usually known as San Domingo — which Boyer, the then president of Hayti, had already held for some nine years without opposition.

The old *garde-magasin*, or store porter, of my informant, who had been a soldier in the war for Haytian independence, and who had been told and believed that the Spanish frigate at anchor before him in the offing had been sent to conquer Hayti and reduce her again to colonial subjugation, as he sat upon a stick of logwood and looked

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them. Old Mr. Tassy of Cape Haytian, who had held office under Toussaint, and who quoted this proverb to me in 1866, with the addition of, "as Toussaint said when he burned the Cape," was evidently of this opinion.— *Hunt*.

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out upon the vessel with an air compounded of pity and contempt, began to soliloquize in this wise:

"*Houn! avla za fait trop fort. Lion soti outi li soti; li vini pou devorer zos. Li tourné li nan toute sens, li pas capabe queté boute zos. Chien tou tê tombé sous zo li; te mordé li jousque lis bouqué; li bligé allé chemin li tou. Avla pauvre poule soti la bas et li cröe li capabe fair quichose avec zos. Cé trop fort.*"[1]

My informant, who chanced to overhear the old negro, asked him to explain his strange soliloquy.

"*Main oui, monché,*" replied the old soldier. "*Ou pas trouvé ça trop fort? Comment! Anglais vina pou pran pays la; nous lê batié Anglais. Français te vini tou; nous baie Français nion caille yo pas te jamain blie. Avla pau-*

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[1] "Now isn't that too much? The lion he came and tried to eat the bone. After turning it over every way, he had to leave it. Then the dog fell on the bone; he gnaws away on it till he is tired, and then he goes his way also. And now here comes a miserable chicken, and fancies she can do something with the bone. That is too much."

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vre Pagnol, qui vlé fair ça Anglais et pi Français pas tê capabe."[1]

The man whose private meditations took such shapes, though he had never read a book, nor, indeed, talked much with those who had, must have possessed an understanding and an imagination not to be despised, and when alone, at least, must have

[1] "Why yes, sir. Don't you find this too much? The English came to take our country; we beat the English. Then the French came; we gave them a skinning they will never forget. And now comes this miserable Spaniard, who has got it into his head that he can succeed where the English and French have both failed."

A person familiar with the French language will have little difficulty in understanding the text of the old porter's discourse, and other specimens of Haytian *patois* which are to follow, though a few explanations will render the task less difficult.

The article *un, une*, is pronounced *nion*, as *nion caille* for *une caille*, *nion poule* for *une poule*.

The personal pronouns *je, tu, el* are *mo, to, ly;* and for the possessives, *mon, ton, son*, the Haytian says, *à moue, à toue, à li*, which, instead of preceding the nouns as in French, follow them, thus, *chien à moue*, instead of *mon chien*.

Z is frequently prefixed to nouns in the singular number, beginning with a vowel, as *zos* for *l'os, zami* for *l'ami*, but more frequently takes the place of the plural article, as *z'œufs* for *les œufs*.

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dwelt in pretty good society. Who is the poet or the statesman who could have put the patriotic Haytian's case more effectively in as many words? and what strikes one in these days of fierce partisanship is the art and majesty with which the picture is ab-

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Conjunctive and demonstrative pronouns, instead of coming, as in French, between the person and the verb, usually follow the verb; for example, *pauvre poule li crõe li capabe*, instead of *se crõe; yo prend li*, instead of *on l'a pris; allez voir lion la*, instead of *allez voir le lion.*

The present infinitive or participle passive is used for the present indicative, as *mo manger*, instead of *je mange.*

The imperfect indicative is formed by placing *tê* before the participle passive, as *chien tê tombé sous zos*, instead of *chien tombait sur l'os; Francais pas tê capabe*, instead of *le Francais n'était pas capable.* The participle is used to express any past tense instead of inflecting the verb. *Pouvoir*, the verb, is always rendered by *capable*, or as it is pronounced, *capabe. Mo pas capabe faire*, instead of *je ne puis pas le faire.* The present indicative is the only tense of the verb *vouloir* in general use among the Haytians, and that is pronounced *vlé.*

The negative *pas* precedes instead of following the verb, as *mo pas connais* for *je ne sais pas.*

Baie is used in the sense of *donner*, as *baie si ca* for *donnez lui cela.* So *baie veni* is used for *apporter*, and *baie allé* for *ôter.*

Gagner is the Haytian *avoir*, and does more service,

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stracted from whatever is local or savors of mere individual or private grievance, and lifted up to the level of universal truth and justice. The gods of Homer did not color the tales of their grievances with so little of personal and purely selfish passion.

I have said that many of the proverbs most current in Hayti are such as could only have originated or be popular among slaves or a people inured to oppression. I might perhaps go a little farther, and say that none are current among them that would be out of place on the lips of a slave. Till their emancipation every Haytian might have said, in the language of an old Spanish poet, "When I was born I wept, and every day I live tells me why."

It has been observed that proverbs begin

I think, than any other verb in his vocabulary. Harvey, in his *Sketches of Hayti*, gives the following sketch of its catholicity. An Englishman who had asked a negro to lend him a horse received the following reply:

"Monché, mo pas gagné choual, main mo connais qui gagné li; si li pas gagné li, li faut mo gagné li pour vous gagné."

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to appear when man begins to suffer and to envy; he then seeks consolation in his misery by laughing at his oppressors. In this sense proverbs have been poetically termed the tears of humanity. It is certain that the people who have been most dependent upon the caprice of their fellow-creatures have been, in all ages, most addicted to the use of proverbs, and for an obvious reason. In the form of a general truth we may give vent to the bitterest personal feeling without making ourselves responsible for its personal application.

But without presuming to offer or discuss any new theories in regard to the origin or currency of proverbs, I will content myself with laying before my readers such of my collection as are most unequivocally of pure Haytian, or at least of African, extraction, leaving aside the much larger number which have reached the island from other lands in the ordinary commerce of civilization, and which, as well as some of these, may no doubt be found in other collections.

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Though a little less numerous than Solomon's, the proverbs here submitted will have at least this quality in common with those of the wisest of sovereigns, that they will be found "to speak of trees, of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."

I.

D'ABORD VOUS GUETTÉ[1] POUX DE BOIS MANGÉ CANARI, CALEBASSE PAS CAPABE PREND PIED.

When you see the wood-louse eat the earthen jar, the calabash cannot be expected to resist.

The foam or spittle of the wood-lice is such a powerful solvent that it makes an impression even upon iron. They are called wood-lice because they feed upon soft wood, and as soon as they have gained the top of a house, the owner must immediately take measures to provide another roof. They also make great havoc among books and

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[1] Corruption of *voir*, one of the few words in common use differing widely from the French.

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linen. No chest is tight enough to keep them out.[1]

The calabash is a vegetable of the gourd species, which is susceptible of being hollowed out, and is one of the most universal utensils of the Haytian *ménage*. Of course it has no pretensions to resist an enemy to which an earthen vessel would succumb.

This proverb teaches us that when the educated, the wealthy, the well connected, the lawgivers of state and society, succumb to vice or to superiòr force of any kind, or betray a lack of courage or judgment or skill, we must not expect the unlettered, the poor, the obscure and dependent, to be more firm or efficient.

One will hardly fail to remark here a servile recognition of inferiority and irresponsible helplessness.

There seems to be a logical as well as a physiological connection between the foregoing proverb and this which follows:

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[1] *Natural and Civil History of the French Dominions in North and South America*, by T. Jeffreys, p. 168.

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II.

D'ABORD VOUS GUETTÉ POUX DE BOIS MANGÉ BOUTEILLE, CROQUEZ CALEBASSE VOUS HAUT.

When you see the wood-louse eat the bottles, hang your calabash high.

The former is an invocation of charity toward those who fall into temptation, and this suggests precautions to be taken against falling again. If you find yourself inclined to any vice, try and put yourself beyond its reach, avoid exposing yourself to its temptations, eschew society and amusements which weaken your power or disposition to resist it, following in this respect the counsel of Niebuhr in the choice of books, that it is best not to read books in which you make the acquaintance of the devil.

And again, whatever is precious to you, be it your sense of God's presence with those who try to do His will, your respect for His word, your faith in prayer, hang it high; that is, cultivate a respect for it not only in yourself, but in others; place it where no

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enemy can see it without looking up, nor reach it without ascending.

Here is another of the same family:

III.

PRAVETTE PAS JAMAIN GAGNÉ RAISON DEVANT POULE.

The cockroach never wins its cause when the chicken is judge.

This is the same plea for the weak against the strong and aggressive which the immortal slave of Phrygia so forcibly presented in his fables of "The Wolf and the Lamb" and "The Council of Animals to stay the Pestilence" some five and twenty centuries ago.[1]

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[1] Hens feed on cockroaches in the West Indies to such an extent as to make the yolks of their eggs pale, thin and at times, more or less bitter, just as our hen's eggs are affected in the "locust year" by a similar course of feeding. This is the type slave proverb of the West Indies because it expresses, more strongly than any other, the relation of weakness and dependence on one side, and force and tyranny on the other which existed between the slaves and their masters. It is the commonest negro proverb in Martinique. When, in 1845, the chamber of deputies in France was discussing the question of slavery in the colonies, and proposed a plan by which a slave could redeem himself by an appeal to the colonial magis-

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IV.

NE QUE COUTEAU CONNAIT QUIOR À YAMME.

It is only the knife that knows the heart of the yam.

Cultivate a healthy distrust of appearances; profit by the lessons taught through trials and temptations which, like a knife penetrate to the very heart, putting all artifice and conventionality at defiance, and bring to light qualities of character before unsuspected.

In this latter sense the Haytians use an-

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trates, Rouillat de Cussac, a Martinique lawyer, told the deputies that in this case the slave would repeat to them *leur proverb le plus habituel.* "Ravet pas teni raison devant poulé." It has always been in use in Trinidad, which was both a French and Spanish island before it was English. The negroes of Jamaica and the other British West India islands say: "Cockroach never in de right before fowl." "Cockroach eber so drunk, him no walk past fowl yard." "When cockroach make dance, him no ax fowl." If some similar proverb has never been current among the slaves of the southern states, it is because of the comparative mildness of slavery there and because their multiplied contact with the whites of the south, in consequence of the latter being the most numerous, wore away negro peculiarities and prevented the growth and adoption of special proverbs.— *Hunt.*

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other proverb, which is probably of French origin :

V.

