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JOHN MERCER LANGSTON,
UNITED STATES MINISTER
TO HAITI, 1877-1885

A thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska at Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
John Dirk Fulton
October, 1969

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Accepted for the faculty of The Graduate College of the
University of Nebraska at Omaha in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

Graduate Committee

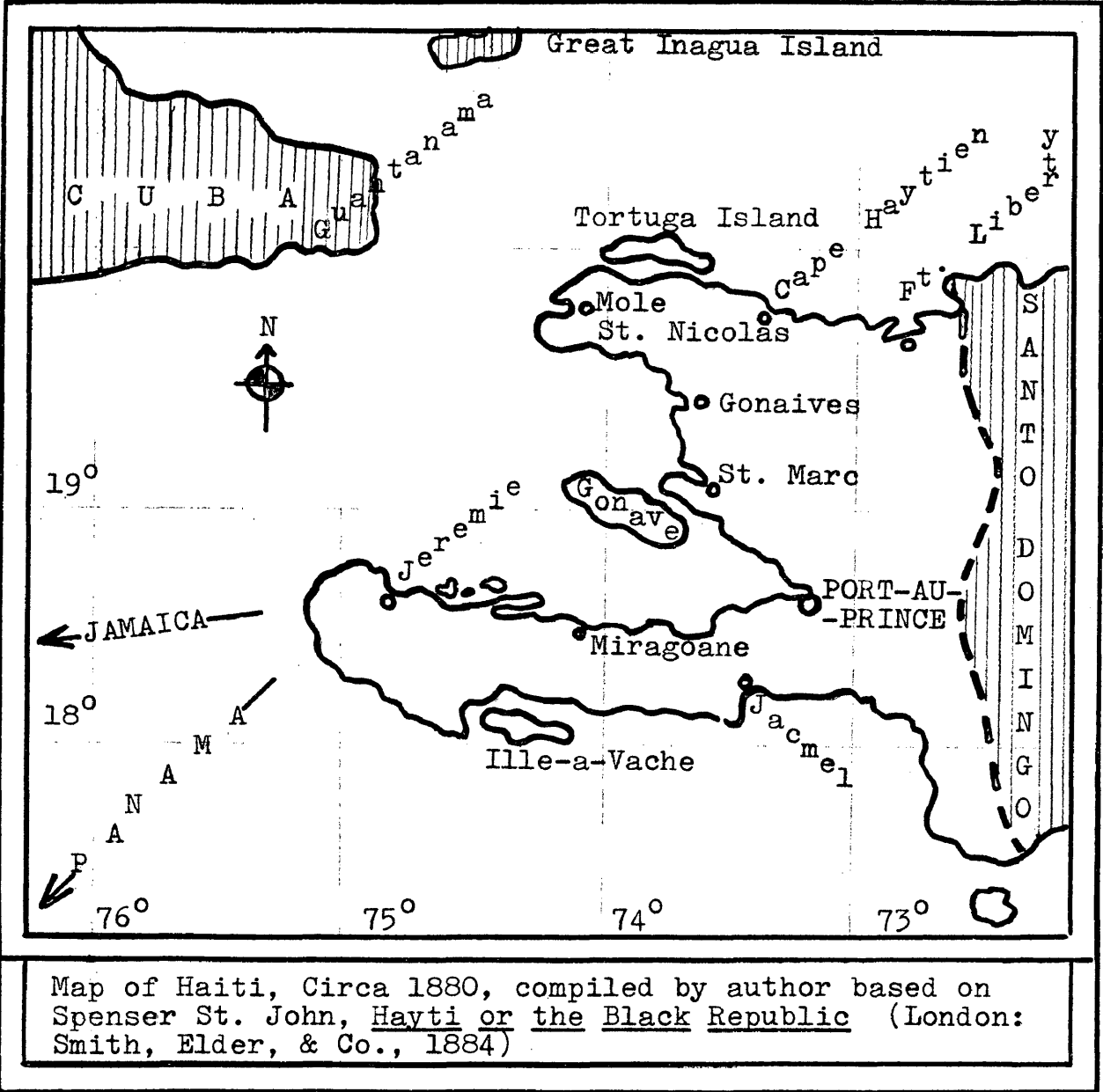
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INTRODUCTION

John Mercer Langston succeeded Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett as United States Minister to Haiti. Robert Plante submitted a Master of Arts Thesis, "Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, United States Minister to Haiti, 1869-1877," to the University of Nebraska at Omaha in August 1969, and the subject of this thesis was chosen with the view of continuing research in the same historical period.

Unlike Bassett, who served his tour in Haiti and in Plante's words ". . . was promptly forgotten," Langston has been well remembered. Langston was a lawyer, a noted public speaker, a diplomat, an educator, Congressman from Virginia, and during his lifetime he ranked only second to the great Frederick Douglass as the leading American Negro in the late nineteenth century. Langston had many claims to fame and he recorded these events in his autobiography, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital; or, The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion. William Francis Cheek III has also written a Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, "Forgotten Prophet: The Life of John Mercer Langston," and Langston's name has been prominently mentioned in many "Black History" works. "Why this thesis?" would appear to be a pertinent question.

Preliminary research indicated that the accounts provided by Langston and Cheek were too general, that neither told the story of Minister Langston, and that more research was needed. The purpose of this thesis is to give further information on Langston's tenure as the United States Minister to Haiti. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to a further knowledge of John Mercer Langston while at the same time provide additional information concerning United States-Haitian relations during the period, 1877-1885.

CHAPTER I

APPOINTMENT IN HAITI

On November 14, 1877, the British steamship Andes departed the port of New York City bound for Haiti. On board was the newly-appointed United States Minister to Haiti, John Mercer Langston. The first three days were unpleasant for the forty-eight year old Negro from Virginia. This was his first time at sea, and he became seasick. On the fourth day, which was Sunday, the Captain asked him to read the Scripture lesson to the passengers and crew.¹ Langston, writing in the third person, described the occasion in his autobiography:

This he did and thereby won great favor with the officers as well as the passengers on the ship. Indeed, the captain complimented him by declaring that he would make a most excellent chaplain. Several times, in fact, after he had been heard at this meeting, he was invited by all on board to make addresses. And when nearing the close of the voyage it was proposed to honor the captain by opening a bottle of champagne and drinking his health, Mr. Langston was, by unanimous call and applause, made the orator par excellence.²

Langston considered it an honor to represent the United States to the Black Republic in the Caribbean. He recalled that Haiti was the second nation in the New World

¹John Mercer Langston, From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital; or, The First and Only Negro Representative in Congress from the Old Dominion. (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1894), pp. 358, 359. Cited hereafter as Virginia. See the New York Times, November 14, 1877, for the sailing date of the Andes.

²Langston, Virginia, p. 359.

to gain independence. He had even named one of his sons after Dessalines, the Haitian leader who had declared independence from France in 1804.³

While the institution of slavery still functioned in the United States, Langston had been reared and educated in a manner befitting the white son of a wealthy planter. His father, Ralph Quarles of Louisa County, Virginia, was a white and wealthy planter, but his mother, Lucy Langston, was a fair-skinned Negro slave girl. Ralph Quarles had emancipated Lucy and one daughter before John Mercer Langston was born, and withstanding the fact that Quarles did not marry Lucy, he treated his family as if they had been members of his own race and color.

Langston's parents, Lucy Langston and Ralph Quarles, died in 1834, but his father's will provided generously for him as well as for his sister and two older brothers. Langston, who was five years old in 1834, was sent to live with a white friend of his father in Chillicothe, Ohio. In Ohio, Langston was reared by his guardian, who treated him as a son. Langston attended a private school in Cincinnati, and then went on to graduate from Oberlin College in 1853.⁴

After graduation, Langston studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1854. He began practicing law in

³Ibid., pp. 157, 358, 524-528. John Mercer Langston's family consisted of his wife, one daughter and three sons. Langston's eldest son was named Arthur Dessalines Langston.

⁴Ibid., pp. 11-103.

Brownhelm, a township located in northern Ohio and close by Lake Erie.⁵ Langston's interest soon turned to politics, and in 1855, he was elected as Brownhelm Township Clerk.⁶ Although Brownhelm Township was distinguished by an overwhelming white majority, its population consisted mainly of New Englanders who prided themselves on their progressive outlook.⁷

During the Civil War, Langston served as a recruiter for Negro troops; and in 1868, President Johnson appointed him Inspector-General of the Freedmen's Bureau. When these activities were terminated, he accepted the professorship of law at Howard University in 1869.⁸

⁵Ibid., p. 356. See also William Francis Cheek III, "Forgotten Prophet; The Life of John Mercer Langston," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1961), p. 38. Cited hereafter as Forgotten Prophet. Cheek wrote: "Though evidence is inconclusive, it is probable that John Mercer Langston was the first Negro in the United States to achieve admission to the bar." See also Booker T. Washington, The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery. (2 vols.; New York: Peter Smith, 1940), II, 185. Macon B. Allen was the first Negro admitted to practice law in the United States according to Booker T. Washington. This writer feels that further research, especially in the New England area, may produce the names of others who may have a prior claim.

⁶Langston, Virginia, pp. 137-139. See also Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 49. Cheek wrote that Langston was probably the first Negro to be chosen to an elective office in the United States. See also William Loren Katz, Teachers' Guide to American Negro History. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 80. Katz states unequivocally that Langston was the first Negro to be elected to political office. Katz does not offer documentation for this claim nor is his bibliography an adequate guide. This writer feels that further research may reveal claimants as early as the seventeenth century in colonial America.

⁷Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, pp. 38, 39.

⁸Ibid., pp. 82-150.

While organizing and establishing the law department at Howard University, Langston had other interests. In 1872 President Grant appointed him attorney for the District of Columbia Board of Health. This appointment was a political reward for Langston's extensive efforts for Grant in the Presidential campaign of 1872. In 1872 Langston was also appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company, an agency of the Freedmen's Bureau.⁹

While he was at Howard University leaders of the Republican Party called upon Langston to devote much of his time and energy ". . . to justify the black man's attachment to the party that had saved the Union, protected the lives of loyal people, and equalized American institutions."¹⁰ Langston also sought, through oral persuasion, to depict the Democrats as the ". . . organization bent on driving the Negro out of politics."¹¹

In 1872 Langston canvassed the states of New York, Ohio and North Carolina. In the fall of 1876 he made more than sixty speeches in these and other states. With the close victory of Rutherford B. Hayes in the disputed election of 1876, he felt assured that his efforts would be rewarded with a higher form of patronage than he had been previously

⁹Ibid., pp. 151-159. This latter appointment turned out to be a dubious honor, as the bank was declared insolvent in 1874.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 166.

