

TOUSSAINT, Dominique François, best known as TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE, Haytian soldier, b. in Bréda, near Cape François, in 1743; d. in the castle of Joux, near Pontarlier, France, 27 April, 1803. He was a slave, and his master employed him as coachman, and subsequently made him overseer, in which office he was honest and efficient, but was severe toward his fellow-slaves. In 1790, when the mulattoes appealed to the negroes for help in enforcing their rights, Toussaint refused to join them, but forwarded supplies secretly to his friend, Jean Biassou, the leader of the insurgents. After the general massacre of the whites in August, 1791, Toussaint protected the flight of his master, and then joined the forces of Jean François, being appointed by the latter chief surgeon of the army. He soon became very popular in the negro army, but incurred the enmity of François, who imprisoned him in the fortress of La Vallière in 1793; but Biassou liberated him. Soon Toussaint turned against his benefactor, and supported the candidacy of Jean François as supreme chief. When news came of the execution of Louis XVI., François, followed by Toussaint, accepted a colonel's commission in the Spanish-Dominican forces, and went to the Spanish part of the island. Re-enforced by a Spanish division, Toussaint invaded French territory, defeated Brandicourt, and occupied important posts, among them Gonaives. Meanwhile the English had taken Port au Prince, and the whole island was in confusion, French, English, Spaniards, mulattoes, and negroes all contending for supremacy. After unsuccessful negotiations with the French agents, Étienne Polverel and Félicité Sonthonax, he heard that the French government had decreed the freedom of the slaves,



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and Gen. Laveaux, Polverel's successor, having promised him the rank of brigadier he joined the French forces. His successes against the Spanish and English were immediate and great. "Cet homme fait donc l'ouverture partout," exclaimed Laveaux, and afterward Toussaint was given the surname of L'Ouverture. Some authorities say that he adopted the title to declare himself the liberator of his people. Laveaux distrusted him, and was seeking an opportunity to dismiss him; but in March, 1795, there was an insurrection in Cape Français, and Toussaint, relieving Laveaux, was appointed lieutenant-general and deputy governor-general, and caused the negroes to lay down their arms. Being confirmed in his offices by the Directory through Sonthonax, Laveaux's successor, in April, 1796, Toussaint formed and disciplined another army, with the purpose of making himself master of the province, and entering Cape Français in August, at the head of a strong party of cavalry, compelled Sonthonax to leave for France. He then assumed the government, acknowledging only the authority of the Directory. The latter body, aware of the extraordinary influence that he exercised over the blacks, feigned to approve his acts, but sent a new commissioner, Gen. Hédouville, to Santo Domingo. Meanwhile the English general, Maitland, had received orders from the home government to evacuate Santo Domingo, and he sought to conciliate Toussaint. It is now demonstrated, through the documents published by Pamphile Lacroix, that a treaty was concerted between Maitland and Toussaint which recognized the latter as king of Santo Domingo, England pledging also the acceptance of the other powers, on condition that an exclusive right of commerce in the island be conceded to the English, who should maintain forever an armed fleet for the protection of Santo Domingo. The sudden landing of Gen. Hédouville terminated the negotiations, and Maitland surrendered to Toussaint Port au Prince, St. Marc, Jeremie, and Mole St. Nicolas. Hédouville, aware of Toussaint's intrigues, sought to overthrow him, but the latter organized through his agents a rebellion in Cape Français, and Hédouville was compelled to return to France. Before sailing he appointed Gen. André Rigaud his lieutenant, and the mulattoes, dissatisfied with Toussaint's rule, rallied around Rigaud. A fierce war ensued, in which Toussaint was almost defeated, but finally drove Rigaud to Les Cayes in December, 1799. At this juncture new commissioners, sent by Bonaparte, brought to Toussaint a commission of commander-in-chief, and determined Rigaud to sail for France. Toussaint then proclaimed a general amnesty and issued his famous decree, which, though acknowledging the enfranchisement of the negroes, compelled them to work for five years for their old masters without other remuneration than a fourth part of the net income from the land that was thus cultivated. He also organized his military household with pomp and ceremony, formed a guard, built palaces, and began to direct his attention to the prosperity of the country, fostering agriculture and commerce. He used to say, "I am the Bonaparte of Santo Domingo," and it is said that he headed his correspondence to the first consul, "The first among the blacks to the first among the whites." At the beginning he selected an administrative council composed of eight whites and one black. Toward the close of January, 1801, he subdued, without effort, the Spanish part of the island, which had been ceded to France by the treaty of Basles. His next act was to promulgate a constitution the first article