CÉ LHÈR VENT CA VENTER MOUNE CA OUÈR LA PEAU POULE.

It is when the wind is blowing that we see the skin of the fool.

VI.

CÉ SOULIERS TOUT-SEULE SAVENT SI BAS TINI-TROUS.

Shoes alone know if the stockings have holes.

There are vices and infirmities known only to the most intimate ; there are crimes known only to their authors, and there are weaknesses known only to one's familiars. *Nemo scit prœter me, said St Jerome, ubi soceus me permit.*[1] *It is the sea only which knows the bottom of the ship, say the Efik tribes of Western Africa.* There is another proverb quite current, I am told, in the French Antilles, though I never chanced to hear it, that *A man is not to be known till he takes a wife.* This

[1] Nobody but myself knows where the shoe pinches.

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might be taken as merely a variety of the two preceding proverbs, without an explication of its origin.

The buccaneers of San Domingo were pretty much a law unto themselves, acknowledging only an odd jumble of conventions upon which they had from time to time agreed. They had, in a manner, shaken off the yoke of religion, and thought they did much, in not entirely forgetting the God of their fathers. Had they been perpetuated until this time, the third or fourth generation of them would have had as little religion as the Caffres and Hottentots of Africa. They even laid aside their surnames, and assumed their nicknames or martial names, most of which have continued in their families to this day. Many of them, however, on their marrying, which seldom happened till they turned planters, took care to have their real surnames inserted in the marriage contract; and this gave occasion to the proverb, that *A man is not to be known till he marries.*[1]

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[1] Jeffreys, *Description of the Island of Hispaniola*, p. 23.

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VII.

RATTE MANGE CANNE; ZANDOLIE MOURRIE INNOCENT.

The rat eats the cane; the innocent lizard dies for it.

This is a creole paraphrase of two well-known lines, one of Publius Syrus and the other of Horace. "*Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur.*" "*Quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.*"

The innocence, that is, the harmlessness, of the lizard is almost as familiar a feature of serpent life in the tropics as that of the lamb among animals.

The Italians have a proverb which implies that the lizard's good name is not confined to the Antilles: *Cui serpe mozzica lucerta teme. He who has been bitten by a serpent is afraid of a lizard.*

At Naples, "whose luxurious inhabitants," says Gibbon,[1] "seem to live on the confines of Paradise and hell fire," they have a joke

[1] Memoirs of his own life.

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upon their exemption from the misfortunes of their neighbors of Torre del Greco.[1] *Napoli fa I peccati, e la Torre li page. Naples commits the sins and la Torre expiates them.*

The Germans have the same aphorism in different forms. *Bei grosser Herren Handeln mussen die Bauern Haar lassen. Der Herren Sunden der Bauern Busse.*

These proverbs will recall to the historical student the story of Henry IV, when he abjured Protestantism, sending two proxies to Rome to undergo the chastisement which the pope was to administer, and bring back his absolution, also that of King James I, when a lad, though subject in all other respects to the discipline of Scotland, being allowed a whipping boy, upon whose back he could receive any punishment that his own misconduct might merit.

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[1] A village in the suburbs of Naples, which has been already three times destroyed by Vesuvius.

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VIII.

Want of charity for those who occasionally succumb to temptation is finely rebuked in a proverb, the application of which unhappily cannot be limited to the transgressions of slaves or heathen:

PETIT MIE TOMBE, RAMASSÈ LI; CHRÈTIEN TOMBE, PAS RAMASSÉ LI.

If the millet[1] falls, it is picked up; if the Christian falls, he is not helped up.

This proverb conveys a merited rebuke to those who assume that any amount of spiritual growth diminishes our liability to temptation, or that the greatest saint has any less of it to contend with than the greatest sinner, and who infer therefore that the professing Christian, and especially the clergy, who occasionally succumb to them, are on that account altogether hypocrites and impostors. It teaches a more profound theology and a more divine charity than is common even in the pulpit.

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[1] A little grain largely cultivated in the Antilles.

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There are two other West Indian proverbs of the same import. *Acoma*[1] *tombe ; tout moun di c'e bois prourri. The acoma falls ; all the world says, 'tis rotten wood.*

IX.

CHITA CHICHE.

The sitter is mean.[2]

Chiche in creole is the equivalent of a persistent sitter, who is naturally idle, and therefore remains poor, not uncommonly the synonym for inhospitality and meanness.

X.

That hope which, through a kind Providence, often saves the most abject and depressed from despair, frequently finds its expression in the following proverb :

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[1] The acoma is the giant of the West Indian forest.

[2] Mr. Hogarth, an intelligent Haytian citizen who came to Port-au-Prince from Maryland when a boy, once told me that this proverb was to be translated, "The sitter is selfish," or "mean" as you have it ; that is, a man who has a seat is selfish and wont make room for one who has none.— *Hunt.*

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JOUDUI POU OUS, DEMAIN POU MOIN.

To-day for you, to-morrow for me.[1]

This is a slight modification of our old English proverb. *It is a long lane that has no turning.*

No one familiar with the Bible can read this form of appeal from the present to the future, which the human heart instinctively makes in its hour of trial, without recalling the memorable occasion when such appeals may be said to have received their highest sanction on earth. When the chief priests, captains of the temple, and elders came out against Jesus with swords and staves as against a thief, he said to them, "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hand against me: but *this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*"

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[1] The country people about Cape Haytian, the day after the earthquake of May, 1872, which destroyed the town, gave a slightly different version of this proverb, when they rushed into the town for plunder, crying "*Bon dieu cai nous tous ca hier pou ous joudi pon nous,* the good God has given us all this (yesterday for you to-day for us).— *Hunt.*

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That His hour and the power of light were expected to come in due time is implied, though, with eloquent fitness, not expressed. So all people, while under the dominion of evil passions and filthy lusts, may look forward, if so disposed, to the Saviour's hour, when, upon their invitation, those lusts shall be driven out and He with His angelic following shall enter in and sup with them.

XI.

The following proverb is not strictly of Haytian origin, though I had never happened to hear it till I heard it in Hayti:

QUAND VOUS MANGÉ AVEC DIABLE, TIEMBÉ CUILLER VOUS LONG.

When you sup with the devil, use a long spoon.

Shakspeare uses this proverb in a way to justify the belief that in this time it was too familiar and commonplace to be quoted in full.

Stephano. Doth thy other mouth call me? Mercy! mercy! This is a devil, and no mon-

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ster; I will leave him; I have no long spoon."[1]

The devil has lost much of the personal consideration, if not the influence, which he used to enjoy in earlier ages, and hence the comparative disuse of this proverb, except among people where the belief in the actual existence of a personal devil to be propitiated prevails, as in Hayti and among all African races, and among some Christian sects. It is a caution to those who accept the hospitality or favors of rogues. It does not take the high and only safe ground, which is to have no transactions with Satan; to make no compromise with evil. If it did, it would probably have lacked one of the essential elements of a proverb—general, popular acceptation;—for a proverb comes to its shape like a cobble-stone, by long and constant attrition. The average man thinks himself a little smarter than Satan, and that he can accept Satan's hospitality without

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[1] Tempest, Act II. Scene 2.

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returning it; that he can have just one or perhaps two transactions with the Prince of Evil, or operate with him for a limited period, and then stop. *Einmal keinmal*, say the Germans: *Once is never;* that is, it is idle to think of doing a wrong thing only once. No one ever deliberately entered into a single transaction with Satan that did not soon enter into another.

The necessity, however, of great wariness in our dealings with the Evil One, which the length of the spoon imports, rather than the wiser policy of rejecting all his overtures and the still wiser policy of making flagrant war upon them, expresses the popular sense both of the danger of such dealings and the occasional necessity for them.

No one has had much to do with slaves or with any people whose social and political liberties were seriously abridged, without remarking a corresponding disposition to seek a partial indemnification for their privations through falsehood, or through theft, which is a form of falsehood. It is

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safe to say that in those countries in which private rights and property are least secure, a man's social standing is least compromised by disingenuousness.

"Le même jour qui met un homme libre aux fers
Lui ravié la moiti de sa virtue première." [1]

It does not follow, however, that the slave is really any less truthful than the master though he may tell more lies. If a lie were necessary to save him from a flogging, and if, as in the slave's case, there were no public sentiment to which he is obliged to pay homage, how many masters could hesitate longer than their slaves to take refuge in falsehood? Many have deplored Galileo's weakness when stretched upon the rack of the Inquisition who would have endured far less even than the great Etruscan for the truth.

As we become independent of the world, whether by having the means of gratifying our carnal appetites or by the gradual ex-

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[1] The day which puts a free man in irons deprives him of half his virtue.

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tinction of such of them as depend on the coöperation or forbearance of our fellow-creatures, lying will become a more hateful offense, and truthfulness a more indispensable condition of worldly esteem. So long, however, as we are sustained in the discharge of our duty only by a sense of worldly prudence, the difference among us, after all, is only a difference in the length of the spoon which we use at the devil's table.

This proverb is also suggestive of another that is more familiar, and which, Quintillian tells us, was old in his day:

Liars should have long memories.

XII.

OUS PAS CAPABLE MANGER GUMBO AVEC NION DOIGT.

You never eat gumbo with one finger.

Spoons and forks are luxuries with which the Haytian peasants are not familiar, and they eat their gumbo (we call it okra) with two fingers. It would be as difficult to eat

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gumbo with one finger as to eat peas with a nut-picker. This proverb illustrates our dependence upon each other in every stage and condition of life.[1] The Haytians have another which is like unto it:

XIII.

NION DOIGT PAS SA POUAND PUCES.[2]

A single finger can't catch fleas.

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[1] Your observations are entirely correct so far as they go, but it is worth while to remark perhaps that this is strictly a practical slave proverb. This preparation of gumbo was distributed to the slaves at their meals in a *coui* (pronounced *quee*) or half a calabash and the part which they could not drink, they were expected to take out with their fingers and they made a sort of a spoon with the first two fingers and thumb. Haytian women in towns to this day, prepare for themselves a plate of food and instead of drawing up a table, they sit down in the door way and eat the contents of their plate in this manner.— *Hunt.*

[2] The Haytian version differs from the Trinidad version which you have given. It runs thus: "Ous pas capable trapper puces avec une doight." The "sa" in the Trinidad version I do not understand."— *Hunt.*

The "sa" is doubtless a form of the verb *savior* to know, literally our judge (*ne sait pas prendre puces*), does not know how to catch fleas.

