

**HAÏTI AS IT IS; BEING NOTES  
OF FIVE MONTHS'  
SOJOURN IN THE NORTH  
AND NORTH-WEST OF HAÏTI**

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Haiti as It Is; Being Notes of Five Months' Sojourn in the North and North-West of Haiti by  
Robert S. E. Hepburn

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**ROBERT S. E. HEPBURN**

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HAÏTI AS IT IS;

BEING

NOTES OF FIVE MONTHS' SOJOURN

IN THE

NORTH AND NORTH-WEST OF HAÏTI,

BY

ROBERT S. E. HEPBURN,

LATE CHEMIST AND GEOLOGIST TO THE REPUBLIC OF HAÏTI.

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"One of the most beautiful islands in the world, and doomed  
to be one of the most unfortunate."—WASHINGTON IRVING.

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KINGSTON, JAMAICA:

A. DECORDOVA & NEPHEW, HARBOUR STREET.

MDCCLXI.

1861

TO  
HIS EXCELLENCY FABRE GEFFRARD,  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF HAÏTI,  
WITH DEEP RESPECT  
FOR HIS PATRIOTISM AND MANY OTHER VIRTUES,  
THE FOLLOWING PAGES  
*Mr Schickel*,  
BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S ATTACHED  
AND  
FAITHFUL SERVANT,  
THE AUTHOR.

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## Introduction.

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“ It is a strange thing that, in sea voyages, where there is nothing to be seen but sky and sea, men should make diaries ; but in land travel, wherein so much is to be observed, for the most part they omit it ; as if chance were fitter to be registered than observation.”—BACON.

To write the history of a sojourn in any country, in the form of a journal,—recording each fact or observation in the order of chronological sequence,—besides labouring under the disadvantage of being simply a medley of facts thrown together, without reference to the subjects embraced, or the conclusions to be arrived at by the reader, is, in most cases, dry and uninteresting, whilst the narrative is apt to merge into a gossiping style, which, to persons of well regulated minds, is exceedingly distasteful.

There are some persons peculiarly prone to gossip. They delight in telling, and hearing some new thing,—not because they convey to others, or themselves derive any new ideas by this means—but, because it is to them a very pleasant way of passing a leisure moment.



My purpose, is not to engage in gossip, nor to gratify an idle curiosity, but rather to endeavour to convey to the reader correct notions of my impressions of a country and people, about which the majority of persons in this Island appear anxious to be accurately informed.

Upon my arrival in this city from Haiti, in the Steamer *Talisman*, I had many queries put to me respecting the present condition of Haiti, in a social, political, and commercial point of view. In addition to these, many persons were anxious for information on the character of the country itself, as well as the nature of its mineral wealth. It was scarcely possible to convey to the querists any correct notions on the points upon which information was sought, apart from a careful analysis of facts and observations recorded in my journal, in order to ascertain to what general conclusions they pointed. It was also necessary to consider, what points required elucidation, in so far as they appear to be the results of past events, and as they relate to the present condition, and future destinies of that country.

I determined, therefore, to reduce my notes under certain general heads, which would in themselves embrace a statement pointing to one or more general conclusions, relating to its politics and commerce, its agri-

cultural and mining prospects, its scenery and climate, as well as an account of the geological structure of that part of the country through which I travelled. Such is a brief statement of the plan which I propose adopting in the following pages.

The task which I have assigned myself, is surrounded with peculiar difficulties. It is one open to errors of a peculiar kind, such as over-rating or under-rating, by placing small virtues in too prominent a light, or by fixing the eye too steadily on failings, arising out of circumstances beyond legitimate control, and magnifying them into great faults. A strict adherence to truth is the only means of avoiding these two extremes; it is indeed the only means of serving faithfully a people, justly proud of their independence and anxious to take up an honorable position amongst nations. To say that the people of Haiti are without their shortcomings would be simply untrue; but to deny to them the possession of any virtues whatever, or to make them the subject of scorn, ridicule, and contempt, is not only unfair, but also slanderous and malicious. There are many points in the Haitien character that admit of severe animadversion, but then let us remember that they possess traits of character worthy of our warmest admiration, and, that these if counterpoised, against the others, will be found so far to out-weigh them, that

all things taken together, we would not hesitate to say of them, as Columbus said of the aborigines of that very country, "there is not in the world a better nation, nor a better land."

Throughout the eventful history of this interesting country—eventful from the day that Columbus first landed on its shores to the present—there is perhaps none more so than the passing period. We find it arrived at a point when all bids fair for future progress and prosperity, seeming to have arrived at a position from whence the long wished for goal may be viewed, so that the prize appears to be within their anxious grasp, passing events would seem to be removing it further from them, and rendering the consequence inevitable, that the struggle should be renewed. By the perfidy of one man, a people inimical to the African and his descendants are brought within their borders to threaten their independence, and not only so, to close the door of refuge against the sons and daughters of the African and his descendants, whom American slaveholders, after having employed them to the worst of purposes, have heartlessly exiled. I would, therefore, invite attention to the following details, which I trust will be found interesting, whilst they will, I hope, convey correct notions of the present condition, and future prospects of the Haitien republic.