

KINGS AND EMPERORS ON AMERICAN SOIL.

Half a Dozen Have Reigned on Our Side of the World
Within the Last Hundred Years—Four of Them
Have Been Confined to Haiti.

Special Correspondence.

Port au Prince, Haiti, Aug. 10.—We are accustomed to consider monarchy exclusively an old-world institution, and to most Americans the realization that five empires and one kingdom have actually flourished on our side of the world within the last century comes as a shock of surprise. Only one of the six was strictly a foreign exorcism—the second empire of Mexico, when a luckless scion of the house of Hapsburg was upheld for a little time, by French bayonets, upon the throne of the Montezumas. The longer reign of the kings of Brazil, which ended only a few years ago with the expulsion of good Dom Pedro, was begun when Joao VI. head of the ancient house of Braganza, transferred his imperium from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, merely moving, for reasons of state, from one part of his domains to another. The other four kingdoms were created on American soil by people of America. Happily none of them flourished long. The atmosphere of the western hemisphere seems to be fatal to such growths. All the monarchs either suffered a tragic death, or were banished in disgrace, and the heirs to their crowns and scepters are today wanderers in foreign lands, or unloved private citizens in their own.

After the downfall of the Incas and the Montezumas, the first empire to be established in the new world was in this little island of Haiti. In 1804, when the great Napoleon placed the imperial crown of France on his own head in the cathedral of Notre Dame, General Dessalines—a full-blooded, brutal negro—black as the typical ace of spades and a monster of cruelty, proclaimed himself Emperor Jean Jacques I. He had better reason for doing so than most upstart emperors. After three years of bloody warfare he had defeated the French forces under Bonaparte's army out of Haiti; and should the victor be less than the vanquished? After that master-spirit, Toussaint L'Ouverture was kidnapped and carried to France by Napoleon's orders (in 1801), Dessalines was the most prominent and successful soldier left on the island. All Haiti rallied around him, and he prosecuted the war with such vigor, assisted by those faithful allies, yellow fever and malaria which carried the French troops off by the thousands, that he soon had the enemy at his mercy. It is a black page in the history which tells how Rochambeau, driven to desperation, ordered the shooting of five hundred blacks, and how Dessalines, in retaliation, murdered twice as many French soldiers who had been defeated on Cape Haitien. Then an English fleet blockaded the ports of Haiti and the French commander surrendered to the British admiral—Dessalines agreeing, on condition that the troops be immediately removed from the island. On Jan. 1, 1804, he proclaimed the independence of Haiti and the island took a promising place among the nations of the world. The Haitians, grateful to the man who had achieved their independence, unanimously elected him governor-general for life, and for six months all went tolerably well. In May Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor of the French, and Dessalines, who afterwards followed his illustrious example, He was crowned with great pomp and ceremony, and his first act was to order the massacre of the remaining French planters, that their fine estates of sugar and coffee be planted with yams and bananas for the sustenance of the troops in case of another war. After two years of turbulent reign he was assassinated by the soldiers of Gen. Pétion, a coffee-colored mulatto, who seized the reins of government and established his capital at Port au Prince; while the northern portion of the island fell to another soldier, Henri Christophe, who made Cape Haitien his capital. The two warred against each other for several years, each ambitious to be supreme chief, but eventually settled down to their respective governments—Pétion over the mulattoes of the south Christophe over the blacks of the north. Pétion was really elected president of the legislature, and held the office until he died—strange to say, peacefully in bed—in the year 1818. He was succeeded by Henri, a mulatto, whose father was a light-colored mulatto tailor, and his mother the blackest and most ignorant of Congo negroes. The son was educated in France where he acquired a "taste of polish," and came back to the land of his birth with the French general, Leclerc.