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These are only variations of the old Greek proverb.

Εἷν ανηρ, ονδεἰς ανηρ.[1]

Or, as it comes to us through the Spanish,

One man and no man is all the same.

The Calabars of West Africa say,

A man does not use one finger to take out an arrow.

Dr. Franklin compared an old bachelor to the half of a pair of scissors which had not yet found its fellow, and therefore was not even half as useful as it might be.

The Spaniards also say,

Three helping each other will bear the burden of six.

As the gods of the ancients were wont to visit this earth in the guise of the humblest peasants, so one of those everlasting truths, which may be said to embrace the beginning and end of human wisdom, lies enveloped in the homely rhetoric of the rustic proverb of which these are variations. They teach

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[1] One man, no man.

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that elementary sense of dependence among men by which the most ignorant, as well as the most learned, are unconsciously led to comprehend and acknowledge their primary and final dependence upon God, a conviction which is the basis of all true religion; and in the same degree to lose faith in their own sufficiency, the basis of all idolatry.

The French have a proverb which, while it seems to enlarge the significance of that we are considering, is actually embraced by it:

Celui qui mange seul son pain est seul à porter son fardeau.

He who eats his bread alone must alone bear his burden.

Or, as the Spaniards say:

Quien solo come su gallo, solo ensille su caballo.

Who eats his dinner alone, must saddle his horse alone.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," so wrote St. Paul to the Galatians.

"Two are better than one," says the

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preacher, "because they have a good reward for their labor; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."[1]

All the selfishness, wars, intolerance, persecution, crime, and disorder in this world, and which seem to be most rife among those nations which boast of being most civilized, may be traced to a disregard of this universal law of dependence, the mother of humility, which the unlettered peasant of Hayti has extracted from his daily necessity of taking two fingers to his gumbo.

Heaven forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on others for assistance call,
Till one man's weakness, grows the strength of all.
Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally
The common interest, or endears the tie:
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere;
Each home felt joy that life inherits here:
Yet from the same we learn, in its decline,
Those joys, those loves, those interests to resign:
Taught half by reason, half by mere decay,
To welcome death and calmly pass away.[2]

There is a proverb current among the

[1] Ecclesiastics, iv: 9, 10. [2] Pope's *Essay on Man*, 249.

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Turks, and commonly supposed to be of Turkish origin, though it is not, which makes a corresponding recognition of the highest of Christian duties, to serve, that is, to love one another.

What I give away is mine.

It is a treasure laid away where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. This noble sentiment which embodies the very essence of Christianity was embalmed in the felicitous verse of the Hispano Roman poet Martial, many centuries before the name of the Turk had been breathed among men.

OPES SECURAE.[1]

Callidus effractâ nummus fur auferet arcâ,
  Prosternet patrios impia flamma Lares.
Debitor usuram pariter sortémque negabit;
  Non reddet sterilis semina jacta seges:
Dispensatorem fallax spoliabit amica;
  Mercibus extructas obruet unda rates.
Extra fortunam est quidquid donatur amicis:
  Quas dederis, solas semper habebis opes.

Our poet Byrant has renewed the youth of these lines in a version which is likely to

[1] Martial, Book v, Epig. 41.

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survive the language in which they were originally written.

Thieves may break in and bear away your gold;
The flames may lay your princely mansion low;
Your dues a faithless debtor may withhold,
Your fields may not return the grain you sow,
A spendthrift steward at your cost may live;
Your loaded barks may founder in the deep
But fortune has no power o'er what you give;
The wealth bestowed, and that alone you keep.

Swift has employed the same moral to wing one of his most penetrating shafts at the "Moderns" in his famous battle of the books. He represents an engagement between the combatants at the point of commencing and then introduces the following pregnant apologue.

"Things were at this crisis, when a material accident fell out. For, upon the highest corner of a large window, there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant. The avenues to his

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castle were guarded with turnpikes and palisadoes, all after the modern way of fortifications.[1] After you had passed several courts, you came to the centre, wherein you might behold the constable himself, in his own lodgings, which had windows fronting to each avenue, and ports to sally out, upon all occasions of prey or defence. In this mansion he had for some time dwelt in peace and plenty, without danger to his person, by swallows from above, or to his palace, by brooms from below, when it was the pleasure of fortune to conduct thither a wandering bee, to whose curiosity a broken pane in the glass had discovered itself, and in he went; where, expatiating a while, he at last happened to alight upon one of the outward walls of the spider's citadel; which, yielding to the unequal weight, sunk down to the very foundation. Thrice he endeavored to force his passage, and thrice the centre

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[1] Fortification was one of the arts, upon the improvement of which the argument in favor of the moderns was founded by their advocates.

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shook. The spider within, feeling the terrible convulsion, supposed at first that nature was approaching to her final dissolution; or else that Beelzebub,[1] with all his legions, was come to revenge the death of many thousand of his subjects, whom his enemy had slain and devoured. However he at length valiantly resolved to issue forth, and meet his fate. Meanwhile the bee had acquitted himself of his toils, and, posted securely at some distance, was employed in cleansing his wings, and disengaging them from the ragged remnants of the cobweb. By this time the spider was adventured out, when, beholding the chasms, the ruins, the dilapidations of his fortress, he was very near at his wits end; he stormed and swore like a madman, and swelled till he was ready to burst. At length, casting his eye upon the bee, and wisely gathering causes from events (for they knew each other by sight).

"'A plague split you,' said he, 'for a giddy

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[1] Supposed to be the tutelar deity of the flies.

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son of a whore; is it you, with a vengeance, that have made this litter here? could not you look before you, and be d — d? Do you think I have nothing else to do (in the divil's name) but to mend and repair after you?'

"'Good words, friend,' said the bee (having now pruned himself and being disposed to be droll), 'I'll give you my hand and word to come near your kennel no more; I was never in such a confounded pickle since I was born.'

"'Sirrah,' replied the spider, 'if it were not for breaking an old custom in our family, never to stir abroad against an enemy, I should come and teach you better manners.'

"'I pray have patience,' said the bee, 'or you'll spend your substance, and, for aught I see, you may stand in need of it all, toward the repair of your house.'

"'Rogue, rogue,' replied the spider, 'yet, methinks you should have more respect to a person, whom all the world allows to be so much your betters.'

"'By my troth,' said the bee, 'the com-

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parison will amount to a very good jest; and you will do me a favor to let me know the reasons that all the world is pleased to use in so hopeful a dispute.'

"At this the spider, having swelled himself into thé size and posture of a disputant, began his argument in the true spirit of controversy, with resolution to be heartily scurrilous and angry, to urge on his own reasons, without the least regard to the answers or objections of his opposite; and fully predetermined in his mind against all conviction.

"'Not to disparage myself,' said he, 'by the comparison with such a rascal, what art thou but a vagabond without house or home, without stock or inheritance? born to no possession of your own, but a pair of wings and a drone pipe. Your livelihood is a universal plunder upon nature; a freebooter over fields and gardens; and for the sake of stealing, will rob a nettle as easily as a violet. Whereas, I am a domestic animal, furnished with a native stock within myself.

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This large castle (to show my improvements in the mathematics[1]), is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person.'

"'I am glad,' answered the bee, 'to hear you grant at least that I am come honestly by my wings and my voice; for then, it seems, I am obliged to Heaven alone for my flights and my music; and Providence would never have bestowed on me two such gifts, without designing them for the noblest ends. I visit, indeed, all the flowers and blossoms of the field and garden; but whatever I collect thence, enriches myself, without the least injury to their beauty, their smell, or their taste. Now, for you and your skill in architecture, and other mathematics, I have little to say: in that building of yours there might, for aught I know, have been labor and method enough; but, by woeful experience for us both, it is plain, the materials

[1] The improvements in mathematical science were (very justly) urged by those who contended for the excellence of modern learning.

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are naught; and I hope you will henceforth take warning, and consider duration and matter, as well as method and art. You boast, indeed, of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from yourself; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel, by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast; and, though I would by no means lessen or disparage your genuine stock of either, yet, I doubt you are somewhat obliged, for an increase of both, to a little foreign assistance. Your inherent portion of dirt does not fail of acquisitions, by sweepings exhaled from below; and one insect furnishes you with a share of poison to destroy another. So that, in short, the question comes all to this; whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but flybane and a cobweb; or that which,

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by a universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax.'"

The following proverbs, current in many tongues, bear in the same direction, and help to prove that there is probably a larger party in this world who cultivate a pious sense of dependence than of impious independence:

Two heads are better than one.

Two eyes see better than one; or,

Plus oculi vident quam oculus.

One flower makes no garland.

Two dry sticks will kindle a green one.

Good riding at two anchors, men have told,
For if one break, the other may hold.

The reflection of our Saviour, when he announced that the hour was come that the Son of Man should be glorified, only extends the application of the same general truth. "Except," he added, "a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth *alone;* but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[1]

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In short, solitude is sterility; independence is selfishness.

XIV.

The Haytians have a proverb to express the force of numbers which could only have its origin among a people who had inherited the notion that conspiracy and assassination were among the legitimate resources of statesmanship.

COMPLOT PLUS FORT PASSÉ OUANGA.

Conspiracy (or combination) is stronger than witchcraft.

This proverb also reflects the condition of the human mind when it is beginning to emancipate itself from superstition. It betrays the dawning sense of the superiority of plans and systematic combination of natural forces over those supernatural resources upon which the ignorant and the savage are much accustomed to rely.

Providentially, only good motives and purposes will thoroughly combine. The selfish,

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[1] St. John, xii: 24.

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which are the sinful and predatory motives, are all distrustful, and therefore incapable of acting in effective concert. Like Pilate and Herod they may unite, but their union will only last while in presence of a common adversary. Hence all predatory and noxious animals and insects are rendered, by their very selfishness, comparatively harmless. "It is a wonderful proof of the wisdom ot Providence," said the late Lord Lytton, "that whenever any large number of its creatures form a community or class, a secret element of disunion enters into the hearts of the individuals forming the congregation and prevents their coöperating heartily and effectually for their own common interests."

"The flies would have dragged me out of bed if they had been unanimous," said the great Curran, "and there can be no doubt if all the spiders in this commonwealth would attack me in a body I should fall a victim to their combined nippers."

