

difference between the color of the Commander-in-Chief and mine? Is it a tint of color, more or less dark, which instills principles of philosophy or gives merit to an individual? . . . I have consecrated my life to the defense of the blacks. From the beginning of the revolution I have braved all for the cause of liberty. I have not betrayed my principles and I shall never do so. Besides, I am too much a believer in the Rights of Man to think that there is one color in nature superior to another. I know a man only as a man.

The revolution under the encouragement of the French revolutionaries seemed to have created a new nation. The great tragedy of San Domingo was that as the revolution in France retreated before reaction, the old slave-owners regained influence and harassed the exhausted blacks.

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The Old United States

The revolts in the United States follow the same line as those in the West Indies before 1789, constant ill-organized uprisings which are always crushed with comparative ease.

A typical revolt was that which took place at Stono, a plantation some twenty miles to the West of Carolina, in September 1739. A few score of slaves killed the two guards of a magazine, armed themselves and set out for the Edisto river. Other Negroes joined them, they marched with colors displayed, drums beating, shouting for liberty, and killing and burning all in their path. They killed about twenty-five whites, but spared one who was a good man and kind to his slaves. After some miles of this destruction they stopped to rest,

but were surprised by their white owners who had followed in pursuit. They fought bravely, but they were defeated, and most of them were either shot in battle, hanged, or gibbeted alive. That is the theme on which the variations were played in state after state in America as in island after island in the West Indies. The slaves gained nothing by these revolts. No attempt is made to treat them more kindly. Instead revolts are savagely repressed and the severity of slave legislation increased.

Yet these American revolts between 1670 and 1860 follow certain laws. This of 1739 was one of a series which took place in South Carolina between 1737 and 1740, a period of grave economic difficulties. There is imperialist intrigue at work. Spain still had colonies in America and the Spaniards were encouraging these American slaves to rebel. Many of the Negroes had been captured in Angola, and being Catholic, were attracted to the Spaniards. When the revolting Negroes set out for the Edisto river, they intended to follow it to its mouth, which was in Spanish territory. Finally the Negroes outnumbered the whites four to one in this state. Yet despite these favorable circumstances the revolt seems to have neglected the thousands of slaves who, it may be presumed, were not unwilling to join. While their masters lived in constant terror, the Negroes themselves seemed unconscious of their revolutionary potentialities when organized on an extensive scale.

The San Domingo revolution and its success dominated the minds of Negroes in the West Indies and America for the next generation. In America, where the slaves had periodically revolted from the very beginning of slavery, San Domingo inspired a series of fresh revolts during the succeeding twenty years. Documented accounts of these American slave revolts have appeared in the United States. In 1795 a revolt in Louisiana failed to take place owing to a quarrel as to the method. But this revolt is notable because an important feature now appears which seems to have been the direct result of the revolutionary ferment of the age: there were whites in alliance with the Negroes from the very beginning. Five years afterward, in 1800, there took place the well-known revolt headed by the Negro slave Gabriel, in Virginia. The white authorities, fortunately for them, heard about it before

the uprising actually began and were thus able to take precautions. About a thousand slaves, armed with clubs and swords, which they had been making since the last harvest, gathered six miles away from the town of Richmond. But a tremendous storm flooded the rivers, tore down bridges and made it impossible to conduct military operations. The revolt ended as always in failure and bloody suppression. Yet Gabriel and his followers were slave revolutionaries above the average. They intended to spare Frenchmen because the Frenchmen were associated in their minds with liberty, equality and fraternity. They were also going to spare Quakers and Methodists because these were consistently opposed to slavery. They confidently expected the poorer whites to join them. After the fore-doomed defeat, Gabriel was captured, tried and executed. It is not known how many Negroes were concerned, but the numbers suggested varied between 2,000 and 10,000.

Despite the accidents which overtook this revolt at its beginning, it is impossible to see what other result but defeat awaited it. It had no support among powerful revolutionary elements in the country. It had no support abroad. Similar failures awaited the plots in Virginia and North Carolina in 1801-2. For these, however, we have clear evidence that the poor whites of the districts had definitely allied themselves with the Negroes. This is the recruiting speech of one of the revolting Negroes: "I have taken it on myself to let the country be at liberty, this lies upon my mind for a long time. Mind men I have told you a great deal I have joined with both black and white which is the common men or poor white people, Mulattoes will join with me to help free the country, although they are free already. I have got eight or ten white men to lead me in the fight on the magazine, they will be before me and hand out guns, powder, pistols, shot and other things that will answer the purpose . . . black men I mean to lose my life in this if they will take it."

There were risings in 1811 and again in 1816, but even as late as 1822 in Virginia, one Denmark Vesey, a free Negro, attempted to lead a revolt which was partially inspired by San Domingo. Vesey based his attempt on his readings of the Bible, but he also had the San Domingo revolution in mind, for he wrote to the rul-

ers of Haiti, telling them of his plans and asking for aid. Despite his religious outlook, or because of it, all who opposed the rising were to be killed. The numbers involved were said to have been between 6,000 and 9,000, and some of his supporters came from as far away as eighty miles. The insurrection was betrayed, probably by that mischievous type—the house-slave who was kindly treated by his master and wore his cast-off clothes.

The last important American revolt was Nat Turner's, born out of the anti-slavery agitation which was to end in the abolition of slavery in the British colonies. Mexico abolished slavery in 1829 and in this period, right through the West Indies and Spanish America, there was slave revolt after slave revolt. Turner's revolt was not very wide in scope. An intelligent and gifted man, he took his inspiration from the Bible. In February 1831 about seventy Negroes, some of them mounted, covered an area of about twenty miles and killed about sixty women and children. They were ultimately defeated by hundreds of state troops. Turner was caught and hanged.

So far, Turner's revolt was commonplace. But this revolt had an effect out of all proportion to its size. Though there are reports of slave conspiracies and of plots all over the Southern states for the next thirty years, nothing on a large scale seems to have been attempted. On the other hand at the time of the Turner revolt the Southern slave owners realized that the unrest "was not confined to the slaves." Henceforward the fear of unity between the blacks and the poor whites drove the South to treat with great severity any opposition to slavery in the South from whatever source it came. A rigid censorship was instituted. In the years before the American Civil War the turmoil among the slaves was widespread all over the South. Their chance came, however, not from the poor whites of the South but from the economic and political necessities of the Northern whites.

The Civil War

Before we consider the course of emancipation in America, let us see what the Negroes were to be emancipated from. In 1860, little more than seventy-five years ago, Negro slavery was still widespread in the Southern states of America. We know what slavery was like during the eighteenth century. It had not changed much in the last half of the nineteenth.

Here is a case that reads as if it came straight from San Domingo, Barbados or British Guiana in 1749.

The Negro was tied to a tree and whipped with switches. When Southern became fatigued with the labor of whipping, he called upon a Negro man of his and made him "cob" Sam with a single.