It was in Boyer's time (1824), that Haiti, in order to obtain from France a recognition of her independence and status as a republic, agreed to pay a large indemnity to those former possessors of the island who had been expelled and the heirs of the thousands of Frenchmen massacred by Dessalines. The amount agreed upon was 150,000,000 francs, to be paid in five annual

installments. Sixty millions were actually paid within five years; but after that, owing to the national prejudice against paying debts of any sort, few payments were forthcoming, and the loan at very long intervals, until the "Haitian loan" made France the butt of jokes the world over. Needless to add, more than half the amount is yet unpaid.

Meanwhile Christophe had declared himself "king" in the northern end of the island and was solemnly crowned in 1811, under the title of Henri I. There were three separate governments in Haiti—that of the so-called presidents, Pétion and Boyer, in the southwest, Spain, which seized the eastern portion of the island, and the kingdom of Christophe in the northwest. The latter was a soldier of sanguinary experience, and so well did he manage his coal-black troops that he forced both Spain and the presidents to acknowledge his government and became one of the recognized sovereigns of the world. The Haitian blacks are royalists, by instinct and profession—at heart as much today as ever, preferring the show and glitter of courts to the plain simplicity of republicanism. They like pomp and ceremony, gold lace and epaulettes, cocked hats and feathers, and if the opportunity were offered, would again take to royalty as easily as a hen-raped duck to water. So they maintained the buffoonery of Henri I. as enthusiastically as they had that of the self-made house of the imperial Dessalines, and for nine years Christophe had things pretty much all his own way at this end of the island. He established a royal court and an order of knighthood known as the "Knights of St. Henri," while dukes and counts and other noble nobility became plentiful as blackberries in the lanes of New England. That was only about 30 years ago, and degenerate descendants of the "Counts of Lemonade" and the "Dukes of Marmalade" may still be met in the neighborhood of Cape Haitien. They are usually mounted on bony steeds, a la Don Quixote, clad in faded regimentals, with spurs on naked feet and woolly heads encased under enormous cocked hats. Henri I was a wonderful man, in spite of his barbarous cruelty and savage instincts. The ruined place of "Sans Souci," beautiful even in decay, and the vast fortress of La Parette are existing proofs of his genius. The fortress, crowning the crest of a mountain, about four hours' ride from the point of the cape, is a work that would command admiration anywhere, though built with all the resources of modern civilization at hand. Its massive walls tower aloft more than a hundred feet, surrounded by a wide, deep moat, yet spanned by decaying drawbridges. Inside are interminable galleries, one above another, in which hundreds of ancient cannons are still mounted—for Christophe had made it his mind to construct a stronghold that could defy the combined navies of the world. It is today a second Gibraltar, but what a sacrifice of life it cost! Its walls were literally cemented with human blood. Among the many similar stories, it is related that one day the tyrant saw a hundred men toiling and sweating in the burning sun, vainly trying to haul a heavy cannon up the mountain side. Seeing the king the head of the force came and ordered himself to the earth before him, begged for more men, or mules, to perform the task. At this Henri flew into a violent rage. Beckoning his guard he commanded: "Take this fellow and every second man of that lot and shoot them on the spot." It was done, and then Christophe ordered the remaining 50 men to perform what the hundred had failed to do. Naturally, the demoralized force could not accomplish the Herculean task quick enough to suit him, and the king, now frenzied with rage, ordered every alternate man of the 50 to be shot and the remaining 25 to pull up the cannon. They did it somehow, under the guns of the guard, though most of them fell dead at the foot, from exhaustion or bursting blood vessels. After his stronghold was completed Christophe moved into it with all his treasure, estimated at thirty million dollars and defied the world to come and take it. One day, when a thunderstorm was raging in the mountains, a stray bolt struck the castle. He responded to the challenge by ordering his gunners to fire all the cannon in the galleries, and as the mighty roar boomed forth he shook his fist at the skies and shouted: "Christophe the king can make a bigger noise than God Himself." Some of those old euns, so long silent in the disused galleries, would have been 50 years ago, except for the labor of getting them back to the coast, for the modern Haitians consider it a impossible task to slide down the mountain side what their fathers so laboriously brought up. Christophe's subjects, one and all, knelt before him as slaves, not daring to look him in the face. Did he want a carriage built, or any article made, he sent for the artificer, who tremblingly prostrated himself at the foot of the throne. "How long will it take you to make it?" demanded the king. Perhaps the answer would be: "Three months, your majesty." "Very well. If it is not here before me, finished and perfect in every particular, in two weeks, you will be thrown over the precipice." And in such matters Christophe never broke his word. Having been stricken with partial paralysis, Henri I shot himself with a silver bullet in a chamber of Sans Souci and was buried in a quadrangle of the fort in the hills.