But spiders, though inhabiting the same region, constituting the same race, ani-

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mated by the same instincts, do not combine even against a butterfly; each seeks his own special advantage and not that of the community at large.

XV.

Responsible people, whose misfortune it is to have lived under unstable and revolutionary governments, are apt to acquire a profound sense of the perils of public life and of every sort of political prominence. It is not strange, therefore, that the prudence of cultivating obscurity should become proverbial with them. The Haytians have this lesson preserved in many forms. Here are two:

CABRITE QUI PAS MALIN MANGÉ NEN PIE MORNE.
The wild goat is not cunning that eats at the foot of the mountain.

That is, near the thoroughfares and settlements of men.

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XVI.

COULEUVRE QUI VLÉ VIVRE LI PAS PROMENER DANS GRAND CHEMIN.

The snake that wishes to live does not travel on the highway.

Ovid, who often wrote more wisely than he acted, has less effectively presented the same idea in a line written during his banishment.

Crede mihi, bene qui latuit bene vixit.[1]

So we say, *Far from court far from care.*

The poet Tibullus went so far as to recommend us to keep our joys from the world:

Qui sapit, in tacito gaudeat ille sinu.

Seneca thus expands the same idea in almost the same words:

Sic vero invidiam effugies, si te non ingesseris oculis, si bona tua non jactaveris, si scieris in sinu gaudere.[2]

Qui struit in callem, multos habet ille magis-

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[1] A life retired
Is well inspired.

[2] If you would escape envy, keep out of sight, do not boast of your possessions, and taste your joys in private.

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tros,[1] is a popular Latin form of the same aphorism, which the Germans have adopted with a slight improvement:

Wer will bauen an die Strassen
Muss die Leute reden lassen.[2]

The goat and the serpent in the Haytian proverbs may be taken to represent the widely opposite motives which actuate different persons in cultivating obscurity. One and the noblest, of which the goat may be taken as a symbol, is a just indifference to public honors and applause; a fear of their distractions or of their corrupting influence upon the heart and character; a modest sense of our ability to fill positions of responsibility.

It is to one of this class La Bruyère refers in one of his most profound reflections:

"*Celui qui un beau jour sait renoncer fermement ou à un grand nom, ou à une grande autorité, ou à une grande fortune, se délivre en un*

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[1] He who buildeth in the street.
Many masters hath to meet.

[2] Who will build upon the walk
Needs must let the people talk.

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moment de bien des peines de bien des veilles, et quelquefois de bien des crimes."[1]

The baser sort, symbolized here by the serpent, is a selfish unwillingness to give our time to the public service, a cowardly fear of the peril to our lives, fortunes, personal consideration or personal comfort, or because of its interference with other plans for our personal profit or aggrandizement. The friendship of such is more to be feared than favored. This class is gently rebuked by Shakespeare in the first act of *Measure for Measure:*

"Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, them on thee.
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do;
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd,
But to find issues."

The man who voluntarily puts himself in

[1] He who has the wit betimes firmly to renounce either a famous name, or great power, or a large fortune, frees himself in a moment from many troubles, from many anxieties, and sometimes even from many crimes.—*De la Cour.*

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the position to awaken the envy of his fellow creatures may be suspected of placing too high a value upon the objects of their envy.

It is a wonderful fact, of which every day of our lives might furnish many illustrations, and one worthy of much meditation, that our virtues and spiritual graces, which are incomparably the greatest treasures and dignities of which we can become possessed, are never objects of envy. We may pasture those on the high-road, at the foot of the mountain, or where we please. People try to deprive us of them sometimes, but never because they desire to appropriate them, nor can they ever succeed without our consent.

As we never envy another his spiritual riches, so we never repent of what we do with a single eye to the laying up of such riches for ourselves. In that sense what a field is here left for the exercise of all the best faculties of our nature in acquiring priceless treasures, the highest dignities,

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irresistible power, without once quitting that modest seclusion which is comparatively free from evil, which provokes no man's envy, awakes no man's lust, but disarms the one and starves the other!

XVII.

MAITRE CABRITE MANDE LI; OUS PAS CAPABLE DI LI PLAINDA.

'Tis the owner of the goat reclaims it. You should not blame him.

This is a proverb employed in the interest of the lender, and to discourage ingratitude toward those who have served us by loans of any sort, whether of money or of any other articles.

XVIII.

ZOREÎES PAS LOURD PASSÉ TÊTE.

The ears never weigh more than the head.

That is, a man's curiosity is the measure of his intelligence. His interest in a thing is limited to his knowledge of its properties and attributes. To Peter Bell —

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"The primrose by the river's brink
A yellow primrose is to him,
And it is nothing more."

The Germans also say:

Wer einen Froschmagen hat
Wird von Fliegen satt.[1]

Hence, by implication, the folly of talking over people's heads, or in trying to influence them by considerations which they don't comprehend. "All the wit in the world," says La Bruyère, "is useless to him who has none. The man with no ideas is incapable of profiting by the ideas of another."

XIX.

The obstinate and insubordinate are described as —

GENS QUI TINI ZOREIES YEAUX PLIS HAUTS PASSÉ TÊTES YEAUX.

People who have their ears above their heads.

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[1] He who has the stomach of a frog will fatten on flies.

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XX.

TANG OU PANCOR PASSÉ LA RIVIÈRE PRIN GADE OU JOURÉ MAMAN CAIMAN.[1]

Till you are across the river, beware how you insult the mother alligator.

To appreciate the force of this proverb, it should be kept in mind that the Haytian creole regards an insult to his mother as the most inexpiable outrage he can receive. Mungo Park also notices this as a trait, and certainly one by no means the least creditable, of all the African race. The Hindoos say, What! dwell in the water and quarrel with the crocodile?

Don't whistle till you are out of the woods, or,

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[1] The insult to the mother referred to in this proverb, relates among the Haytians, strictly to the source of life in a woman. A pert boy one day at Cape Haytian, as he passed a man he did not like, looked up at him and said "*Maman à ous*," and ran on. The man was bitterly offended and I inquired of the boy's older brother what it all meant. He said more was intended by the phrase than was spoken, and gave me the full sentence, containing the Haytian's Creole word for uterus. This led me to suspect that the proverb connects with some tradition of the Phallic worship.— *Hunt.*

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as the Germans say, *Lobe den Tag nicht vor dem Abend*, borrowed doubtless from the Latin, *A solis occasu, non ortu, describe diem.*

The Spaniards say: *Non mi digas oliva hasta que me veas cogido.— Call me not olive till you see me gathered.*

Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off (1 Kings, xx: 11).

President Lincoln has given a world-wide currency to a proverb which is almost a paraphrase of the Haytian — *Never swop horses while crossing a stream.*

XXI.

SI CRAPAUD DIE OUS CAIMAN TINI MALZIEZ, COÈR LI.

If the frog says the alligator has sore eyes, believe him.

The alligator with sore eyes, that is, unable to see his prey, is comparatively harmless. If the frog, who lives near him, and has most to fear from him, says he is blind, you may trust him. So we may trust a

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man's favorable testimony of an unfriendly neighbor.

There is a slight variation of this proverb which is also current:

XXII.

TORTUE QUI SORTI BAS DE L'EAU LI DI OU CAIMAN GAGNÉ MALSZIEUX, COÉR LI.

If the terrapin that comes from the bottom of the water tells us that the alligator has sore eyes, believe him.

No fear need be entertained of the alligator, says Père Labat,[1] when he swims, for his paws must be supported to enable him to hurt anything. For this reason he inspires no apprehension in places where the water is deep, only in those places where he can put his feet on the bottom or on the shore. When, therefore, a terrapin which swims in the deep water, tells you any thing about the alligator, it is evidence that the latter is in deep water, and therefore not dangerous. A similar lesson is taught by another department of the animal kingdom in the following aphorism:

[1] *Nouveaux Voyage aux Iles d'Amerique*, vol. VII, p. 201.

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XXIII.

QUAND YO BAILLE OU TÊTE BEF POU MANGÉ, N'A PAS PEUR ZIEUX LI.

When they give you an ox's head to eat, have no fear for his eyes.

XXIV.

The vanity of the black, which frequently tempts him to load his back at the expense of his stomach, to purchase superfluities while lacking necessaries, is perhaps no more common among the African than the Caucasian race, but its exhibition is apt to be more absurd.

It is a weakness, however, which has not escaped the barbs of Haytian satire. Their contempt for such folly is compared to that of the frog which, lacking water to drink, asks for a bath, or wanting a shirt, calls for drawers.

CRAPAUD LI PAS TINI L'EAU POUR LI BOIRE LI VLÉ GAGNÉ POUR LI BAGNER.

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XXV.

CRAPAUD PAS TINI CHEMISE OUS VLÉ LI POTER CALEÇON.

The Germans draw the same lesson from the cat:

Du willst andern Katzen fangen, und kannst dir selbst keine Maus fangen.

You would hunt other cats, and can't yet catch a mouse.

Cicero[1] quotes from Ennius a line expressing the same sentiment, though as a proverbial locution it has little save its age to recommend it — *Qui sibi semitam non sapiunt, alteri monstrant viam.*[2]

Goldsmith, in his *Haunch of Venison*, has embalmed the best English paraphrase

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[1] *De Divinatione*, I, 58.

[2] Though not knowing the way themselves they pretend to point it out to others; the blind leading the blind. There is another Latin proverb which conveys a kindred though not quite the same lesson: *Alienos agros irrigas tuis sitientibus.— You water others' fields, your own parched by drought.*

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of the two Haytian proverbs now under consideration:

"There's my countryman, Higgins, oh, let him alone
For making a blunder or picking a bone;
But hang it, to poets, who seldom can eat,
Your very good mutton's a very good treat.
Such dainties to them their health it might hurt;
It's like sending them ruffles when wanting a shirt."

XXVI.

BEF PAS JAMAIN CA DIE SAVANNE, "MECI."

The ox never says to the pasture, "Thank you."

This proverb not only rebukes ingratitude for familiar favors or blessings, by placing the ingrates on a footing with beasts, which have no intelligent sense of obligation, and are strangers to the emotion of thankfulness, but it also distinguishes between the ostensible good deeds which are the result of accident, or which originate in a selfish purpose, such as the feeding our cattle or poultry that they may one day feed us, from those which are the result of spontaneous and deliberate kindness.

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XXVII.

Practical jokes and injudicious familiarities have given form and currency to the following caution.