¹¹Ibid.

accorded.¹² But in March 1877, during the month in which Hayes assumed the presidency, opposition to Langston attaining Cabinet rank can be seen in this article which appeared in the New York Times:

There has been a persistent effort made by a number of colored men to have the President appoint Professor Langston, a colored man, to the Commissioner of Agriculture. Since the appointment of Frederick Douglass to be Marshal for this district [Washington] these efforts have increased. . . . The difference between Messrs. Douglass and Langston is that while the former is competent to discharge the duties of Marshal, the latter has no qualifications whatever for the administration of the Department of Agriculture.¹³

Apparently President Hayes held similar views, or he was convinced by close advisers that Langston was not qualified to head the Department of Agriculture. As a result, the President offered him a lesser appointment as Minister to Haiti. His appointment was officially tendered on October 2, 1877, and his nomination was confirmed by the Senate later in the same month.¹⁴ Since he had served in a variety of administrative and legal positions he had no qualms about his own qualifications for foreign service but ". . . he yet professed somewhat uncharacteristically, that he felt an inadequacy when it came to the mastery of the French language which he would

¹²Ibid., pp. 166-174.

¹³New York Times, March 31, 1877. Also see Langston, Virginia, pp. 350-374. Langston did not mention the efforts to have himself appointed Commissioner of Agriculture.

¹⁴U.S., National Archives, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State: Haiti. MSS, II, Evarts to Langston, October 2, 1877, No. 1, and October 26, 1877, No. 3. Cited hereafter as Instructions, Haiti.

be called upon to use in Haiti."¹⁵

Langston arrived at Port-au-Prince, the Haitian capital, on November 21, 1877. He was met by the retiring Minister, Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, the British Chargé d' Affaires, Major Robert Stuart, and Bassett's private secretary, Adrian H. Lazare. Bassett had a carriage waiting, and after Langston's baggage was loaded, they rode by to see the American Legation while enroute to the American minister's residence on the outskirts of the city.¹⁶

The next few days were spent in becoming acquainted with Port-au-Prince and his new diplomatic post. On the third day, Langston and Bassett were given an audience with Haiti's chief executive, President Boisrond-Canal. Bassett presented his Letter of Recall and Langston tendered his Letter of Credence.¹⁷ In his autobiography, Langston described his official reception as being very impressive:

The National Band with a detachment of the National guards affording the appropriate music and doing military duty on the occasion, in honor of the new

¹⁵Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 175. Cheek credited Langston with the acquisition of a knowledge of French during his tenure. Cheek could have been misled by Langston's statement that he was ". . . able to present his successor to the Haitian president." See Langston, Virginia, p. 370. Langston's brief presentation could have been committed to memory. See U.S., National Archives, Despatches from the United States Ministers to Haiti, MSS, XVIX, Langston to Bayard, June 30, 1885, No. 755. Cited hereafter as Despatches, Haiti.

¹⁶Langston, Virginia, p. 335.

¹⁷Despatches, Haiti, X, Langston to Evarts, November 29, 1877, No. 8.

American minister and his government, signalized and distinguished his official recognition.¹⁸

Langston did not acknowledge that the impressive ceremony was more in honor of the retiring minister than himself. Bassett had saved the Haitian president's life in 1874 by offering Boisrond-Canal refuge in the American minister's resident for more than five months.¹⁹ Bassett departed Haiti on December 1, and Langston had only nine days in which to obtain the benefit of the retiring minister's advice.²⁰ Still there was no difficulty as Langston had found the conditions of his diplomatic post in good order as a result of Bassett's efficient administration of the office during a long tenure. These conditions were reflected in Langston's first report to Secretary Evarts, in which he reported that all was peaceful and quiet in Haiti.²¹

Langston reported that Boisrond-Canal's government was popular with the people even though some sharp domestic criticism was heard. In his dispatch he enclosed an article from Le Constitutionnel, an opposition newspaper, which criticized the finance minister for being bureaucratic and

¹⁸Langston, Virginia, p. 371.

¹⁹Robert Plante, "Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, United States Minister to Haiti, 1869-1877," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1969), pp. 87-101. Cited hereafter as Bassett.

²⁰Despatches, Haiti, X, Bassett to Evarts, December 15, 1877, Western Union Telegram.

²¹U.S., Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1877, p. 412. Cited hereafter as F.R.U.S.

irrational. The article concluded that the finance minister could easily solve his problems but ". . . there are always people who manage to drown themselves in a glass of water."²²

Langston felt that this kind of open criticism was evidence of the improving political health of Haiti:

Freedom of debate, liberty of the press, agitation and instructions of the public mind, are the only moral agencies calculated to cure this government of its chronic and disastrous disorders.²³

The new minister only expressed two dissatisfactions with his post. Langston felt that ". . . the hurried and imperfect instructions, verbal and written, given at the State Department were not adequate for the beginning of his mission."²⁴ He also did not care for the American Legation, which he found ". . . as located, established and furnished, was neither in appearance nor dignity what he felt it ought to be."²⁵ On the whole, Langston felt pleased with his appointment to Haiti. When Bassett departed Langston hired Adrian H. Lazare, Bassett's private secretary, and the new minister was comforted to have French-speaking Lazare relieve a possible clumsy situation:

[Langston] found the society of the city composed of

²²F.R.U.S., 1877, p. 414.

²³Ibid., p. 412. See the New York Times, August 9, 1877, for the last reported political disturbance. This article reported that insurgents under the command of General Salomon had been rebuffed by government troops about ten miles from Port-au-Prince.

²⁴Langston, Virginia, pp. 354, 355.

²⁵Ibid., p. 375.

so many foreign elements using the English language, that he was able to make himself quite at home, even from the very first. Furthermore, his secretary was so much the master of the French and Spanish languages and was so attentive to the minister, that he found little embarrassment in even social life, for Mr. Lazare was always present and ready to translate and interpret for him.²⁶

Langston enjoyed his official and social status among representatives of powerful nations and among the Haitians. He admired the tropical city with its refreshing sea and land breezes, shaded streets and its easy pace of life.²⁷ He was especially pleased with his residence located on the outskirts of the city:

It was at Sans Souci--the place whose name is so unique and expressive--"without care"--that the American minister at once established and spent the greater part of his time while he remained in the beautiful Island Republic.²⁸

²⁶Langston, Virginia, p. 370.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 350-374. Langston painted Port-au-Prince in glowing terms in his autobiography, but his despatches provide a more accurate picture. For example, see Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, May 1, 1879, No. 153, and his description of the deplorable health and sanitary conditions when there was an outbreak of Yellow Fever. John Houston Craige, Cannibal Cousins, (New York: Minton Balch & Company, 1934), pp. 15, 16, provides an apt description: "A filthy, beautiful, glamorous, appalling city. . . . It attracted and repelled. The breeze brought to our nostrils languorous tropical perfumes mingled with hideous stenches."

²⁸Langston, Virginia, p. 375.

CHAPTER II

THE LAZARE CLAIM

Having established himself, Langston turned to the business of the legation and found four instructions from Secretary Evarts awaiting his attention. The first instruction concerned the Oaksmith claim.¹ This claim involved an American firm which had a contract with President Salnave to rebuild the old United States warship Atlanta and sell it to Haiti for \$160,000. The firm received a down payment of approximately \$50,000 when the ship was turned over to the Haitian crew. Unfortunately the ship sank while enroute to Haiti in December 1869. Before the account was settled, Salnave was overthrown by Nissage Saget. Saget was not disposed to pay for a ship he had neither ordered nor could see. Succeeding chief executives had apparently felt the same way and the claim had never been settled.²

Langston reported that as far as he could determine

¹Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, October 22, 1877, No. 2. Accounts of the Oaksmith claim can be found in Ludwell Lee Montague, Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), cited hereafter as Haiti, and Rayford W. Logan, The Diplomatic Relations of the United States with Haiti, 1776-1891, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), cited hereafter as Diplomatic Relations.

²Despatches, Haiti, IX, Bassett to Evarts, April 24, 1877, No. 496, and X, September 24, 1877, No. 539.

his predecessor had never made a formal presentation of the Oaksmith claim to Boisrond-Canal's administration.³ Had Langston checked the legation files, he would have found that Bassett had done this on April 12, 1877 without receiving any satisfaction from the Haitian government.⁴

Another outstanding claim forwarded to Langston was the Heuvelman, Haven and Company claim for \$109,752.43. This amount was claimed for the cost of constructing a Pantheon for the Domingue administration in 1875.⁵ The history of Haiti's Pantheon reads like fiction, as this sample (indicates:

It was under President Domingue that the need for a Haitian Pantheon was discovered. The President's nephew, Septimus Rameau, the Prime Minister of the Domingue Government, had heard of the French Pantheon. He made a brilliant oration before the Haitian Legislature, dwelling on the glories of the French Pantheon and asking for a credit . . . for the erection of a Haitian Pantheon in Port-au-Prince. The motion was carried by unanimous consent. It had to be. Rameau controlled the Legislature. So the Prime Minister sat down / and dictated a letter to Heuvelman, Haven and Company: /

No. 5. ³Ibid., X, Langston to Evarts, November 29, 1877,

⁴Ibid., IX, Bassett to Evarts, April 24, 1877, No. 496.

⁵Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, December 14, 1877, No. 9. See also Despatches, Haiti, X, Bassett to Evarts, September 24, 1877, No. 539. Heuvelman, Haven and Company had previously constructed a bank building and a warehouse for the Domingue administration for which they had been paid. The Heuvelman, Haven and Company claim is mentioned by Montague, Haiti, and Logan, Diplomatic Relations, but these two accounts do not present Langston's actions. The account of the Pantheon by Craige, Cannibal Cousins, does not offer documentation and appears to be based upon information learned by Craige through personal interviews with various Haitian citizens.

"We want a Pantheon. We have a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars to pay for it and we have great confidence in the artistic taste and engineering ability of your firm. Will you therefore kindly make us one Pantheon of cast iron, as big as possible for the money and send it to us by the first available conveyance."⁶

The Pantheon was cast in Philadelphia, shipped to Haiti, and bolted together by the American firm on the Champ de Mars, the main street of Port-au-Prince. "It didn't look much like the Pantheon in Paris, true enough, but then not many of the Haitian statesmen had ever been to Paris."⁷ Shortly thereafter Domingue was overthrown and exiled, Rameau was killed, and Heuvelman, Haven and Company was left without payment. Bassett reported that the claim was a sore subject for the Haitians:

[The American firm's] distance from the country did not permit them to appreciate at its just value the fallen government and the situation which it was creating to the country by its squanderings before contracting with it.⁸

Evarts informed Langston that both the Oaksmith and Heuvelman, Haven and Company claims were based on individual contracts with the Haitian government, and as such could not be considered international in character. Evarts said that these claims must be pursued through the normal channels of

⁶Craige, Cannibal Cousins, p. 225. See also Despatches, Haiti, X, Bassett to Evarts, September 24, 1877, No. 539. Craige had the letter going to another firm, but otherwise his history appears to be correct.

