

HISTORY OF
S T. D O M I N G O.

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penury was extreme ; and sloth, depopulation, and degeneracy, were its necessary consequences (*f*).

THE introduction into this island of negroes from Africa, of which I have elsewhere traced the origin and cause (*g*), took place at an early period. This resource did not, however, greatly contribute to augment the population of the colony ; for such of the whites as removed to the continent, in search of richer mines and better fortune, commonly took their negroes with them ; and the small pox, a few years afterwards, destroyed prodigious numbers of others. In 1717, the whole number of inhabitants under the Spanish dominion, of all ages and conditions, enslaved and free, were no more than 18,410, and since that time, I conceive, they have rather diminished than increased. Of pure whites (in contradistinction to the people of mixed blood) the number is undoubtedly very inconsiderable ; perhaps not 3,000 in the whole.

(*f*) The gross ignorance of considering gold and silver as *real* instead of *artificial* wealth, and the folly of neglecting agriculture for the sake of exploring mines, have been well exposed by Abbé Raynal ; who compares the conduct of the Spaniards in this respect, to that of the dog in the fable, dropping the piece of meat which he had in his mouth, to catch at the shadow of it in the water.

(*g*) Hist. of the British West Indies, Book iv. c. 2. A curious circumstance was, however, omitted. When the Portuguese first began the traffick in negroes, application was made to the Pope to sanctify the trade by a bull, which his Holiness issued accordingly. In consequence of this permission and authority, a very considerable slave-market was established at Lisbon, inasmuch, that about the year 1539, from 10 to 12,000 negroes were sold there annually.