BADIÑEN BIEN AVEC MACAQUE, MAIN PRIN GADE MANIER QUEUE LI.

Joke freely with the monkey, but don't play with his tail.

Jocko's sensitiveness about his tail, which is notoriously his weak point,[1] serves admirably to show that there is nothing so amiable, so low, so familiar, that has not something about him or it that must not be trifled with. Every one has some sentiment which to him is sacred, some point of dignity, self-respect, or sensitiveness which may not be outraged with impunity.

This proverb also contains a warning against driving an adversary to extremities, against abusing an advantage. There

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[1] **The Haytians, also, when they wish to speak of one who has been heavily fined or harshly treated, say: *Yeaux péser la sous laché li. — They have pressed on his tail.***

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is a point with every body which it is not wise to pass, whether in joke or in earnest.

So the Haytians also say:

XXVIII.

HAI MOUNE, MAIN PAS BAIE YEAUX PAÑEN POU CHAIER DE L'EAU.

Hate people, but don't give them baskets to fetch water in.[1]

That is, don't impose upon them impossible duties nor insupportable punishments, for "with the tale of bricks Moses comes." Neither should we impute to people incredible crimes or acts inconsistent with their character, age, sex, or condition. As the French say: *Il ne faut pas faire cuire l'agneau dans le lait de la mère* — almost a literal translation of one of the prohibitions of Moses: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." Deut., xiv: 21; Exod., xxii: 19; xxxiv.: 26.

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[1] The Trinidad version of this proverb is similar to the Martinique and Haytian version. In Jamaica an addition has been made to it, and it runs thus: "If any one hate you him get you basket carry water; but if you clebber, you put plaintain leaf in him." — *Hunt.*

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XXIX.

LIANE YAMME CA MARER YAMME.

The yam vines bind the yam.

Those who lead or beguile the innocent into danger, physical or moral; who, like Haman, build gibbets for the unoffending, are sure, sooner or later, to become the victims of their own perfidy. "Whoso diggeth a pit," says Solomon, "shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him."[1]

He is "taken in his own toils."

Like Acteon, he is eaten by his own dogs.

He is hoist by his own petard.

Punishment is a cripple, says a Spanish proverb, *but it arrives.*

Every stage and condition of life has limitations and conditions peculiar to it. Youth yearns for the strength of manhood, not suspecting that the vigor of manhood is mortgaged as soon as developed to new and pro-

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[1] Proverbs, xxvi: 27.

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portionate service. The poor fancy that the wealth which seems far from giving happiness to a neighbor, if theirs, would leave them nothing to desire. When they acquire wealth, power, or station, they either find it involves corresponding duties and cares, or that it tempts to self-indulgence, weakens the moral energies, impairs the health, provokes jealousy and envy, and in a thousand ways eats away the pleasure with which, when seen through the spectrum of poverty or obscurity, it seems so prolific.

"*Vois ce fleuve*," said Béranger, pointing to the Loire, "*plus il monte, plus il est troublé.*"[1]

No one has turned his experience of life to much account who has not realized that happiness, like the yam, is nourished and sustained by those providential restrictions and limitations which grow with its growth and strengthen with its strength, and which, by revealing to us, put us on our guard against, our besetting sins and infirmities.

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[1] See this river (the Loire); the more it swells the more it is troubled.

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XXX.

MACAQUE CONNAITE QUI BOIS LI CA MONTER.

The monkey knows what tree to climb.

XXXI.

COCHON MARON CONNAITE QUI BOIS LI FROTTE.[1]

The wild hog knows what wood he rubs against.

Both these proverbs no doubt owe their currency, if not their origin, to slavery. Such aphorisms would spring naturally to the lips of the oppressed and dependent. People are rarely insolent or overbearing to those who can chastise them. Who experiences this earlier or more frequently than those 'who have no rights which a white man is bound to respect?" Unhappily, when slavery shall cease in the world, there is little chance that these proverbs will

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[1] This proverb most likely orignated with the bucaneers who knew the habits of the wild hog, the hunting of which had mostly ceased before the slaves became numerous in Hayti. It is still often used there in the manner you describe, *l'arbre* being substituted for *bois*.—*Hunt.*

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become obsolete. The Spaniards have a proverb of substantially the same import:

Bien sabe el asno en cuya cara rebuzna.[1]

We have also in English another like unto it:

The cat knows whose lips she licks.

XXXII.

JARDIN LOIN, GUMBO GATE.

The garden far, the gumbo (ochra) spoils.

Those who have lived among slaves know the difficulty of having a garden. The propensity of these dependents to forage upon the vegetables and poultry of the proprietary class is incurable. To this is owing in a great measure the fact that, with manifold advantages of soil, of climate, and of cheap labor, such a thing as a good garden in the slave states of America was almost unknown. In the days of slavery, strawberries and peas were rarely seen in the Charleston market, though the richest city

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[1] The ass knows whose face he brays.

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for its population in all the slave states. Now for miles around Charleston the land is a continuous market garden.

The negro's plea for treating his master's fruit as his own is the same as that which the Hebrews may be supposed to have used when reproached with appropriating to their own use the jewelry of their Egyptian task-masters. A garden, therefore, not under the immediate and watchful eye of the master, is apt to prove unprofitable property.

It is your own fault, says an English moralist, *if your neglected wife deceives you.*

Poor Richard says:

The eye of the master will do more work than both his hands.

Not to oversee workmen is to leave them with your purse open.

He that by the plow would thrive.
Himself must either hold or drive.

The Italians have a proverb, borrowed, however, from the Greek, which teaches the same lesson:

The master's eye makes the horse fat.

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"Perses being asked," says Aristotle,[1] "what is the best thing to make a horse thrive, answered, 'The master's eye;' and Libys being asked what is the best manure, answered, 'The master's footsteps.'"

Aulus Gellius tells of a fat man riding on a lean horse who was asked why he was so fat and his horse so lean. "Because," he said, "I feed myself, and my servant feeds my horse."

Plutarch, in his chapter on the training of children, quotes the saying of the king's groom:

"Nothing made the king's horse so fat as the king's eye."

But the Haytian proverb has a wider application than any of these. The garden that is near to its master will receive the labor and the thought of many of his spare moments in the course of the day when other employments are suspended, which would not be the case if the garden were

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[1] *Œconom.*, II.

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more remote. It is visited more frequently; the growth of weeds and the presence of insects and vermin are detected in season, and before they work irreparable mischief.

There is also a lesson in the proverb for that large class who are more concerned about the faults of other people than about their own, who are more occupied in evangelizing the heathen than in grubbing up the weeds and destroying the vermin that infest their own hearts, who, as De Maintenon said of Louis XIV, "think to expiate their own sins by being inexorable toward the sins of their fellow-creatures." Their garden is so far from home that it is overrun with the weeds and insects of self-righteousness, and what it yields is only fit to be burned or fed to swine.

XXXIII.

LI MENE LI COMME HARENG MÈNE BANANE.

They are as inseparable as herring and banana.

To comprehend the force of this proverb it should be borne in mind that the country

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people of Hayti habitually cook banana with pickled herring, of which latter very large quantities are imported annually. Besides the obvious applicability of this proverb to those who seem united to each other socially or politically by ties of peculiar intimacy, it also corresponds in some measure with a form of speech quite current in political circles, and which dates back at least to the days of George III. "When Pitt takes snuff," the opposition would say, "Dundas sneezes." It is applied to all who blindly accept another's leadership.

XXXIV.

TOUTE CABINETTE GAGNÉ MARINGOIN À YO.

Every closet has its moscheto, or as we say in Northern lands, *Every house has its skeleton.*

It is painful to notice the variety of forms which this sentiment has taken, and the universality of its currency. For example,

Every gap has its bush,
Every bean has its black,
Every grain has its bran,

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Every man has a fool in his sleeve,
Every path hath a puddle,
Every day hath its night,
Every light hath its shadow,
Chacun a son marotte, etc.,

are only variations of the same theme.

What a grievous pity it is that this skeleton in every closet, this black in every bean, this puddle in every path, the unavoidable trials, sorrows, and embarrassments which beset us through life, are not more generally recognized and turned to account; that we are so inapt to learn the lessons they are mercifully sent to teach, and so unmindful of the fact that when they are unnecessary they are certain to disappear!

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XXXV.

CROQUEZ MACOUTE [1] OU OUETI MAIN OU CA RIVE.

Hang your knapsack where you can reach it.

In other words,

Cut your coat according to your cloth ;

In laying your plans, measure your resources ;

Before you build, count the cost ;

Stretch your arm no further than your sleeves will reach.

XXXVI.

GIRAMON PAS DONNE CALABASSE.

The pumpkin vine does not yield the calabash.

This is the creole's way of saying :

You can't make a horn of a pig's tail, or a silk purse of a hog's ear ;

Every man's nose will not make a shoeing horn ;

Non cuivis contingit adire Corinthum ; [2]

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[1] The macoute is a sort of a knapsack or saddle-bag made of flag or swamp grass, and which the Haytian peasant throws across the back of his donkey ; and in it he carries every thing, from a baby to a piece of pork, from a bunch of sugar-cane to a sack of flour.

[2] An allusion of Horace's to the exhorbitant price which a famous courtesan of Corinth set upon her favors.

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You can't get blood from a beet,
Non exquovis ligno fit Mercurius.

XXXVII.

GAMBETTE OUS TROUVÉ GAN CHEMIN, NEN GAN CHEMIN OUS VA PÊDE LI.

Every jackknife found on the highway, on the highway will be lost.

That is:

Light come, light go;
What comes with the flute goes with the drum;
Quelche viene di salti, va via di balzi;
Schnell gewonnen,
Schnell zerronnen;
Soon gotten, soon spent;
Soon hot, soon cold;
Soon ripe, soon rotten;
Soon learned, soon forgotten;
Soon Todd,[1]
Soon with God;
Ce que vient de pille-pille 'en va de tire-tire;
Père pilleur, fils gaspilleur.

The Romans used to say, "The third heir

[1] An old English proverb applied to children who have their teeth too soon.

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never enjoys a fraudulently acquired fortune."