⁷Craige, Cannibal Cousins, p. 226.

⁸Despatches, Haiti, X, Bassett to Evarts, September 24, 1877, No. 539.

the Haitian government and instructed Langston to ". . . limit your proceedings for the collection to your personal good offices."⁹ Langston, acting as the private attorney for these two claimants, wrote continually to the Haitian government for the settlement of these two claims over the next five years. In 1883 he reported to Frelinghuysen that Heuvelman, Haven and Company had received final payment and that the Oaksmith claim had been paid in full.¹⁰

The third claim was for \$500,000 and concerned the claim of Langston's secretary, Adrian H. Lazare, who had made a contract with President Domingue to establish a national bank in Haiti. Lazare claimed that after he had arranged the necessary capital that Domingue had cancelled the contract. Lazare desired reimbursement for the expenses and the interest on the capital he had secured, plus the expenses for the construction of the physical facilities to house the national bank.¹¹

Since William M. Evarts, at the time of his appointment as Secretary of State had been the acknowledged leader of the American Bar and he was writing to an attorney and former professor of law, it comes as no surprise that his

⁹Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, October 22, 1877, No. 2, and December 14, 1877, No. 9.

¹⁰Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, February 19, 1883, No. 518, and March 20, 1883, No. 533.

¹¹Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, December 13, 1877, No. 8.

instructions read like a lawyer's brief.¹² These instructions were lengthy, detailed and included a copy of the contract, statements and the minute affidavit of the claimant. It is apparent that Evarts knew Lazare's claim was dubious but that he had decided to press the claim anyway. His closing words read clearly to this point:

[The settlement of Lazare's claim] may be accomplished either by submitting the controversy to arbitration or by the Haitian government of its own volition making such an allowance and payment to this claimant as under the circumstances, justice and equity seem to dictate.¹³

The following month, Langston signed and forwarded a report on Lazare's claim which had been penned by the claimant himself, Langston's secretary.¹⁴ Langston reported that he had checked the files and found a report by Bassett,¹⁵ which had been ". . . a vigorous and minute statement against this claim."¹⁶ Langston said that Bassett's report had been

¹²Samuel Flagg Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, (10 Vols.; New York: Pageant Book Company, 1958), VII, 219. Cited hereafter as American Secretaries.

¹³Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, December 13, 1877, No. 8.

¹⁴This writer does not presume a knowlege of graphology, but the difference between Langston's hard-to-read scrawl, and Lazare's fine and neat hand is obvious. For a comparison, see Despatches, Haiti, IX, Bassett to Evarts, April 24, 1877, No. 495, for an affidavit executed by Lazare, and XVII, November 6, 1883, (no number), for an example of Langston's handwriting.

¹⁵Despatches, Haiti, IX, Bassett to Evarts, April 24, 1877, No. 495.

¹⁶Ibid., XI, Langston to Evarts, January 25, 1878, No. 26.

incomplete and erroneous. Langston added that as soon as Lazare could provide the missing information, the claim would be formally presented to the Haitian government.¹⁷

Bassett's report to Evarts that the Lazare claim was invalid was complete and thorough. Lazare had been Bassett's house-guest several times and Bassett had personal knowledge of Lazare's ambitious scheme to found a national bank:

I had therefore, an opportunity of knowing the steps taken by him at those times in reference to the bank. I had also other opportunities of knowing all the important facts in the case as they occurred.¹⁸

In September 1874, Lazare made a contract with the Domingue administration to establish a national bank with a metallic reserve of \$1,500,000. Haiti was to furnish \$500,000, and Lazare was to provide the remainder. The contract stated that if the bank were not in operation in one year, the contract would be null and void. Lazare tried in vain to arrange loans in Paris and New York, but failed. In April 1875, he returned to Port-au-Prince and requested a forty-five day extension to his contract. He traveled to London and tried again, but when the extension expired he still could not produce any capital. President Domingue, in appreciation of Lazare's efforts and expenses, gave him \$10,000, and appointed him Haiti's consul-general in New York City which he readily

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., IX, Bassett to Evarts, April 24, 1877, No. 495.

accepted. When Domingue was overthrown by Boisrond-Canal in 1876, Lazare lost his position with the Haitian government and returned to Port-au-Prince, where he was able to secure a job as Bassett's private secretary.¹⁹

When Lazare learned that the Haitian archives had been destroyed by fire during the revolution in 1876, he initiated his claim against the Haitian government for alleged breach of contract. The Lazare claim was submitted to Secretary Hamilton Fish by Lazare's New York City lawyers and Fish forwarded the claim to Port-au-Prince for Bassett's investigation and report.²⁰

Bassett's report pointed out that at no time had Lazare been able to obtain a million dollars and that the physical facilities of the bank had been built and paid for. Bassett had Lazare, his secretary and the claimant himself, write the report, which included Bassett's opinion that the claim was unfounded.²¹

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Instructions, Haiti, II, Fish to Bassett, September 18, 1877, No. 283.

²¹Despatches, Haiti, IX, Bassett to Evarts, April 24, 1877, No. 495. Bassett experienced a delay in completing his report to Fish because of the unsettled political situation after the overthrow of the Domingue administration. When he finally filed his report, Secretary Evarts had replaced Fish in the State Department. Accounts of the Lazare claim can be found in Montague, Haiti, and Logan, Diplomatic Relations. For a bitter and scathing review by a Haitian writer, see Jacques Nicholas Leger, Haiti: Her History and Her Detractors, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1907), pp. 231, 232. Cited hereafter as Haiti Detractors. Documentation for the Lazare case can also be found in F.R.U.S., 1887, pp. 609-632.

Despite Bassett's damaging evidence and substantiated opinion to the contrary, Evarts in Washington, acting in behalf of Lazare's New York City attorneys, and Langston in Port-au-Prince, acting in behalf of his secretary, opened the grossly exaggerated and unfounded claim of Adrian H. Lazare.²² The Haitian government stubbornly resisted, but Langston pursued the claim relentlessly for six years. Finally in 1884, Haiti yielded to the pressure and agreed to the matter being settled by international arbitration:

By a protocol signed at Washington May 24, 1884, by Mr. Frelinghuysen, Secretary of State of the United States, and Mr. Preston, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of Hayti [sic], the Governments of the United States and Hayti [sic] agreed to refer the claim of A. H. Lazare, citizen of the United States, against the republic of Hayti [sic], to the Hon. William Strong, formerly a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, as sole arbitrator.²³

Bassett's crucial dispatch was not a part of the evidence presented to Justice Strong for review. The Haitian government did not know it existed. The only evidence presented to Justice Strong consisted of those documents submitted by Lazare's attorneys.²⁴ All pertinent Haitian papers

²²John Bassett Moore, History and Digest of the International Arbitrations to which the United States has been a Party. (6 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), II, 1749-1805, and V, 4768-4770. Cited hereafter as Arbitrations. In addition to Bassett's report, Evarts knew that Lazare was Langston's secretary, and he also approved the appointment of Lazare's son as consular agent at Jacmel, Haiti. See Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, October 24, 1878, No. 44, and June 7, 1880, No. 110.

²³Moore, Arbitrations, II, 1749.

²⁴Ibid., II, 1793.

had been lost by fire in 1876.²⁵ It is probably for this reason that Justice Strong delivered this decision on June 13, 1885:

I am, therefore of opinion that A. H. Lazare has a just claim upon the Republic of Hayti [sic] to the extent of one hundred and seventeen thousand five hundred dollars, with interest from November 1, 1875, at six per cent, and I award that sum for the claim against the said republic.²⁶

Fortunately for Haiti, Article VI of the protocol bound the parties to the decision, ". . . but no period was prescribed within which the awards, if in favor of the claimants, should be paid."²⁷ More fortunate for Haiti, was the appointment of Thomas Francis Bayard as Secretary of State in 1885. Secretary Bayard, after investigating the case, felt that Haiti had been unduly pressed into arbitration.²⁸ Bayard said that Lazare was nothing more than an insolvent and enterprising adventurer with a worthless claim.²⁹ He further maintained that it was his duty ". . . to refuse to enforce an unconscionable award either as a matter of honor or as a matter of law."³⁰

Langston, in his autobiography, left the impression that the Lazare case as well as all other cases he had

²⁵F.R.U.S., 1877, pp. 595, 604.

²⁶Moore, Arbitrations, II, 1793.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., II, 1795.

²⁹Ibid., II, 1803, 1804.

³⁰Ibid., II, 1800.

handled had been unsuccessfully concluded:

In every case, either by settlement with the Haitian government directly, or by some arrangement of arbitration and reference, he brought all these matters to reasonable, amicable conclusion and adjustment. . . .³¹

In his dissertation, Cheek wrote that ". . . Evarts and Langston had acted precipitously in behalf of Lazare [because of their] readiness to accept the American side of the argument."³²

Langston did not inform the readers of his autobiography of the outcome of the Lazare case, but he did offer a detailed account of the next case brought to his attention in December 1877.³³ Secretary Evarts directed Langston's attention to the complaint of some New York City merchants about the alleged unfairness of an import tax law enacted by Haiti. This law permitted the levy of a one per cent tax on all goods shipped to Haiti. Evarts felt that this law violated the existing treaty between the United States and Haiti, and he instructed Langston to register a protest with the Haitian government without delay.³⁴

Langston studied the matter for a week, and then sent a letter of protest to the Haitian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Felix Carrie. Minister Carrie's reply was lengthy, but essentially it contained only a few pertinent points. Carrie said

³¹Langston, Virginia, p. 383.

³²Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 185.

³³Langston, Virginia, pp. 379, 380.