Long after Christophe, as late as 1849, Haiti had another monarchy, under Souleouque, an illiterate and superstitious ex-slave, who declared himself emperor under the title of Faustin I, and revived the old nobility of the Marmalades and Lemonades. It was not long before he made himself such a laughing stock by his absurd pretensions that even obtuse Haiti was forced to repudiate him. He was sent into exile, after having successfully plundered the treasury of millions. His successor, a negro named Gaudard, though only "president" of Haiti, followed his illustrious example, even into exile, with his pockets full of plunder. Next came Salnave, a coal-black soldier, who became dictator in 1857 and assumed all the powers of absolute monarch. He was deposed by Saget, driven from his palace and shot like a dog in the streets. And so they have been going the pace ever since in Haiti, few of the so-called presidents ever completing their terms of office, the careers of most of them being cut short, none too soon, by the bullet, or the knife of an assassin. Only a few years ago the famous Legitime was overturned and driven out, by the more famous Hypolite; and Hypolite, after assuming all the pomp and powers of royalty, lacking only the name, massacred hundreds of his subjects and died a peaceful death which he did not deserve. He was a big, blue-black extraordinary brutal negro, and if ever a wretch deserved to be hung it was Hypolite. His successor, President Simon Sam, a tolerably respectable disparity, of decidedly less sanguinary disposition, managed to save a couple of millions out of his salary in a short time, and scenting a coming storm, retired to Paris with his savings "on a visit." It was said at the time, but doubtless never to return. A provisional government was organized, for the purpose of electing a new president, and a new election could be held under the constitution. Soldier candidates for the lucrative post of president sprang up like the faded crop after the sowing of the dragon's teeth, and hence the present embroilment all be attributed to the strongest candidate, and the rest he intended against him, to seize the government by fair means or foul. A nice country, truly, for Uncle Samuel to interest himself in! Yet it is confidently believed in all the neighboring islands that the United States will sooner or later interfere and make Haiti one of her territories, like near-by Porto Rico. Seems to me we have troubles enough of our own without any such foolishness.

But to return to the subject of American kings. While Henri I was ruling in Haiti, another king was reigning in the western world, far away to the south. In 1807 Napoleon had made Lisbon extremely uncomfortable for John VI, king of Portugal and Brazil; and so he shifted his quarters to the old stone palace, under the shadow of Hunchback mountain in Rio de Janeiro, which today faces its little mark bravely as ever. When the downfall of Napoleon allowed him to return to his beloved Lisbon, he left his eldest son in Brazil as regent. In 1822, two years after the downfall of Henri I, in Haiti, the independent of Brazil was proclaimed and King John's son became emperor, under the title of Dom Pedro I. In the same year (1822), turbulence set up the first empire in Mexico, which vanished almost in a night. The second empire under Maximilian began as late as the middle of our civil war, and many of the prominent figures in it are still alive.

FANNIE B. WARD.

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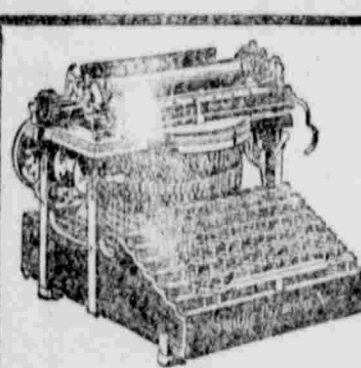
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