

# THE BRIGHT ISLE

BY ALBERT JAY NOCK

*To Munson Havens*

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI  
25 January, 1937

MY DEAR FRIEND: —

I am now in Haiti, ready to bet with anyone that it is the most charming and interesting spot on this hemisphere. It has something for pretty nearly everybody. Its marvelous beauty goes to the tourist's heart and stays there; the student of civilization delights himself in hobnobbing with the people; and the island appears to be a virgin field for research-workers in almost every branch of science I can think of, from agronomy up and down.

Even an archæologist might find something to do here, for people occasionally turn up artifacts of the earliest known inhabitants, the tribe which Columbus found, and which his noble countrymen killed off so promptly that there has not been an authentic trace of their blood in the Haitian population for a couple of centuries. No one seems to know just what those folks were; some sort of Indians, probably, for they were copper-colored. They were often raided by Caribs, however, so probably there was some admixture of blood resulting, since that is the usual thing. Their numbers are estimated at 200,000, though I do not know on what evidence. In his official report Columbus gives these poor souls a great character for gentleness, kindness and hospitality. It would have been money in their pocket, as Artemus Ward said,

'if they had given Chris a warm meal and sent him home again ore the ragin Billers.' In fact, I think you and I might agree that it would have been a good thing all round if the whole Western Hemisphere had been let lie fallow for fifty or a hundred thousand years, or until such time as people came along with sense and decency enough to do the right thing by it; assuming, of course, that such people ever would come along, which I should say is open to great doubt.

I have seen a small fragment of an artifact in clay, showing the head and face of some animal, very well moulded. I am so ignorant of such matters that I have no idea whether the thing was originally part of a jug-handle or part of an idol; it could do for either, as far as I know to the contrary. Over on the south side of the island there are certain mounds which appear to be artificial, like those in the Ohio Valley. It might be worth while to cut a cross-section of one of them to find out what is inside, if anything; it would not cost much. Perhaps the whole region is worth a look-see by some competent archæologist, for I cannot get any testimony to its ever having had one.

Biologists and anthropologists could certainly do some business here. As reckoned by political geography, the blood-strains uniting in the present population are Spanish, African and French; Spanish and African since 1500, French since 1600. The Africans