³⁴F.R.U.S., 1877, p. 410.

that the 1864 Treaty between the United States and Haiti had nothing to do with granting the United States special privileges and that the tax law applied equally to all foreign nations. Langston sent a copy of Carrie's reply to Evarts and made a few disparaging remarks about Bassett concerning the import tax law:

I do not find that protest, on behalf of our government, was made against the passage of the present law while pending in the Corps Legislatif. Such protest I cannot but believe would have been wise.³⁵

Although Bassett did not protest its passage, he had informed Evarts about the import tax law in one of his last despatches before turning over his post to Langston. Bassett felt that Haiti had the indisputable right to enact import duties, and that Haiti was sorely in need of increased revenue for a badly depleted treasury. Bassett reported that when the complaint of the American merchants had been published in the newspapers, he had received this reaction from Haitian officials: "What!" say, they in effect, "are we not even to be allowed to make our own laws in our own way."³⁶ In Bassett's opinion the self-interests of a few New York City merchants should not be permitted to hold sway over the diplomatic relations between the United States and Haiti.³⁷

³⁵F.R.U.S., 1877, p. 416.

³⁶Despatches, Haiti, X, Bassett to Evarts, October 23, 1877, No. 544.

³⁷Ibid.

It is apparent that Evarts did not consider Bassett's opinion a valid reason for acquiescence in the matter. He instructed Langston to keep the subject before the Haitian government until the tax had been removed. This persistence was rewarded in 1881, when the law was superceded by a more lenient one.³⁸

While Langston was pondering over the old claims and the import tax protest, there was some excitement in Port-au-Prince. An article in the New York Times gives a concise description of these events:

A Cuban who was charged with having willfully set fire to the International Hotel in Port-au-Prince, has been tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. The Spanish Consul has interfered; also the commander of a Spanish frigate. The Haytian [sic] Government is nevertheless firm in its resolution to carry out the sentence, and has now been notified by the Spanish representatives that if it does the Spanish fleet will bombard Port-au-Prince in retaliation.³⁹

In a routine despatch, Langston had informed Evarts of the arrival of a Spanish warship but had thought no more about it until two weeks later when he learned the Spanish had given Haiti a seventy-two hour ultimatum for the release of the alleged arsonist. Before the ultimatum had expired, the Diplomatic Corps negotiated an agreement with the two parties which essentially called for Haitian acquiescence to the Spanish demands.⁴⁰ As agreed during the conference,

³⁸Ibid., XV, Langston to Blaine, November 5, 1881, No. 414.

³⁹New York Times, January 7, 1878.

⁴⁰F.R.U.S., 1877, pp. 418, 419.

the Haitians, from Fort National, rendered a twenty-one gun salute to the Spanish consul and warship, and the warship returned the salute.⁴¹ The alleged arsonist was quietly released several days later.⁴²

After the Spanish crisis had ended Langston was able to enjoy the social activities of the closing year. He celebrated New Year's eve, along with the other members of the Diplomatic Corps, at the annual reception given in the National Palace.⁴³

⁴¹F.R.U.S., 1877, p. 419.

⁴²Despatches, Haiti, X, Langston to Evarts, December 29, 1877, No. 18. See also Leger, Haiti Detractors, pp. 227-231. The captain of the Spanish frigate was Commandant Jose Maria Autran, so Leger entitled the ultimatum affair as the "Autran Incident." Leger claimed that Spain used Haiti as a scapegoat when Spain found herself unable to subdue an insurrection in Cuba.

⁴³Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, January 9, 1878, No. 20, and F.R.U.S., 1877, p. 420.

CHAPTER III

THE TANIS REBELLION AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The festivities of the New Year over, Langston opened legation business by reporting he had found another Haitian law unfair and discriminating to Americans. He said several American merchants had complained about a new license law which had been enacted in October 1877. This law required all merchants to obtain licenses to do business in Haiti, but the cost of a foreign license was double the amount a Haitian must pay. Langston felt the ". . . matter in the way of dollars and cents may be small and insignificant; but our seeming assent invites to other and it may be more serious."¹ Evarts told Langston to ". . . use strong but respectful language in your protest but to keep insisting that the law be changed."² This was done for the next seven years, but the license law was maintained without change.

In January 1878, Langston reported that Boisrond-Canal had departed for southern Haiti with two of his cabinet officers and that the Haitian president had left his foreign minister in charge of governmental affairs in the capital. Langston remarked that ". . . the entire country seems now

¹Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, January 25, 1878, No. 25.

²Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, April 12, 1878, No. 25.

at perfect peace."³ Langston, who had been dissatisfied with the location and facilities of the American Legation, took this opportunity to move.⁴ He reported that he had moved near the National Palace and that his new location was not only better but the rent was lower.⁵ Langston described his new location in glowing terms in his autobiography:

Such a property, situated upon the Rue Pave, in the central portion of the city and belonging to an American citizen, commanded a view of the surrounding country and was in such near neighborhood of the palace, the residence of the president, the government offices, the main business part of the city, the custom house and the port, as to make it in every sense more desirable than any other in the capital.⁶

Langston did not report to the State Department that the building was owned by Charles A. Van Bokkelen, an American citizen. Langston was well aware that the Haitian Constitution did not permit the ownership of real property by foreigners.⁷

Mardi Gras, during the first week in March, was the next national celebration to be observed in Port-au-Prince. In Langston's opinion, the festival was an obscene and offensive spectacle regardless of its religious significance:

³Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, January 24, 1878, No. 24.

⁴Supra, p. 11.

⁵Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, March 8, 1878, No. 34.

⁶Langston, Virginia, p. 375.

⁷Infra, p. 83. See also U.S., Department of State, Commercial Relations of the United States, 1878, p. 812. Cited hereafter as Commercial Relations. In his first consulate report, Langston pointed out that foreigners could not own real property in Haiti.

In the first place, there was no well conceived designs of high moral meaning in a single masque [sic] and where there was any design at all it was such as appealed to the low and groveling part of man's nature. In the second place, the conduct of the majority of those in the procession distinguished by peculiarity of dress and behavior, was in most instances, insane and frequently obscene and repulsive. And in the third place, there was nothing in the dress, the conduct, or music, connected with the occasion, which showed it in the most remote sense, or manner, as having anything to do with religion of any sort or of a church of any name.⁸

A week later, the events of Mardi Gras were quickly forgotten, and these new events gave Langston more cause for concern than the morality and purpose of Mardi Gras. Although he never mentioned it, Langston had cause to regret he had moved the legation to the center of Port-au-Prince. During the absence of Boisrond-Canal, revolutionary plots had been developing, and on March 14, 1878, these plots were transformed into action:

General Louis Tanis, taking advantage of the President's absence, took up arms against the government. He and his followers--about 800--in number--tried to take possession of the palace, arsenal and fort, but only succeeded in capturing the latter, Fort National. On the 14th, a dispatch steamer was sent for the President and about noon the man-of-war then in port was moored broadside on and opened fire on the fort. Three shots were fired, all of which missed the fort, one falling into the center of the city.⁹

Government troops attempted to recapture the fort, but were unsuccessful. The foreign minister who had been left in charge of the government during Boisrond-Canal's absence,

⁸Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, March 18, 1878, No. 38.

⁹New York Times, March 29, 1878.

turned to Major Stuart, the British Chargé d'Affaires and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps for help. Major Stuart, with Langston accompanying him, went to the fort and requested General Tanis to surrender in the name of humanity. General Tanis said he would agree to surrender provided the Haitian government permitted him and his followers to leave the country unmolested. Major Stuart carried this message back, but the Haitian official was unable to decide what action to take until President Boisrond-Canal returned.

Boisrond-Canal returned on March 17, but during the early hours of that day, General Tanis and his followers slipped out of the fort and took refuge in the various consulates and legations in Port-au-Prince. Langston permitted three of the rebels to take refuge in the American Legation.¹⁰ The Haitian government sent Langston a message requesting he ". . . cause to be embarked those individuals who are a source of trouble to the country,"¹¹ and on April 3, 1878, his three refugees, as well as the others, were embarked on the British steamship Atlas for Jamaica.¹²

Langston, in his report to Evarts, stated that he felt the policy of "right to asylum" had the ill effect of producing revolutionary movements by securing practical immunity to offenders. He also felt the ". . . expense

¹⁰ F.R.U.S., 1878, pp. 431-437.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 443.

¹² Ibid., p. 444.

and trouble connected with this matter of asylum constitutes another consideration."¹³ Langston further felt the practice of asylum could not yet be abandoned by the United States until the other ". . . enlightened nations represented here . . . deem it wise to abolish it."¹⁴ Langston's action in granting asylum to three refugees is in direct contradiction to his description of his asylum policy offered by his autobiography:

Although he found the custom of receiving refugees not only in the various legations but in the consulates as well, universal and uniform, he declined to take any refugees in his. . . . Prior to his arrival and control of the United States Legation, his predecessors had, without a single exception, given asylum, . . . however, he was entirely able to maintain his position on the subject.¹⁵

There were rumors in Port-au-Prince that more revolutionary activities could be expected, but the remainder of the spring and summer of 1878 was peaceful and quiet.¹⁶ On May 1, 1878, Haiti celebrated her first National Agricultural Day with local and national exhibitions. The exhibition at Port-au-Prince was preceded by a dinner at the National Palace which was attended by the Diplomatic Corps and the

¹³F.R.U.S., 1878, p. 445. It is fitting Langston remarked upon the expense and trouble of keeping three refugees for two weeks when his action is compared with the magnanimous actions of his predecessor. Bassett harbored over two thousand refugees at his own expense and offered asylum to Boisrond-Canal for more than five months. See Plante, Bassett, pp. 87-101.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Langston, Virginia, p. 385.

¹⁶Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, April 24, 1878, No. 46.

capital's leading citizens.¹⁷ Langston found the dinner excellent but reported the exhibition was far from adequate:

The products had on display were neither numerous nor various. A few specimens of coffee, sugar-cane and fruits constituted the sum total of what was to be seen. . . . Every one presenting produces held them in his hands. . . . There is the largest room for improvement.¹⁸

According to the Haitian Constitution the National Assembly was required to convene on the first Monday of April annually, but Langston reported there was little attention paid to this requirement. The assembly did not meet until May 4, 1878, and Langston, along with the Diplomatic Corps, was invited to attend the opening ceremony. Langston said the ceremony was impressive and the speeches glittered with glorious promises but ". . . wise action, on the part of the legislature, and the executive, remains to be determined."¹⁹

Langston occupied a dual role in Haiti; he was consul-general as well as minister-resident. Under the consul-general were ten consular agents located at the ten open ports of Haiti.²⁰ The primary function of the consular agents was to regulate trade relations, but they were often

¹⁷F.R.U.S., 1878, pp. 446-449.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 449, 450.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 450.