of which made him president and commander-in-chief of Santo Domingo for life, with the privilege of choosing his successor and of appointing all military and civil officers. This provoked harsh criticism, and there were riots in several cities, which Toussaint subdued with his usual vigor. In the north he defeated the rebels on 4 Nov., and ordered his own nephew, Hyacinthe Moyse, to be shot without trial. On 26 Nov. he issued a decree recalling the emigrated proprietors and providing severe penalties for larceny and other offences against the common law. Bonaparte just then directed his attention to Santo Domingo. It is now conceded that he had less in mind to subdue Toussaint than "to get rid of 60,000 soldiers," the partisans of Gen. Moreau, as he said to Gen. Fairfait, who dissuaded him from sending an expedition to perish by yellow fever in Santo Domingo. A powerful fleet, carrying an army under command of Gen. Victor Leclerc, appeared on 29 Jan., 1802, in the Bay of Samana, and, dividing his forces into four divisions, the general-in-chief made sail for Cape Français. Toussaint's army numbered then 20,000 trained soldiers, twice Leclerc's forces, yet he did not oppose the landing, but instructed Henry Christophe to set fire to the town, 6 Feb., 1802. The whole island readily accepted the French rule, yet nothing was gained so long as Toussaint refused to make his submission. Leclerc tried hard to conciliate him, choosing as his ambassadors Toussaint's two sons, who had been brought from school in France to deliver to their father a letter from the first consul, commending Toussaint's administration and maintaining him in the office of commander-in-chief. But as Toussaint demanded that the French forces should re-embark immediately, the captain-general proclaimed him an outlaw on 17 Feb. A sanguinary conflict ensued with varying success, the French holding the seaports and the blacks defying them in their mountain-fastnesses, and Leclerc, finding it impossible to conquer the island by force, sought to win over the negro generals, and succeeded in part, Christophe and Dessalines making their submission. Leclerc, nevertheless, was most anxious to treat, as out of a total of 23,000 men, 5,000 were already dead and upward of 6,000 in the hospitals. He consented, therefore, to pardon Toussaint, and assigned him for residence his estate of Sancey, near Gonaives, 1 May, 1802. It was alleged by the French authorities that Toussaint was continuing to conspire against them, and a correspondence with his former adjutant, Joseph Fontaine, which has never been published, having been seized, Leclerc resolved to arrest him. Gen. Brunet invited Toussaint to a conference at Gorges, and both parties went, accompanied by twenty guards, but the negroes were easily overcome, and Toussaint was embarked on the frigate "La Créole" and transported to Cape Français. There he was transferred on the ship "Le Héros" and sent with his family to France, arriving at Landerneau, 10 Aug., and at Paris, 17 Aug., 1802. There he was met by Gen. Caffarelli, an aide-de-camp of Bonaparte, transported to the castle of Joux, and closely confined. Stories of harsh treatment have been circulated; it has even been said that he was subjected to the intense cold with insufficient clothing and food, and that finally he died from hunger during an absence of the governor of the castle, or, as some say, from poison; but there is no positive proof of all this. It must be borne in mind that Toussaint was at that time sixty years old, that he had never before left Santo Domingo, and was unaccustomed to the severe winters of the Jura mountains. Moreover, the governor of

the castle not only had special orders for the welfare of his prisoner, but became his friend, as is shown by Toussaint's correspondence. Toussaint probably died from apoplexy, provoked by anger, resentment, and humiliation at his ill fortune. In person Toussaint was short of stature and of unprepossessing appearance. He was temperate and hardy, often riding fifty leagues without stopping, and sleeping but two hours. In his army he maintained the strictest discipline, and his soldiers looked on him as a superior being. His life has been written by Charles de St. Rémy (Paris, 1850), by John R. Beard (London, 1853), by Charles W. Elliot (New York, 1855), and by James Redpath (Boston, 1863), and he forms the subject of one of Wendell Phillips's most celebrated lectures. Toussaint's family was transported to France with him, and assigned a residence in Agen with a pension from the government. His wife died there in May, 1816, and his third son soon afterward. The two eldest, Isaac and Placide, having tried to escape in 1805, were imprisoned in Belle-Isle till 1815. They settled afterward in Bordeaux. Placide, who died in 1843, published "Vie de Toussaint l'Ouverture" (Bordeaux, 1825). Isaac died in 1850.