There are few adult persons of any condition who have not had opportunities of observing how very perishable are apt to be the immediate fruits of what is vulgarly termed "luck," how rarely wealth or success, not the legitimate fruit of our own labor, or the outgrowth of or complement to our own maturing characters, abides with us. It seems as if it were the order of Providence that our capacities to enjoy and retain wealth or any other species of worldly prosperity are proportioned in no inconsiderable degree to the trouble we have had in acquiring them. Nothing is more unreliable than a fortune won at the gaming-table, except perhaps a fortune won by fraud. Every thing in this world gravitates to the point where it may be most useful in the order of Providence, and no attempt by fraud or violence to divert it from that channel can be successful. "The unrighteous penny," say the Germans, "corrupts the righteous

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pound;"[1] and "that which is another's," say the Spaniards, "always yearns for its lord."[2]

"Time," says Lamartine, "only respects that in which he has a part."

"We see men fall from high position," says La Bruyère, "because of the very faults through which they rose."

Descartes makes a confession in his *Discours de la Méthode* that is but an amplification of the Haytian proverb.

"As for me," he says, "I am persuaded that if in my youth I had been taught all the truths of which I have since sought the demonstrations, I should never, perhaps, have known any others, or at least never have acquired the habit and facility which I think I possess of finding new ones whenever I apply myself to the search for them."

What is got over the devil's back is spent under his belly.

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[1] *Ungerechter Pfenning verzehrt gerechten Thaler.*

[2] *Lo ageno siempre pia por su dueño.*

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"An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning," said the wise man; "but the end thereof shall not be blessed."[1]

The Tuscans have two proverbs of substantially the same import:[2]

Bene di fortuna passano come la luna;
Farina del Diavolo riduce in crusca.

Chi confessa la sorte, nega Dio.

Seneca was accustomed to pay the postage of his letters to his friend Lucilius — the *portorium*, as he sometimes termed it — by quoting at its close something striking that he had read in the course of the day. In one of them he cites the following line from Publius Syrus, which shows that the notion *that nothing we acquire is worth to us more than it cost us* is neither of modern nor exclusively of Christian currency:

Non est tuum Fortuna quod fecit tuum.[3]

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[1] Proverbs, xx: 21.

[2] The gains of fortune change like the moon.
The Devil's flour to bran turns soon.

[3] *That is not yours which chance bestows.*

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XXXVIII.

TOUT BOIS CÉ BOIS, MAIN MAPOU PAS CAJOU.

All wood is wood, but mapou (a worthless sort of wood) *is not cedar.*

All people are good for something, but none are good for every thing. Every one is a member of the state, but all are not statesmen.

A' are na maidens that wear bare hair.

All are not hunters that blow the horn.

All is not gold that glitters.

All are not friends that speak one fair.

All are not saints that go to church.

All are not thieves that the dogs bark at, etc.

The Haytians have another proverb, which if not a variation, may be regarded as a corollary of the foregoing:

XXXIX.

CA QUI PAS BON POUR SAC PAS BON POUR MACOUTE.

What is not good for the bag is not good for the knapsack.

This homage to the fitness of things is in the following proverb restricted to the discreet use of the tongue:

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XL.

TOUTE MANGÉ BON POUR MANGÉ MAIS TOUTES PAROLES PAS BON POUR À DI.

All food is good to eat, but all words are not fit to speak.

Akin to this is the English proverb,

He who says what he likes shall hear what he don't like.

"Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words?" says Solomon; "there is more hope of a fool than of him."[1]

If one might judge from the proverbs to which it has given rise, indiscretions of the tongue are the most besetting of human infirmities. Every one is familiar with this of the Persian, so often in the mouth of diplomatists:

Speech is silvern; silence is golden.

The Italian says, *He who speaks, sows; he who keeps silence, reaps.*[2] Again, *Silence was never written down.*[3] The Spaniards, in a yet

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[1] Proverbs, xxix, 20.

[2] *Chi parla, semina; chi tace, ricoglie.*

[3] *Il tacere non su mai scritto.*

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profounder strain, say, *The evil which comes from thy mouth falls into thy bosom.*[1] The Hebrews say, *If a word be worth one shekel, silence is worth a pair.*

Think what you please; say what you ought.

Words written are male; words spoken are female.

Verba volant; scripta manent.

The following inscription, which used to decorate the refectory of a Franciscan convent at Lyons, in France, includes discretion in speech among the four cardinal virtues of monastic life:

Garde toi —
De désirer tout ce que tu vois;
De croire toute ce que tu entende;
DE DIRE TOUT CE QUE TU SAIS,
De faire tout ce que tu peux.[1]

I think my readers will not complain of its want of pertinence if I here introduce a

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[1] *El mal que de tu boca sale en tu seno se cae.*

[1] *Bevare —*
Of wishing all you see,
Of believing all you hear,
Of saying all you know,
Of doing all you can.

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memorable rebuke reported to have been once administered to an Indian monarch, for a hasty and indiscreet promise. The famous Brahmin, Sissa once conceived the idea of restoring to his senses a prince who had become intoxicated with his power and was disposed to disregard the advice of more experienced counselors. Feeling that his lessons would be ineffectual if the prince discovered that he was being tutored, he devised the game of chess where the king, although the most important of all the pieces, is powerless to attack, and even to defend himself without the aid of his subjects and soldiers.

The new game soon became famous; the prince heard of it and wished to learn it. Sissa was naturally chosen to teach it to him and in explaining its rules and showing with what art the other pieces had to be used for the king's defence, he made the prince perceive and realize the important truths to which till then he had been inaccessible.

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Sincerely grateful for what the game had taught him the prince wished to testify his gratitude to its author, and asked him to name his recompense; whatever it might be he should have it. To show the danger of hasty and inconsiderate promises, and to teach the supreme importance to a prince of keeping his tongue under the control of his judgment, he replied that all he should ask for his recompense would be as many grains of wheat as would go to the sixty-four squares on the chess board, counting one for the first, two for the second, four for the third, eight for the fourth and so on, doubling every time to the last. The prince, astonished at the apparent modesty of the request, granted it at once. When his treasurer came to calculate what was to be paid to the Brahmin it was discovered that the prince had entered into an engagement which all the wealth of the kingdom could not discharge, that to contain the promised amount of grain would require 16,384 cities having each 1,024 granaries, each stored with 174,762

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measures, and each measure with 32,768 grains.[1] The value of it all would be over twenty thousand millions of dollars; more than all the wealth of the world. Sissa profited by the occasion to make the prince comprehend that no person is so powerful or so high placed as to be able to keep all the engagements which may be made by an indiscreet tongue.

XLI.

CE LANGUE CRAPAUD QUI CA TRAHI CRAPAUD.

'Tis the frog's own tongue that betrays him.

We all know what sort of a character it is desirable to be thought to have, but nothing is so difficult to counterfeit successfully. Those who talk much are liable, like frogs, to reveal what they would prefer to conceal. "There is nothing," says La Bruyère, "so inartificial, so simple, so imperceptible, in our character that our manners do not betray it. A fool neither enters nor leaves a room, he neither sits nor rises, he does not

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[1] Freret, tom. XVII, p. 121–140.

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even preserve silence nor stand on his legs, like a man of sense."

XLII.

It is distressing to think how many thousand poor creatures must have lain down at night with misery and awakened to despair before the mint of slavery could have coined the three proverbs which follow :

BON BLANC MOURRI, MAUVAIS RÊTE.[1]

The good white dies, the bad remains.

XLIII.

SOLEIL COUCHÉ, MALHEUR PAS JAMIN COUCHÉ.

The sun sets, misfortunes never.

But there is no situation so desperate that has not its alleviations, and even the poor slave found comfort in reflecting that —

[1] This was a local saying among the negroes of Cape François in the time of the French, and was a bit of raillery on their part. St. Mery, vol. I, p. 342, says: "For a long time there has been a cracked bell here, the sepulchral sound of which is quite in harmony with the interments which it announces. The negroes pretend that it accords with and makes the base of the other church bell; there being a pair of them, and they say 'bon blanc'" etc. The single bell at the church of Cape Haytian in 1845–6, was still called "Bon Blanc."— *Hunt.*

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XLIV.

MÊME BATON QUI BATTE CHIEN NOIR LA PÈ BATTE CHIEN BLANC LA.

The same stick that beats the black dog may beat the white one.

Disappointment, humiliation, sorrow, sickness, and death visit the palace of the rich white as well as the cabin of the poor black.

The French say, *The devil is not always at the door of the poor man.*[1] And again, *The sun rises here, he sets there.*

In a more Christian spirit, the Spaniards say, *God has made no one to abandon him;* and the Russians, *What God has wet, He will dry.*

In the same sense, the mother of Baron Stockmar, one of the friends and counsellors of Queen Victoria and her late husband, used to say, "Heaven takes care that the cow's tail shall not grow too long."

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[1] *Le diable n'est pas toujours à la porte du pauvre homme.*

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XLV.

BATTRE UN NÈGRE, C'EST LE NOURRIR; BATTRE UN INDIEN, CEST LE TUER.[1]

To beat the negro is to feed him, to beat an Indian is to kill him.

XLVI.

CHIEN GAGNÉ QUATRE PIEDS MAIS LI PAS CAPABLE DANS QUATRE CHEMINS.

The dog has four feet, but he does not walk with them in four roads.

In these dissuasives from spreading our butter over too much bread, we find the principle of division of labor, the discovery of which is one of Adam Smith's titles to fame, and a forecasting of specialization, which is the distinguishing characteristic

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[1] This proverb is not of African origin nor is it current in Hayti; the present race knowing nothing of Indians who had disappeared long before their advent. The people of Martinique, which the French settled before they settled Hayti, had Indian as well as negro slaves, and this proverb originated among the white people there and applies to the differing dispositions of the two kinds of slaves. Du Tertre (*Histoire des Antilles* vol. II, p. 490), gives it thus: *Regarder un Sauvage de travers, c'est le battre; le battre c'est le tuer; battre un nègre c'est le nourrir."— Hunt.*

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of the march of modern science. Because we have faculties which qualify us for usefulness in many callings, we are not therefore to attempt to master all callings, but as the dog uses his four legs to walk in a single path, so we are advised to use all our faculties to attain the greatest proficiency in whatever vocation we may reasonably hope for the greatest success. Concentration is the secret of success. All might have wealth if they would give as much thought to acquiring it as they do to spending it.[1]

XLVII.

MISERE FAIT MACAQUE MANGER PIMENTO.[2]

Hunger will make a monkey eat pepper.