²⁰Commercial Relations, 1878, p. 826. The ten open ports were Port-au-Prince, Cape Haytien, Gonaives, St. Marc, Jacmel, Aux Cayes, Petit Goave, Miragoane, Jeremie and Port-de-Paix.

the source of diplomatic friction,²¹ and an inadequate communications system compounded the difficulty.²² In addition, many of the agents were not United States citizens.²³

Langston submitted his first annual consul report in June 1878, and Secretary Evarts praised the report as being ". . . the first of any consequence from that republic."²⁴ As might be expected, Langston included Evarts's words of praise in his autobiography and prefaced the praise by these remarks:

Up to the time that the United States consular service was thus reorganized and rendered efficient, it appeared to be as it was, utterly lifeless. Not even had an annual commercial report ever been made.²⁵

Had Secretary Evarts checked the State Department files, he would have seen that his words of praise should have been more appropriately assigned to Langston's predecessor. The consul report of 1873, in fact, established the

²¹See F.R.U.S., 1880, p. 639, for one example. The Haitian government complained about American consular agents interfering with Haitian customs officials and threatened to expel them from the country.

²²Commercial Relations, 1878, p. 830. "The land routes are extremely difficult and uncertain, the carrier being often delayed by rains and floods; and besides, there are no regular roads in the country in the proper sense of those terms; and the paths over which mules pass in this service are rugged, and in many parts, often impassable."

²³Despatches, Haiti, X-XIX, 1877-1885, passim. Only five of the ten American consular agents were United States citizens during Langston's tenure.

²⁴Commercial Relations, 1878, p. 51.

²⁵Langston, Virginia, p. 380.

format used by Bassett's successors.²⁶ Langston utilized Bassett's unpublished informational despatches extensively in his 1878 consul report.²⁷ It appears that the only original information Langston supplied was the description of the Haitian bar and bench.²⁸

In his autobiography, Langston stated that he had done much to improve the United States consular service:

It is true that by wise management of the consular officers of the United States government, under the direction of the consular-general as located in the open ports of the republic, special impulse was given to trade with their country and its importance and trade greatly enhanced.²⁹

Langston made only one visit to a subordinate consul during his entire tenure in Haiti. In 1884, he visited the consul at St. Marc for one hour while enroute to Santo Domingo.³⁰ A review of Langston's records from 1877 to 1885 reveals the absence of even one improvement in the consular service initiated by Langston. During the period, 1869-1877,

²⁶Commercial Relations, 1873, pp. 591-603.

²⁷For examples, see Despatches, Haiti, III-VII, Bassett to Fish, Nos. 16, 35, 47, 111 and 246.

²⁸Commercial Relations, 1878, pp. 811-834. It appears obvious that Langston had to rely upon the legation files for information. He could not speak nor read the Haitian language. He had only been in the country six months and information was extremely difficult to obtain in Haiti.

²⁹Langston, Virginia, p. 381. See also Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 201. Cheek wrote that Langston's annual commercial reports ". . . were singled out for praise, and represent Langston's most significant contribution as his country's consul general to Haiti.

³⁰Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, April 12, 1884, No. 633.

Bassett conducted an overall reform, established three of the ten consuls, and made numerous improvements and recommendations.³¹

Langston was also in error in his statement that the importance and value of commerce between the United States and Haiti was "greatly enhanced" during his tenure.³² On the contrary, such trade had reached its height in 1860, and then began a gradual decline which continued during Langston's time in Haiti.³³ American trade with Haiti was one ninth that of Britain and was less than that of either France or Germany. In addition, a good portion of American trade consisted of manufactures in transit from England.³⁴ The value of Haitian trade with the United States was so insignificant that a later historian remarked; "Commercially, Americans were hardly aware of Haiti's existence."³⁵

³¹Despatches, Haiti, III-XIX, 1869-1885, passim.

³²Supra, p. 33.

³³Montague, Haiti, pp. 89, 163.

³⁴Spenser St. John, Hayti or the Black Republic, (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1884), pp. 333-336. The information cited by St. John was provided by Major Stuart, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Haiti during Langston's tenure.

³⁵Montague, Haiti, p. 163.

CHAPTER IV

THE PELLETIER CLAIM

Although he did not mention Pelletier by name in his autobiography, Langston described the Pelletier claim in this general manner:

So far as his own citizens and their claims were concerned, he was confronted by many grave and serious matters, some standing for even more than twenty years, requiring consideration and settlement at the earliest practicable moment. One case especially, involving over a million dollars. . . had its origin in violent and unjustifiable treatment accorded an American citizen.¹

Antonio Pelletier, a Frenchman by birth, asserted that he was an American citizen by naturalization in 1852; however, proof of his assertion was never satisfactorily established.² In 1861 Captain Pelletier sailed into the Port-au-Prince harbor on the sailing bark Williams flying the American flag.³ Pelletier announced he was in Haiti for the purpose of engaging fifty men to load a cargo of guano at Navassa Island, an island in the Caribbean between Haiti and Jamaica.

¹Langston, Virginia, p. 383.

²F.R.U.S., 1887, pp. 597, 598. In 1874, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations rejected Pelletier's claim to American citizenship for reason of fraudulent naturalization papers.

³Leger, Haiti Detractors, p. 232. Pelletier was a well-known slave-trader and in April 1859, his former ship was captured at the mouth of the Congo River by Captain Brent of the United States warship Marion according to Leger.

While the Williams was in harbor, a member of its crew informed Haitian authorities that Pelletier was actually there for the purpose of kidnapping some Haitian blacks and selling them in Louisiana. The Haitian authorities searched the Williams and found slave-trading paraphernalia consisting of pistols, ammunition and handcuffs hidden under a false section of the ship. Captain Pelletier was ordered to leave Haiti and the Williams was escorted out of Haitian waters by the Haitian warship, Le Geffrard.

Le Geffrard returned to Port-au-Prince when the Williams appeared to be on its announced course for New Orleans. The Williams then changed its westward course and sailed east to Fort Liberty, a small port town on the north coast of Haiti, which was closed to commerce. During the five days at sea, Captain Pelletier changed the name of his ship to the Guillaume Tell, his own name to Jules Letellier, and sailed into Fort Liberty flying the French flag.⁴

At Fort Liberty, Pelletier used a different pretext to obtain captives. He announced he was giving a dance on board the Guillaume Tell and invited some fifty black citizens of Fort Liberty. Again, one of his seamen, who happened to be

⁴Details of the Pelletier claim can be found in Moore, Arbitrations, II, 1749-1805, V, 4768-4770, and F.R.U.S., 1887, pp. 593-632. Published works which have utilized these references include Montague, Haiti, Logan, Diplomatic Relations, and Leger, Haiti Detractors. Although Langston's name is mentioned, these references and accounts do not provide the story of Langston's involvement in the Pelletier claim.

a Negro, informed Haitian authorities of Pelletier's actual designs. The authorities at Fort Liberty called upon the French Consul and the American commercial agent from the nearby open port of Cape Haytien to assist in the investigation of the case. The French Consul, who knew the real ship Guillaume Tell and its master, exposed Pelletier's false identity. The Williams was seized and Pelletier arrested for piracy.⁵

The American commercial agent notified the American Commissioner in Port-au-Prince, Benjamin Whidden, and Whidden reported the incident to Secretary of State William Seward.⁶ Henry Byron, assistant British Chargé d'Affaires at Port-au-Prince, joined Whidden in the recommendation to the Haitian government that Pelletier and his ship should not be set free. Pelletier was tried in August and sentenced to death as a pirate, but the Haitian Supreme Court reduced his sentence to five years in prison. Pelletier's attorney at Port-au-Prince appealed to the State Department without success. Secretary Seward instructed Whidden that the policy of the United States would be one of non-interference.⁷

While serving his sentence at Cape Haytien, Pelletier

⁵F.R.U.S., 1887, pp. 593-598.

⁶Ibid. The United States maintained a commissioner and commercial agents in Haiti until the republic was recognized by the United States in July 1862, and Whidden became the first diplomatic representative to Haiti. See Logan, Diplomatic Relations, p. 103.

⁷F.R.U.S., 1887, pp. 597-600.

became sick and was transferred to the prison hospital at Port-au-Prince. He used this opportunity to scale the walls and escape to Kingston. From Jamaica, he made his way to the United States in early 1864. In Washington, Pelletier presented a long memorial to the State Department. Pelletier claimed his arrest had been illegal, his trial a mockery, and that all the evidence presented against him had been of a circumstantial nature. Secretary Seward merely filed his memorial. Four years later, Pelletier appealed to the House of Representatives. In 1868, that body, after calling for a report of the case from the State Department, took no further action.⁸

Secretary Hamilton Fish received Pelletier's third application for damages in 1871. Fish saw no reason to dissent from Secretary Seward's opinion of the matter and took no action.⁹ Pelletier's fourth application was to the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in 1874. The Pelletier claim was again rejected in these words:

The conclusion reached is that proof of the citizenship of that person is not sufficient to warrant an interposition in his behalf. But allowing the reverse to be the fact, his conduct in Hayti [sic] and on its coasts is conceived to have afforded the reasonable ground of suspicion against him on the part of the authorities of that Republic, which led to his arrest, trial and conviction, in regular course of law, with which result it is not deemed expedient to interfere.¹⁰

⁸F.R.U.S., 1887, pp. 593, 594.

⁹Ibid., p. 594.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 597, 598.

Pelletier's fifth application to Secretary William E. Evarts proved more favorable. In April 1878, Evarts forwarded Pelletier's claim to Langston for investigation and report. Evarts discussed the past record of unsuccessful attempts to process the claim and explained that the case had been neglected due to the pressures of the Civil War. Evarts criticized the 1861 eye witness report of the American commercial agent at Cape Haytien as "incorrect and partial" and charged that Haiti had treated Pelletier ". . . with a degree of harshness and cruelty, wholly inconsistent with the practices of civilized nations."¹¹

Langston returned the results of his investigation with the opinion that the ". . . Pelletier claim was well founded."¹² Langston explained he had predicated his conclusion upon the evidence and opinion offered by Linstant Pradine and then went on to explain:

Linstant Pradine, whose name I have already given, is without doubt the first lawyer of this republic. A man of age, extended and varied experience in professional and official life, he is a lawyer of large and comprehensive reading and thought and withal a candid and conscientious man. He was Captain Pelletier's attorney.¹³

Evarts was pleased with Langston's favorable report but informed Langston he had expected further research than

¹¹Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, April 12, 1878, No. 23.

¹²Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, June 24, 1878, No. 64.

