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1724 Frankford Road.
Philadelphia. March 1st, 1875.

My Dear Mr. Bigelow.

I duly received your letter of the 24th ult. and was glad to learn that you had finally arranged for the publication of your Haytian proverbs. You are entirely at liberty to use the extract from one of my letters which you enclose to me. I had forgotten that I ever wrote to you any account of the incident in question, though I had not forgotten the occurrence. I find it in my note-book, and it there appears incidentally, to illustrate the disposition on the part of Haytian rulers to interfere personally and directly in details. It is given as one among several, and is as follows.

Another instance of direct interference with details on the part of the Haytian Government.

Some time in 1852, there was for a while, a great demand for logwood, at Port au Prince. Many vessels were in

the harbour, waiting cargo, and logwood, at the time, was the only product accessible. Generally only three balances for the weighing of logwood, previous to shipment, were needed at the Custom-House. But on this occasion, three extra ones were set up for the accommodation of the shipping merchants. This was reported to the Emperor, and he suspected it had something to do with smuggling. So, one morning, he came down to the Custom-House with his staff, consisting of twenty-five or thirty, mostly generals & colonels, all in uniform, and mounted, as well as the Emperor. He alighted and an arm-chair was brought him from one of the offices. He took his seat, a sort of hollow square was formed, & the Director of the Custom House was called before him. He approached, half bent, shading his eyes with his hands. This, I believe, was one of the prescribed ceremonials to be observed by one who was called into the presence of the Emperor, - the imperial presence being supposed to dazzle like the sun. The Emperor addressed the Director in a low, but hurried & excited tone of voice. "How is this, Mr. Director? - Three logwood balances

were enough in Mr. Pétion's time, & three are enough now. Let the three extra ones be taken down. If ever they are put up again, I will hang the man that puts them up, on the potence (frame-work of the balance.) Go!" and with a gesture, dismissed him. Then turning to the crowd, standing round, with hats off, at a respectful distance, he said in a little louder, but still a low voice, "I am Emperor, yes. I am the first man on earth, just as St. John, the Baptist, is the first man in heaven." St. John is the patron saint of the masons, and as every Haytian, who can afford the expence, including a dress coat, & can get himself accepted, becomes a mason, St. John is supposed to be the chief of all the saints.

I have had this copied entire, as the readiest way of correcting the faults & omissions of the letter account, which, however, is much the most spirited. The cause of the Emperor's visit was suspicion of smuggling. As I well remember, Monsieur Cadet, the Director, & Monsieur Alexis, the weigh-master, when they came before the Emperor, did not bow down to the earth, but approached half bent; the central joint of their persons forming a right

angle. The Emperor was not violent in manner; this was never his habit. His voice was always low, modified on this occasion by suppressed excitement. The disposition of the Haytians to become masons explains the introduction of St. John, whose festival, the 24th of June, is one of the leading Haytian holidays.

In writing of the Haytians, I always consider it best to curb all appearance of a disposition to describe them as ridiculous. If a simple statement makes them so, & it often enough will, let it. There is naturally an almost uncontrolable bias on the part of writers, who visit the Haytians, to show them up as ridiculous. But Hayti is a very serious subject & should so be treated.

I am glad to hear that you are coming to Phila, and when here, you can, if you will, look over my note-books on Hayti, which now, thanks to my "learned secretary", as you term her, are in a very readable condition. If you find anything else, suited to your purpose, you shall be welcome to it. I have not been working in the direction of Hayti for the last six months. When

I came to the subject of the French engagés, & struck in to an old shaft, which I had worked many years ago, and have never lost my interest in it. I have been reading & making collections on the early emigration of the poor to America, ever since.

It is clear to me that your three volumes about Franklin will eventually, if they are not now, be the source from which most Americans will get their knowledge of his life and character. A lady, and an intimate friend, whose son had read the Autobiography, asked me the other day, where she could best find the rest of Franklin's life. I sent her in the first volume of Sparks, and your first volume. She chose the latter.

When you come on, come to the

house in any part of the day, & if you are here at the time of taking food, you can join us in such as we have. We can even give you a bed, as the family now consists only of Mrs. Hunt, Miss Chamberlain and myself, if you can not do better.

Please present my compliments to Mrs. Bigelow and believe me, as ever, to be

Your sincere friend.—

Wm. P. Hunt

You will find two or three changes & corrections in your MS., which I return enclosed