Necessity has no law, or, as the Haytians also say:

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[1] This slave proverb in Hayti was a simple protest against being required to do too much. The version as I remember it runs thus: "*Chien dit li gagné quatre pieds, mais li pas capable couri quatre chemins à la fois.*" Schoelcher gives the Martinique version as "*Chien gagné quattre pates, mais le pas capable prend quatre chemins*" — *Hunt.*

[2] There is a tradition that one of the four small quad-

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XLVIII.

BONDIN PAS TINI ZOREILLES.

The belly has no ears.

That is, there is no reasoning with starvation. *Jejunus venter non audet libenter*, or, as Seneca says, *Venter precepta non audit.*[1]

The ancients also had a proverb analogous to this, but applicable to another order of ideas;

Venter ingenii largitor.

The belly (that is, hunger) *develops talents.*

There is a very old French Provençal proverb to the effect that *He who needs fire will seek it with his fingers.*

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rupeds of Hayti was a monkey, but it became extinct long before the arrival of the negro and all the monkey negro proverbs originated elsewhere than in Hayti.—*Hunt.*

[1] *Epistolæ Lucillii*, XX.

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XLIX.

MALHEURS PAS CHAGER COMME LA PIEL.[1]

Accidents do not threaten like rain.

This is a degeneration of a sublimely poetical version of the same thought which has come down to us as a part of the wisdom of antiquity.

Dii laneos habent pedes.

The feet of the avenging deities are shod with wool: Their steps are inaudible; they give no warning.

L.

OU FAIT SEMBLANT MOURIR, MOI FAIT SEMBLANT ENTERRER VOUS.

You make believe die, I make believe bury you.

This is a shot at all sham and false pretenses. The pretender is taken at his word. It recalls the story of the Quaker whose guest declined some delicacy at his table in the expectation of being asked a second time. Being disappointed in this, be held

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[1] I never heard this proverb, of which you have given the Trinidad version, in Hayti.—*Hunt.*

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out his plate, with the remark that he had changed his mind.

"Nay," replied the Quaker, "thee'll not lie in my house."

In other words, you make believe to be modest, or indifferent to my offerings and I'll take you at your word. "You make believe die, I make believe bury you."

The poet Martial has put the spirit of this proverb in an epigram on Coelius who, to escape the distractions and exactions of society, feigned so long and so faithfully to have the gout that at last he was spared the necessity of feigning.[1]

Franklin stimulated the colonists of Pennsylvania to resist the encroachments of the imperial government by using the Italian proverb.

Make yourself sheep, and the wolves will eat you.

The French say, *He who makes a sheep of himself, the wolf eats;* and the Spaniards say, *Make honey of yourself, and the flies will eat you.*

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[1] Mart., Lib. VII, 39.

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LI.

CHIEN CONNAIT COMMENT LI FAIT POUR MANGER ZOS.

The dog knows how to eat bones.

A modification of the vulgar, *You can't teach your grandmother to suck eggs.*

LII.

GUIDI GUIDI PAS FAIT VITE.

Making a fuss is not making haste.

LIII.

MOI VINI POU BOIR LAIT, MOI PAS VINI POU COMPTER VEAU.

I came to drink milk, not to count calves.

It is said of the pontifical court that it does not seek sheep without wool — *Curia Romana non quærit ovem sine lana* — a sentiment which, with many others, appears to have been inherited from pagan Rome where it was proverbial that —

Absque aere mutum est Apollonis oraculum — *Without his fee Apollo is mute.*

The Germans say, *Umsonst wird kein altar gedeckt.*

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Of the same *trempe* is Martial's epigram to Sextus:

Vis te Sexte, coli: volebam amare.[1]

You wish me, Sextus, to honor you; I wished to love you.

The Haytians have another proverb which is the logical correlative of the foregoing.

LIV.

MOIN PAS PREND DI THÉ POU LA FIÈVE LI.

I don't take tea for his fever.

LV.

CA QUI DIT OU, ACHETÉ CHOUAL GROS VENTE LI PAS AIDÉ VOUS NOURRIR LI.

He who advises you to buy a horse with a big belly will not help you feed him.

The world is full of people more ready with advice than money when we would buy; with criticism than credit when we become embarrassed; with indifference than sympathy when we become poor.

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[1] *Epigrams*, IV, book II.

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LVI.

BABIEZ MOUCHE, BABIEZ VIANDE.

Scold the fly, scold the meat.

In other words, if we find fault with the fly, we awaken a suspicion that the meat is spoiled by it. So the husband compromises his wife or daughter by accusing their cavaliers. It is the argument for silence used by the elders to Susannah.

LVII.

CA QUI GAGNÉ PETIT MIS DEHORS, VEILLEZ LA PLIE.

Who would harvest his millet, let him watch the weather.

This proverb, or at least the policy which it inculcates, seems to have been so universal at Rome some two thousand years ago that in the struggle for the repeal of the law which had banished Cicero, B.C. 57, the senate resolved that thenceforth whoever attempted *de cælo servare* — to watch the heavens,or by their interpretation to obstruct public business, was to be regarded as an enemy of the republic.[1]

[1] Forsyth's *Life of Cicero*, p. 200 and 213.

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LVIII.

CHIEN JAMAIN MORDE PETITE LI JUSQUE NANS ZOS.

The bitch will never bite its pups to the bone; or, as the French say, *The kick of the mare never harmed the horse.*

LIX.

PETITE QUE PAS CAPABE TÊTE MAMAN LI YO TÊTÉ GRANNE.

The baby that cannot suck its mother, will suck its grandmother.

This may be regarded as the Haytian version of the familiar line of Horace,

Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurrit.

LX.

ZIEUX ROUGE PAS BRULÉ SAVANNE.

Red eyes will not set the prairies on fire.

Rien ne seche plus vite que les larmes,[1] say the French.

Every language abounds in proverbs which, like these, treat tears as one of the most serviceable weapons of hypocrisy.

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[1] Nothing dries quicker than tears.

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LXI.

SI ZANDOLI TÉ BON VIANE LI PASSÉ CA DRIVÉR.

If the lizard were good to eat, it would not be so common.

And if soft words would butter parsnips, fewer would be wasted in flattery and idle compliment.

LXII.

SI COULÉVE PAS TÉ FONTÉ, FEMMES SE POUEND LI FAIR RIBANS JIPES.

If the adder were not so dangerous, women would take it for petticoat strings.

But for the dangers which beset the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, we should yield to them even more readily than we do now.

The arts, however, which the flatterer practices upon those who, unlike the lizard, are either too innocent or not worth preying upon, or who, unlike the adder, are not dangerous, are fitly described as a leprosy:

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LXIII.

LEPE DIT AIMÉ OUS PENDANT LI MANGE DOEGT OUS.

The leprosy pretends to love you that it may eat your fingers.

The pliancy of courtiers, the sycophancy of politicians and place-hunters, and the servility of toad-eaters of all denominations were never perhaps more justly characterized. It would seem to be scarcely more extraordinary for persons to put faith in the affection of a foul disease which is eating away their extremities than it is for men of exalted rank and influence to tolerate around them many who seem to be their favorites. *When flatterers meet, the devil goes to dinner;* his success is assured.

LXIV.

OU FACHE AVEC GAN CHEMIN QUI COTÉ OU VŒ PASSÉ.

If you quarrel with the high-road, which way will you go?

This is usually employed in deference to the presumptive wisdom of the majority and

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the good sense of manners and usages which have been sanctioned by time and popularity.

Descartes took many more words to say the same thing. One of the four rules of life which he prescribed to himself while making his search for truth was: "to obey the laws and customs of my country, adhering to the religion in which God has given me the grace to be educated from my infancy, and governing myself in all other matters according to the most moderate and least extreme opinions that are commonly received by the more sensible of those with whom I have to live. ... And among many opinions equally prevalent I chose the more moderate, as well because they are the most convenient in practice, and probably the best, all extremes being generally bad, as to wander as little as possible from the true course in case I had mistaken the road."

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LXV.

C'EST CUILLER QUI ALLÉ LA CAYE GAMELLE; GAMELLE PAS JAMAIN ALLÉ LA CAYE CUILLER.

The spoon goes to tray's house, but the tray never goes to spoon's house.

The poor visit the rich, but the rich do not visit the poor. Those who want go to those who have, but those who have are less apt to go to those who want. The obscure and humble seek the society of the fashionable, the distinguished, the powerful; the latter do not seek the society of the humble or the obscure.

"There are but two families in the world," said Sancho Panza, "those who have and those who have not. My grandmother," he added, with a delightful simplicity, "had great esteem for the families of those who have, and I am of her way of thinking."

The Haytians have another proverb which is a corollary of the preceding:

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LXVI.

PAUVRE MOUNE BAIL DEJEUNER NANS' CUIOR.

Poor people entertain with the heart.

Or as old Bishop Hall says in closing one of his satires:

> For whom he means to make an often guest,
> One dish shall serve, and welcome make the rest.[1]

Or as Shakespeare puts it:

> What my tongue dare not
> That my heart shall say.[2]

LXVII.

CABRITE PAS CONNAIT GOUMÉ MAIS CUI LI BATTE LA CHARGE.

The goat does not know how to fight, but his skin may beat the charge.

There is no one so humble or so infirm that he can not in some way promote a cause he has really at heart.

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[1] *Sat.*, III, book III.

[2] Groom *in Richard* 2, Act 5, Sc. 5.

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LXVIII.

BÊF PAS CA JAMAIN LASSE POTÉ CONES LI.

The ox is never weary of carrying his horns.

What flatters our vanity or gives us protection is never wearisome.

Marti arma non sunt oneri.

LXIX.

MOUNE CONNAIT CA QUA BOUILLI NEN CANARI LI.

Every one knows what is boiling in his own pot.

LXX.

HAILLIONS MOI PASSÉ TOUT NU.

Better rags than nakedness, or *half a loaf than no bread.*

LXXI.

BUTÉ PAS TOMBÉ.

A stumble is not a fall; or, One error is not ruin.

The horse which draws his halter is not quite escaped.

LXXII.

SI LI TÉ GAGNÉ MOUSSA LI TA MANGÉ GUMBO.

If he had mush, he would want gumbo.

A proverb applicable to the large class

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who are never sensible of their present blessings, but always wishing something more or different.

So the Hebrews say,

An ass is cold even in the summer solstice.