¹³Ibid.

the evidence and opinion offered by Pelletier's attorney. Evarts excused Langston by remarking, ". . . That may, in part at least, be imputed to the destruction by fire of the records of the Court at Port-au-Prince."¹⁴ Evarts was still reluctant to pursue the claim and for a very good reason. Haiti's minister of foreign affairs, Carrie, had been the official in charge of the investigation of the Pelletier case in 1861. Evarts was careful to point this out when he sent the claim to Langston.¹⁵ It was not until Carrie had been replaced in November 1878,¹⁶ that Evarts instructed Langston to broach the subject of Pelletier:

Perhaps the subject may more properly be informally and orally mentioned in the first instance. . . . [You will be further instructed] when the Department shall have been informed as to the manner in which the overture may have been received.¹⁷

In February 1878, Langston informed Evarts he had mentioned the Pelletier claim to the new foreign minister and had received a disinterested reaction.¹⁸ Upon receipt of this information, Evarts instructed Langston to pursue the claim

¹⁴Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, December 23, 1878, No. 50.

¹⁵Ibid., April 12, 1878, No. 23.

¹⁶Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, November 23, 1878, No. 90. Boisrond-Canal replaced Carrie with Francois in November 1878. Langston described the new foreign minister as being a black man without benefit of education or culture.

¹⁷Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, December 23, 1878, No. 50.

¹⁸Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, February 28, 1879, No. 130.

with vigor. The Pelletier claim against the Haitian government had now grown to the considerable amount of more than two million dollars.¹⁹

Langston pursued the Pelletier claim with the same relentless energy he had displayed in the Lazare claim. The Haitian government resisted in the same stubborn manner until 1884, when it yielded and agreed to have the claim submitted to arbitration along with that of Lazare.²⁰ As with the Lazare claim, Justice Strong, the arbitrator, had only the information and evidence submitted by the claimant's lawyers. Justice Strong rendered this decision on June 13, 1885:

I award Antonio Pelletier and against the Republic of Hayti [sic] for the claim of the former, the sum of fifty-seven thousand and two hundred and fifty dollars.²¹

In 1885, Secretary Thomas Francis Bayard found himself in agreement with the protest of the Haitian government after he had looked into the case. Unlike Secretary Evarts, Bayard experienced no difficulty in assigning credence to the unbiased eye witness testimony of American officials over that of Pelletier and his attorneys. He also found different answers to the two questions asked by Langston of Evarts in 1878:

All that I have indicated as to law and fact favorable to Captain Pelletier may be true; but how shall the

¹⁹Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, March 24, 1879, No. 61.

²⁰Moore, Arbitrations, V, 4770.

²¹Ibid., II, 1779.

statement of Mr. Hubbard [United States commercial agent at Cape Haytien in 1861] be overcome? How shall the decision of the Department as presented in the despatch of Mr. Seward be set aside?²²

Bayard thought that the Lazare claim was an obvious fraud without visible merits,²³ but that the Pelletier claim was ". . . so saturated with turpitude and infamy that on it no action, judicial, or diplomatic can be based."²⁴ Bayard stated that on no account would the Lazare and Pelletier awards be pressed for collection and he concluded:

The intercourse between nations should be marked by the highest honor as well as honesty. The moment that the government of the United States discovers that a claim it makes on a foreign government can not be honorably and honestly pressed, that moment, no matter what may be the period of the procedure, that claim should be dropped.²⁵

Bayard's stirring words have been quoted extensively and one historian has entitled a chapter of his work on Haiti, "Honor and Honesty" in Secretary Bayard's memory.²⁶ It comes as no surprise that Bayard's words were not mentioned in Langston's autobiography.

²²Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, June 24, 1878, No. 64. Cheek, in his dissertation, never mentioned the Pelletier claim.

²³F.R.U.S., 1887, p. 620.

²⁴Ibid., p. 609.

²⁵Ibid., p. 620.

²⁶Montague, Haiti.

CHAPTER V

THE FALL OF BOISROND-CANAL

Boisrond-Canal, who had been elected president after being instrumental in the overthrow of Domingue in 1876, had served less than two of his four year term when his government was challenged by General Tanis in 1878.¹ Dissatisfaction with his administration had begun early over Haiti's greatest social problem, her color-class system. Boisrond-Canal, a light-skinned mulatto, had not appointed a single black to a position of responsibility in his administration. In 1877 Minister Bassett had predicted this slight to the Haitian majority, if not corrected, would lead to Boisrond-Canal's downfall.² It was also a point soon recognized by Langston.³

Langston wrote several reports touching on Haiti's color-class system and its political significance. He said the bulk of Haiti's population were blacks of pure African heritage, but the aristocracy of Haiti consisted of mulattoes. It was this color line that divided political allegiance. The Liberal Party was made up of mulattoes, whereas the

¹Supra, pp. 26-29, and Plante, Bassett, pp. 102-119.

²Despatches, Haiti, X, Bassett to Evarts, June 1, 1877, No. 509.

³F.R.U.S., 1878, p. 432.

National Party represented the blacks. Langston wrote that there was a third political group that might be called conservatives since it was their desire to see no changes take place in the incumbent administration. These conservatives could be either black or mulatto.⁴

Langston may have over-simplified his discussion of this complex social problem, but there are later writers who have agreed that Haiti was divided by color.⁵ The British Chargé d'Affaires in Haiti from 1863 to 1875 had this to say about Haiti's color line:

There is a marked line drawn between the black and the mulatto, which is probably the most disastrous circumstance for the future prosperity of the country. The black hates the mulatto, the mulatto despises the black; proscriptions, judicial murders, massacres have arisen, and will continue to arise as long as this deplorable feeling prevails.⁶

The Tanis rebellion failed for one important reason. The support Tanis had expected from another black, General Salomon, failed to materialize. There was also another party who had rendered unexpected assistance to Boisrond-Canal by his inaction during the Tanis rebellion. This was Boyer Bazelais, a mulatto and leading member of the Liberal Party.⁷ Langston submitted his opinion of both Bazelais and Salomon along with his report of the Tanis rebellion:

⁴Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, December 20, 1879, No. 204.

⁵For example, see Leyburn, The Haitian People.

⁶St. John, Hayti or the Black Republic, p. 137.

⁷F.R.U.S., 1878, pp. 431-437.

The combination which . . . forced Tanis into his unfortunate (not to call it by a harder name) position is led by perhaps the ablest Haitian politician. I refer to Boyer Bazelais; who is a civilian, a lawyer by profession, but who has Presidential aspirations and is in fact a very popular as well as a very able man. He is supported by many of the well-educated and cultured younger men of the Republic. Another Haitian said by his friends to be even abler than Bazelais, and more popular, a man of age and large official influence, and a man of no mean military name, General Salomon, also heads a party, determined if possible, to make him President of the Republic.⁸

When the Tanis rebellion failed, General Salomon took refuge in the Peruvian Consulate, and then left for exile in Jamaica. Upon Salomon's departure, Langston remarked that Salomon ". . . lacks the physical courage which is essential to successful leadership among the people of this country."⁹ Events of the following year indicate that Langston's assessment of Salomon was far from accurate.

With Bazelais inactive in Port-au-Prince, and Salomon in exile in Jamaica, Boisrond-Canal sought to placate his opposition by a reorganization of his government. In November 1878, he brought in one of the blacks from the National Party as well as one of the mulattoes of the Liberal Party.¹⁰ This move appeared to offer Boisrond-Canal some respite. In February 1879, Stephen Preston, Haiti's minister to the United States, was quoted in the New York Times as being optimistic about Haiti's political situation:

⁸F.R.U.S., 1878, p. 435.

⁹Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, July 25, 1878, No. 76.

¹⁰Ibid., November 23, 1878, No. 90.

Hon. Stephen Preston, Haytian [sic] Minister to this country discredits the report of a revolution in Hayti [sic]. . . . The country is quiet and no trouble is feared. . . . After the end of his term the President will return to private life, as the present constitution of Hayti [sic] does not admit of two successive Presidential terms.¹¹

Revolutionary forces had already landed on the northern coast of Haiti when Minister Preston released his statement in Washington. General Benjamin and General Paul, two chief members of Salomon's National Party, had departed Jamaica and landed near Fort Liberty. They experienced no difficulty in obtaining the support of the rural blacks in that area.¹²

The rebels next moved on the city of Gonaives. They opened the local prison and released its inmates, always a popular move with the poor, and then repaired to the city's arsenal and removed some arms and ammunition. When the news reached Port-au-Prince, Boisrond-Canal with fifty soldiers departed on board the 1804, one of the vessels of Haiti's three-ship navy. Fifty additional soldiers were dispatched on horseback to join him at Gonaives. When Boisrond-Canal arrived, the rebels had already left, so the president returned to the capital.¹³ Le Moniteur, the government's

¹¹New York Times, February 15, 1879.

¹²Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, February 8, 1879, No. 122.

¹³Ibid., February 20, 1879, No. 127. See also XIII, November 6, 1879, No. 198. The 1804 was blown up by its captain in an act of sabotage in July 1879.

newspaper, reported that the raid on Gonaives was simply a guise to cover financial aid already received by the rebels. Le Moniteur also stated that the government had knowledge that the rebels, while in Jamaica, had purchased arms and ammunition from the Remington Arms Company of America.¹⁴

Langston reported he was delighted to see the United States warship Powhatan arrive in late February. Two British warships, two French and one German warship had arrived in Port-au-Prince as soon as news of a revolutionary struggle had reached their respective governments. Langston was disappointed when the Powhatan sailed after staying one day, but the Powhatan's sudden departure was due to the outbreak of Yellow Fever in the Haitian capital. It also appears the fever was responsible for the lack of revolutionary activity during the following two months.¹⁵ In May 1879, Langston reported that the French Minister, Rochechonart, had died of Yellow Fever. Since Major Stuart, the British Charge d' Affaires, was out of the country on leave, the death of Rochechonart made Langston the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.¹⁶

The fever epidemic subsided in June, and the rebels began to stir in the north. On June 30, 1879, conflict from another source erupted in Port-au-Prince. Boyer Bazelais,

¹⁴Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, February 28, 1879, No. 128.

¹⁵Ibid., January 24, 1879, No. 110, February 24, 1879, No. 124, March 12, 1879, No. 134, and May 1, 1879, No. 153.

¹⁶Ibid., May 19, 1879, No. 158.

the leader of the Liberal Party, had started an argument in the Chamber of Deputies which resulted in pistols being drawn. Some shots were fired and two Haitian statesmen fell dead. Bazelais then led several hundred of his followers into the streets and took over several government buildings located on Rue Pave, the same city block on which the American Legation was located. The insurgents then began directing small arms fire to persons passing in the street.¹⁷ In his autobiography, Langston described the scene in this manner:

[The conflict broke out in Port-au-Prince] to the surprise and terror not only of the people generally, but of the government itself. In the absence of her Britannic majesty's representative, the American minister acted as the dean of the diplomatic corps. The government, ill prepared for this warlike and violent demonstration, hurried its messenger to the United States Legation with its appeal. . . . Con- voking his associates promptly. . . . the acting dean accompanied the corps in a body to the national palace where [advice and counsel was offered.]¹⁸

Langston did not, as he stated in his autobiography, hurry to the National Palace. Langston abandoned his post and went to his residence, Sans Souci, where he remained until the fighting was over.¹⁹ Henry Byron, the assistant British Chargé d'Affaires, sent this message to Langston after two days of the fighting had elapsed:

¹⁷F.R.U.S., 1879, pp. 564-568.

¹⁸Langston, Virginia, p. 386.

¹⁹F.R.U.S., 1879, pp. 564-574. See also St. John, Hayti or The Black Republic, p. 125. St. John praised the actions of the seventy year old Henry Byron. Byron inter- vened and saved several lives during the fierce conflict.

I pray to you to come into the city immediately in order that we may go to the Palace to endeavor in the name of humanity to bring to an end the terrible outpouring of blood which deluges the city at this moment. Make haste to come, it is already almost to late.²⁰

Langston did not go into the city but remained at his residence and informed Byron that since he was the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps that Byron should come out to see him. He remained at Sans Souci until Boisrond-Canal had routed Boyer Bazelais and his men on July 3, 1879. The forces of the government had been unable to dislodge Bazelais by cannon fire, so they set fire to the buildings. In the midst of the fire and confusion, Bazelais and approximately forty survivors escaped and found asylum in several of the legations and consuls. Some of them entered the American Legation but left since there was no one there to offer them refuge. Langston came into the city on July 4, and reported that the finest block in Port-au-Prince had been almost totally destroyed:

The building in which our Legation and Consul-General are located stands solitary and alone in the midst of acres of desolation and ruin. The only thing burned upon it was our flagstaff; and that fell charred by the heat of the surrounding fires.²¹

Langston inferred in his autobiography that he had been in the thick of the conflict. He even described a scene where he was supposed to have walked in front of the buildings held by the rebels and ". . . the guns were immediately taken down, as Mr. Langston warned those who drew them not to fire."²²

²⁰F.R.U.S., 1879, p. 574.

²¹Ibid., p. 566.

²²Langston, Virginia, pp. 387, 389.

During the conflict in Port-au-Prince, General Paul and General Benjamin captured Cape Haytien, and on July 17, Langston reported the fall of Gonaives and St. Marc. He also reported that Bazelais and his men had departed their places of refuge and were on board the British warship Boxer which was anchored in the harbor.²³ On July 17, 1879, when the rebel army was moving south on the capital, Boisrond-Canal resigned the presidency. On the same day, he boarded the French steamer La Desirade and sailed for St. Thomas Island.²⁴ The rebel army arrived at the capital on July 26, and Port-au-Prince surrendered without a shot being fired. While the rebel army provided control, a provisional government was established. This provisional government consisted of one member from each of the five sections of the country and was appropriately named, "The Central Revolutionary Committee."²⁵

Several days later, Langston departed on leave of absence to the United States:

The Negro minister took advantage of this privilege every year, usually absenting himself for a period of about two months in the late summer and early fall. On each occasion, he traveled widely, spoke extensively, and in general tried to keep himself vividly imprinted on the minds of his people--and of the Republican administration.²⁶

²³F.R.U.S., 1879, pp. 569, 570.

²⁴Ibid., p. 572.

²⁵Despatches, Haiti, XII, Langston to Evarts, July 28, 1879, No. 188.

²⁶Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 190.

Prior to his departure he had accepted an invitation to speak before the Emigrant Aid Society of Washington on the subject of Negroes leaving the south and moving north.²⁷ Langston made a speech entitled "Exodus" on October 7, 1879, and included a copy of this speech in a book of his speeches which was published in 1883. Langston's "Exodus" speech presented the view that the southern Negro was correct in leaving the land of his enslavement and that his exodus would hasten his full acceptance in American society. Although Langston mentioned the British West Indies in his "Exodus" speech, it is unfortunate that he offered nothing to enlighten his audience and readers about Haiti.²⁸

On the day after he returned to his post, Haiti's National Assembly, convened by order of the Central Revolutionary Committee, elected General Louis Etienne Salomon as President of Haiti.²⁹ General Salomon, after twenty years of intrigue and unsuccessful revolutionary attempts had finally realized his ambition to return to a position of power. He had last served in the cabinet of Emperor Soulouque, the illiterate black who had ruled Haiti with an iron hand from 1847 to 1859.³⁰ On Salomon's inauguration

²⁷Langston, Freedom and Citizenship, p. 232.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 233-266.

²⁹Despatches, Haiti, XIII, Langston to Evarts, October 22, 1879, Nos. 193 and 196.

³⁰Donald E. Smith, ed., The New Larned History (Springfield, Mass: C. A. Nichols Publishing Company, 1923), pp. 4405, 4406. See also Montague, Haiti, pp. 16-18, 20, 22, 57-64.

day, Langston gave this description of Haiti's chief executive:

General Salomon is, in blood and complexion, a pure negro, with full head of white hair. He is a large man, of imposing presence, and of easy self-possessed and dignified bearing. His age is sixty-five years. His wife is a French woman, purely white.³¹

Salomon's first actions as president were to suspend payment of all claims pending a study on the matter, and to arrest some enemies of his administration in Port-au-Prince. The National Assembly was also successfully urged to amend the constitution to permit Salomon to serve a term of seven years instead of four.³² Salomon considered ". . . the term of four years has been too frequently. . . the occasion of dangerous agitation."³³

Langston expressed the hope that the new chief executive would ". . . support his country's honor by making due and prompt provision for redeeming her obligations."³⁴ He reminded Salomon of his obligation to Americans when he formally presented those claims to Salomon's administration. As might be expected, the first two claims submitted for Salomon's consideration were the Lazare and Pelletier claims.³⁵

Langston attended the annual reception at the National

³¹F.R.U.S., 1880, p. 616.

³²Despatches, Haiti, XIII, Langston to Evarts, November 6, 1879, No. 199, and December 20, 1879, No. 206.

³³Ibid., October 22, 1879, No. 196.

³⁴Ibid., November 6, 1879, No. 199.

³⁵Ibid., November 26, 1879, Nos. 211, 212 and 213.

Palace on New Year's eve and the New Year's day celebration of Haiti's independence.³⁶ In his report of the festivities, Langston remarked that ". . . whatever else may be true of Haiti, its people could be justly proud of maintaining their independence for seventy-six years."³⁷

³⁶F.R.U.S., 1880, pp. 626, 627.

³⁷Ibid., p. 626.

CHAPTER VI

THE RISE OF SALOMON

The damage suffered by American citizens during the revolution that forced the resignation of Boisrond-Canal had been relatively slight. The scenes of conflict had been largely limited to two cities, Port-au-Prince and Gonaives. The claims of three Americans for damages suffered in the revolution did not arrive on Langston's desk until March of the following year.¹ The delay was due to the policy of the State Department which required that claims be first submitted to the Secretary of State prior to being directed to the American Legation in Port-au-Prince.

Langston was reminded of the procedure for claims when he was reprimanded by Secretary Evarts following the insult and detention of an American by the Port-au-Prince police. Evarts had received a letter of complaint from that citizen who stated Langston had told him nothing could be done about his complaint until instructions were received from the Secretary of State. Evarts informed Langston that the State Department policy referred to actions regarding claims and not for actions regarding moral redress. Evarts

¹Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, February 3, 1880, Nos. 93, 94, and March 6, 1880, No. 96.

pointed out that Langston's proper action would have been to investigate immediately, and if circumstances warranted, demand an apology from the Haitian government.²

Two of the 1879 spoliation claims were from American merchants in Gonaives who claimed losses of \$6,000 through pillage by government troops during the fighting. The third claim was from an American in Port-au-Prince who claimed the loss of \$1,000 in personal effects.³ Langston presented these claims at least annually over the next five years. When he was relieved by his successor in 1885, these claims had not been settled by the Haitian government. Langston was far less demanding in the pursuance of minor claims. Claims involving large sums of money were continually brought to the attention of the Haitian government.

In April 1880, Langston reported that a number of Negro males had come into his office requesting the issuance of American passports. These young men were the sons of American Negro slaves who had attempted a settlement on the Haitian island of Ille-a-Vachè before the American Civil War. Their colonization attempt had failed but some of them had remained in Haiti. In Langston's opinion, their claim to American citizenship was invalid. Langston asserted that

²Instructions, Haiti, II, Evarts to Langston, January 29, 1880, No. 92.

³Despatches, Haiti, XIII, Langston to Evarts, February 3, 1880, Nos. 93, 94, and March 6, 1880, No. 96.

⁴Ibid., XIX, Langston to Bayard, June 25, 1885, No. 751.

their fathers had emigrated from America prior to the passage of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution and therefore they had not been American citizens prior to their departure. Langston refused to recognize their sons as Americans. It appears Evarts agreed with Langston because contrary instructions were not issued.⁵

Three years later, when Langston reported to Secretary Frelinghuysen that he had taken a similar action in the case of Anton Chassing,⁶ Langston was admonished. Secretary Frelinghuysen said he could not understand Langston's refusal when all of his predecessors had accepted these descendants as American citizens. Frelinghuysen's instructions continued:

Now he has the needless and inconvenient burden of proving that his father actually and legitimately acquired the status of a citizen of the United States. If you had already issued it, the act would have been regarded as justified. But since you have done this, he must now prove his father was an American citizen, and if he cannot, he cannot be issued a passport. Before you take any actions of this nature again, inform the Department and we will give you the instructions.⁷

Chassing was unable to prove his father was an American citizen, and Langston did not grant him a passport.⁸

⁵Ibid., XIII, Langston to Evarts, April 9, 1880, No. 244. For the story of the unsuccessful colonization attempt on Ille-a-Vache, see Montague, Haiti, pp. 66-80.

⁶Ibid., XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, June 11, 1883, No. 561.

⁷Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, June 29, 1883, No. 220.

⁸Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, July 12, 1883, No. 573.