Luther, in his *Table-Talk*, is represented as putting down a Misnian noble who had stumbled into the category of men, who, when they have mush want gumbo, and rejected the gospel because it paid no interest, by telling the following fable:

"A lion, making a great feast, invited all the beasts, and with them some swine. When all manner of dainties were set before the guests, the swine asked, 'Have you no corn?'

"Even so," continued the doctor — "even so in these days it is with our Epicureans. We preachers set before them in our churches the most dainty and costly dishes, as everlasting salvation, remission of sins, and God's grace, but they, like swine, turn up their snouts, and ask for guilders. Offer a cow a nutmeg, and she will reject it for old hay."

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LXXIII.

CI LA QUI VLÉ COUVÉ COUVÉ SU ZEF YO.

Let him who wishes to hatch sit on his own eggs.

He who proposes to live without work must not undertake to do it at others' expense. He who would indulge in the luxury of a family must provide for it — he must hatch his own eggs.

LXXIV.

C'EST DEVANT TAMBOUR N'A CONNAIS ZAMBA.

It is before the drum you know Zamba.

A man's talents must be tested by what he professes to know and do best. Cicero taught the same truth, but less poetically; *Is maxime decet quemque, quod est suam maxime.*[1]

The Germans say, also, *Jedem steht sein eigenes kleid am besten.*[2]

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[1] *De Officiis*, 132. It best becomes us to do what we can do best.

[2] Every one's own garment becomes him best.

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LXXV.

DENT MORDE LANGUE.

The teeth bite the tongue.

One of the uniform consequences of domestic quarrels.

LXXVI.

VOLEUR PAS VLÉ CAMARADE LI PORTE MACOUTE.

The robber does not desire a comrade to carry his knapsack for him.

Distrust is one of the qualities most certain to rule in the breast of a rogue. Whom no one can trust is sure to trust no one. An important corollary of this proverb is thus treated by Seneca:

Nam quidam fallere docuerunt dum timent falle; et illi jus peccandi suspecando fecerunt.

Which Voltaire may have had in his mind when he wrote the following line in his tragedy of *Zaire:*

Quiconque est soupçonneux invite a le trahir.

Whether in his mind or not, this modification of the *jus peccandi* shows that seventeen centuries of Christianity had not been

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entirely lost even upon one who treated it as a superstition.

The robber does not desire a comrade to carry his bag, not merely from a healthy distrust of his principles, but from the yet more selfish motive implied in the following proverb, often in the mouths of court favorites and political parasites.

Le moins de gens qu'on peut, à l'entour du gateau.[1]

LXXVII.

DENTS PAS CA POTER DEI.

Teeth do not wear mourning.

Lightness of heart or innocence may not always be inferred from teeth-displaying laughter. Sad as well as treacherous hearts may often be found behind faces wreathed in smiles. "I laugh," said Byron, "that I may not weep."

[1] The fewer the better around the cake.

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LXXVIII.

CRABE PAS MÂCHER, LI PAS GRAS; LI MÂCHER TROP ET LI TOMBÉ NANS CHOIDÈR.

Crab has not walked, he is not fat; he has walked too much, and has fallen into the pot.

This illustrates the folly of running into extremes, and commends the wisdom of Deucalion's advice to Icarus:

In medio tulissimus ibis.

Too far east is west.

LXXIX.

CANARI VLÉ RIE CHÔDIÈR.

The earthern pot wishes to laugh at the iron pot.

The folly here criticised is also aimed at in the following:

LXXX.

QUI MELER ZÉFS NANS CALENDA OUOCHES?

What business have eggs dancing with stones.

Do not eat cherries with a nobleman, lest he throw the pits at your nose, is the form in which the Danes administer the same counsel; and the Germans say, *The egg presumes to know more of the matter than the chicken.*

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"Drive on your own track," is an old Greek proverb which Plutarch quotes to discourage the young from marrying above their rank.

LXXXI.

TRAVAI PAS MAL; CE ZIEZ QUI CAPONS.

Work is not hard; 'tis the eyes that are capons (cowards).

People are often discouraged from undertaking the task which Providence has clearly assigned them, in view of the magnitude of the aggregate result expected of them. They overlook the lesson taught them by their watches, which count aloud over thirty millions in a year by counting only sixty times in a minute. Hence the curtain of the future is always down. Had the loyal people of the United States, when Fort Sumter was fired upon in 1860, thought it would cost from three to four milliards of dollars and more than a million of lives to preserve the Union, it may be doubted whether the voice of the country would not have pronounced in favor of "letting the wayward

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sisters go." If Pope Julius II. had known that the erection of St. Peter's Church at Rome would result in the great Reformation, which in three centures was destined to give the controlling military and civil power in Europe to the Protestants, that monument of ecclesiastical presumption might never have been reared, and the Reformation, with all its vital and vitalizing consequences, might have been indefinitely postponed. Pharaoh would scarcely have ordered the male children of his Hebrew subjects to be thrown into the Nile if he had supposed it was to lead to the overthrow of himself and of his army in the Red sea. And when Moses invited his compatriots to fly with him to the land of Canaan, his following would have been small in numbers if before leaving Egypt they had suspected they were to wander forty years in the wilderness. Did man realize at the commencement of his regeneration that he must end, as Christ did, upon the cross; deliver up to death all his carnal and selfish

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affections, it is to be feared there would be fewer Christians even than there are.

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state;
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know:
Or who could suffer being here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.
Oh! blindness to the future! kindly given
That each may fill the circle marked by Heaven;
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all;
A hero perish or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
And now a bubble burst and now a world.[1]

It is curious to observe how prone we all are to exaggerate the difficulties and the dangers that beset any radical reform of our habits; how our imagination helps us to picture the helpless, destitute and forlorn condition to which we should be reduced if we were to give battle to some of the more formidable of our besetting sins. The weakness, and the cowardice of every human heart, in this respect, was prefigured with singular distinctness in the report of the scouts sent out by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan.

[1] Pope's *Essay on Man*, 77.

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"We came unto this land," they said, "whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless they be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. * * We be not able to go up against the people for they are stronger than we. * * The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature, and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers and so we were in their sight."[1]

The result proved that it was not the enemies that were so formidable, it was the eyes that were cowards.

LXXXII.

VOYER CHIEN, CHIEN VOYER LA CHÉ LI.

Send dog, dog sends his tail.

Another branch of Dr. Franklin's aphor-

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[1] Numbers, ch. xiii.

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ism, that if you would have your business done, go; if not, send. Your agent will be apt to follow your example, and send.

LXXXIII.

SAC QUI VIDE PAS CONNAIT RÉTÉ DEBOUT.

The empty bag can't stand up.

This is the hungry slave's reply when reproached for idleness.

The Haytian's conversation abounds also in aphoristic expressions, which need only a slight change in form to be proverbs. For example, if a man's conduct justifies the worst imputations of his enemies, they say:

LXXXIV.

BAÎE LENEMIS LAITE POÛ BOÈR LA-SOUS TÊTE OUS.

He gives his enemies milk to drink on his head.

If a man has a grudge against you, they say:

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LXXXV.

HÔMME LA TINÎ YON TIT COCHON CA NOURRÎ POÛ OUS.

That man has a pig feeding for you.

If a man turns a deaf ear to another:

LXXXVI.

LI CASSER BOIS NANS ZOREÎES LI.

He broke wood in his ears.

Of one who brings his kindred to trouble they say:

LXXXVII.

LI METTER D'LEAU NANS ZIEZ FAMÎE LI.

He put water in the eyes of his relations.

Conversing they call:

LXXXVIII.

CE MANGER ZOREISS.

To eat with the ears.

To cheat a person unmercifully:

LXXXIX.

ENTRER NANS VENTE YON MOUNE.

To get into a person's belly.

To accommodate one's self to the custom of the place:

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XC.

DANSER QUAND TAMBOÛ CA BATTE.

To dance as the drum beats.

A man with two faces — treachery:

XCI.

CÉ YON COUTEAÛ PHÊMACIE.

He is an apothecary's knife (which is two edged).

Of a man who cannot keep a secret, but must bring it up and out, they say:

XCII.

CÉ YON GENS QUI TINÎ L'ESTOMAC FROIT.

He is a fellow with a cold stomach.

The proverbs of every nationality deserve to be studied scarcely less, perhaps, for what they do not, than for what they do contain. This is especially true of the proverbs of Hayti. The reader will look in vain through this collection for any thing corresponding in spirit with the popular maxims of Poor Richard, by which labor is dignified and sweetened, poverty disinfected of meanness and vulgarity, and frugality raised to the

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dignity of a Christian grace. How can the slave be expected to find pleasure in toil the fruits of which go to another, or merit in frugality which neither increases nor diminishes his own store nor adds to the comforts of any in whom he is interested? Industry, toil, thrift, economy, whether of property or time, can no more be commended to a slave than the east wind to a rheumatic.

It will be remarked also that there is not a proverb in this collection which reflects the slightest interest in the church or in the forms and ceremonial of the Catholic faith, in which the Haytians are trained. Some indication of the old Vaudou worship, which they or their ancestors brought with them from Africa, and which, though proscribed by the law and the church, is still cultivated more earnestly and more sincerely than any other, may be occasionally detected, but the Christian faith seems to have left no impression upon their forms of thought or expression.

Love, the fertile mother of proverbs in

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other and especially warm countries, has not, so far as I know, produced a single one in Hayti. The same is true of friendship, courage, firmness, and all those heroic qualities which have a sense of moral accountability for their basis. As might be expected from a race of bondmen, their proverbs reveal no consciousness of the power and pleasure of knowledge, of the value and uses of education; no interest whatever inart of any kind, nor, it grieves me to add, any interest in the domestic relations, with a single exception: the slave all the world over resents any indignity offered to his mother. In the father the slave naturally feels less interest; as little in brothers and sisters, in marriage, and in domestic life, the sacred charms of which have never been revealed to him.

How little do they know of slavery to whom that word only suggests ideas of shabby attire, coarse food, hard labor, brutal punishments, and the manifold physical privations incident thereto! What are these

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to the direr privations to which the proverbs they do not use, bear their unimpeachable, if silent, testimony — privations which starve the soul, dry up in the heart those fountains of affection and sentiment which make all men kin, and which plant in their place fear, hate, vindictiveness, and despair?

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THE

WIT AND WISDOM

OF THE

HAYTIANS.

BY

JOHN BIGELOW.

NEW YORK:
SCRIBNER & ARMSTRONG.
1877.

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