General Salomon, who had twenty years of revolutionary experience, used his knowledge to advantage in consolidating his power in Haiti. His problems, a depleted treasury and an unsettled country, were not unique for Haiti, but his solutions reflected his long experience. Langston was not the only diplomat pressing Salomon for the payment of claims and past debts. Powerful nations such as Britain, France and Germany also had claims to portions of the Haitian treasury. Salomon, who had to await the revenue from the next coffee crop, resorted to the only tactics remaining at his disposal, procrastination and evasion.⁹

Salomon brilliantly combined these tactics with an extended tour of the Haitian countryside in an effort to suppress local opposition to his administration. Taking half of his army, he absented himself from Port-au-Prince for extended periods during 1880 and 1881.¹⁰ When Salomon absented himself from the capital, his foreign minister was left in charge of the palace. Salomon also dispatched his finance minister to Paris to investigate the possibility of founding a national bank. When his foreign minister was approached with a financial matter, that official would reply that such matters must await the return of the president. When Salomon returned, he would defer financial matters

⁹Despatches, Haiti, XIII-XV, 1880-1881, passim. See also Montague, Haiti, p. 127.

¹⁰Despatches, Haiti, XIII-XV, 1880-1881, Nos. 249, 264, 306, 313, 318, and F.R.U.S., 1881, pp. 641-643.

pending the return of his finance minister. It was in this manner that Salomon managed to stave off his creditors and at the same time reduce opposition to his administration within Haiti.¹¹

When Salomon was elected in 1879, his election would have been unanimous except for the votes of eleven members of legislature consisting of 105 members. In July 1880, Salomon declared these eleven seats vacant pending the next regular election of 1882. During the remainder of Langston's tenure no further elections were conducted.¹²

Salomon was also not one to permit personal loyalty or gratitude to bar the elimination of a possible rival in the affections of the Haitian people. General Desperval, who had played a prominent role in the resignation of Boisrond-Canal and Salomon's election, was arrested and confined in the central portion of the country. General Desperval was sent on a feigned errand and arrested in the countryside away from his troops in Port-au-Prince.¹³ While reporting Salomon's oppres-

¹¹Despatches, Haiti, XIII, Langston to Evarts, April 12, 1880, No. 260, and XIV, July 24, 1880, No. 293.

¹²Ibid., XIV, July 24, 1880, No. 293. See also Supra, p. 52, and Commercial Relations, 1878, pp. 813-814. The Corps Legislatif was composed of a senate, consisting of thirty members, and the chamber of deputies, consisting of seventy-five members. The Corps Legislatif was elected every four years and the presidential election was to take place every seven years.

¹³Despatches, Haiti, XIII, Langston to Evarts, June 18, 1880, No. 279, and July 24, 1880, No. 293. General Desperval's name was never mentioned again by Langston in his despatches.

sive tactics, Langston usually observed that the president was still popular with the people.¹⁴

In the fall of 1880, Langston departed on his customary leave of absence and while in the United States he used the time to campaign for the election of James A. Garfield, the Republican candidate for president.¹⁵ Upon his return, Langston's main concern about Salomon's activities seemed to center around the heavy costs of Salomon's travels with such a huge entourage.¹⁶

It was not until the spring of 1881 that Langston indicated a concern about the development of affairs within Haiti. Langston reported to James G. Blaine, the new Secretary of State, that during the absence of President Salomon, the Haitian press had made an ". . . unjustifiable and wanton attack on his [Langston's] character."¹⁷ Langston enclosed a copy of the offending article and his indignation is understandable:

It is sad to report that the representative of an honorable nation (we refer to Mr. John Mercer Langston) has constituted himself the lawyer for the fossil reclamation of the well-known slave-trader Pelletier and the equally unsupportable reclamation of Lazare.¹⁸

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 190.

¹⁶Despatches, Haiti, XIV, Langston to Evarts, November 20, 1880, No. 313.

¹⁷Ibid., XV, Langston to Blaine, March 26, 1881, No. 361.

¹⁸Ibid., Encl. 1., copy of L'Oeil.

The new secretary of state did not comment upon the indignant rebuttal and protest of Langston. In fact, the official correspondence between Blaine and Langston reveals that neither the Pelletier nor Lazare claims were again mentioned during Blaine's tenure. It was not until Blaine was replaced by Frelinghuysen that the correspondence on these claims resumed.¹⁹

President Salomon returned to Port-au-Prince and his finance minister returned from Paris in June 1881. Langston felt the Haitian government could now be operated on a more business-like basis.²⁰ On the day Salomon returned, Langston made his first request for a visit by an American warship:

It has now been two and one half years since the Powhatan arrived at this port and weighed anchor the same day. . . . The occasional presence of a man-of-war would give moral support to its diplomatic corps and inspiring respect for the nation whose flag it bears. Please request the Navy Department to send a ship to Haiti as soon as possible.²¹

Secretary Blaine approved of Langston's request and forwarded his own letter to the Navy Department requesting the visit of an American warship to Port-au-Prince.²²

¹⁹Instructions, Haiti, II, Blaine to Langston, 1881, Nos. 149-164., and Despatches, Haiti, XIV-XV, Langston to Blaine, 1881, Nos. 358-422.

²⁰Despatches, Haiti, XV, Langston to Blaine, June 18, 1881, No. 383.

²¹Ibid., June 18, 1881, No. 387.

²²Instructions, Haiti, II, Blaine to Langston, July 11, 1881, No. 157. Apparently the assassination of President Garfield upset the plans of the United States Navy because a warship was not sent to Haiti during 1881.

In July 1881, Langston accompanied Major Stuart, the British Chargé d'Affaires, to see President Salomon on the subject of lighthouse duties. The Salomon administration, in an obvious move to increase revenue, had erected two lighthouses in the harbor of Port-au-Prince and was charging six cents a ton on the gross weight of ships entering the harbor. In addition to the duties, which were considered excessive, the lighthouses did not offer any real assistance to ships entering Port-au-Prince. The lights, erected on two islands, were visible for nine miles, but both were located thirty-five miles from Port-au-Prince.²³ As a result of the joint visit, the duties were later curtailed and a simple and small fee system substituted.²⁴

This was Langston's last mention of Major Stuart or the British representatives during his tenure in Haiti. Prior to the summer of 1879, Langston and Stuart had maintained a close personal relationship and Stuart was often fondly mentioned or praised in Langston's official reports. It appears that Langston's dubious actions in the Bazelais insurrection in Port-au-Prince had served to cool their relationship.²⁵

²³F.R.U.S., 1881, pp. 640, 641.

²⁴Despatches, Haiti, XV, Langston to Frelinghuysen, December 17, 1881, No. 425.

²⁵Ibid., X-XIX, 1877-1885, and Langston, Virginia, passim. Major Stuart's name is prominent in both of these references for events prior to the summer of 1879.

The wounding of President Garfield in the summer of 1881 was a personal tragedy to Langston. He had campaigned for Garfield in 1880, and he had hoped to be rewarded for his efforts:

When Garfield was elected, a large body of Negro citizens from some 20 states and the District of Columbia petitioned the new president to appoint Langston to a secretaryship of one of the executive departments. The petition fitted Langston's sentiments entirely, for by 1881 he had come to feel, as he wrote to his friend Senator John Sherman, that "I ought to be at home, where I can make myself more useful, and at the same time advance my personal interests." In the same letter, he asked Sherman if he would ascertain from Garfield whether the president would be "disposed to give me, should I resign, a position under his administration, either at home or elsewhere." . . . For Langston's part, as his correspondence indicates, he was determined not to resign unless another political appointment were offered him. Since this did not materialize, he deemed it best to remain at his post.²⁶

Langston departed Port-au-Prince on his customary leave of absence in 1881, and he was in Washington when the president died of his wound on September 19, 1881.²⁷ The turn of political events must have been very disappointing to him. With the death of Garfield, ". . . Langston's efforts in his own behalf, and those of his friends, to gain his recall to the states fell on deaf ears."²⁸

When Langston returned from leave in October, Haiti

²⁶Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, pp. 390, 391.

²⁷Despatches, Haiti, XV, Langston to Blaine, October 11, 1881, No. 405.

²⁸Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 391.

was still peaceful.²⁹ Langston reported the Salomon administration was now reacting with more agreeableness and it had repealed its offensive import tax of one per cent during his absence.³⁰ Langston sent in a comprehensive report on the works of the Salomon administration and withstanding their rejection of the Lazare and Pelletier claims, he felt Haiti had made considerable progress. A national bank had been established and Haiti had joined the Universal Postal Union. Salomon had also agreed to the construction of a submarine cable linking Port-au-Prince to Kingston by an English firm at no expense to the Haitian government.³¹

Probably Secretary Blaine never read Langston's comprehensive report of the Salomon administration. In December 1881, he was replaced by Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, a member ". . . of that sect of the Republican Party called Stalwarts to which President Arthur and Senator Conkling belonged."³² One of the first actions of the new secretary of state was to call for the progress of the Pelletier claim. Frelinghuysen informed Langston that President Arthur was also interested in the Pelletier claim.³³

President Arthur was the only president of the three

²⁹Despatches, Haiti, XV, Langston to Blaine, October 11, 1881, No. 406.

³⁰Ibid., November 5, 1881, No. 414.

³¹Ibid., November 15, 1881, No. 415.

³²Bemis, American Secretaries, VIII, p. 5.

³³Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, February 27, 1882, No. 285.

under whom Langston served as Minister to Haiti who ever mentioned Haiti in an official manner. In February 1882, President Arthur mentioned the Pelletier claim in a message to the Senate. In his second annual message to Congress in 1882, he stated he regretted ". . . that certain claims of American citizens against the government of Hayti [sic] have thus far been urged unavailingly."³⁴

³⁴James D. Richardson, ed. Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897. 10 vols. (53d Cong., 2d Sess., House Misc. Doc. No. 210, Pts. 1-10 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1907), X, 4665, 4716.

CHAPTER VII

SALOMON'S OFFER OF HAITIAN TERRITORY

In December 1881, an insurrection involving sixteen persons occurred at St. Marc. The rebels seized the city's arsenal but were easily routed by local troops. Salomon's reaction was immediate and harsh. He proclaimed a state of martial law for St. Marc and also placed Jacmel and Port-au-Prince under martial law. His forces then began rounding up revolutionary suspects in all three cities. Reports from St. Marc disclosed that political refugees had been accepted at the British, French and American consulates and all such persons had been safely evacuated by a French sailing bark.¹

Whether or not the political unrest influenced the arrival of the American warship Yantic cannot be determined but it arrived on New Year's day and departed the next day. Its sudden departure was due to the outbreak of smallpox. Smallpox prevailed at Port-au-Prince in epidemic proportions and by February 1882 had claimed more than 4000 lives.²

When the smallpox epidemic subsided in March, the American warship Despatch arrived with the announced mission

¹Despatches, Haiti, XV, Langston to Frelinghuysen, December 17, 1881, No. 426, December 28, 1881, No. 429, February 23, 1882, No. 441, and March 10, 1882, No. 444.

²Ibid., January 5, 1882, No. 432, and February 23, 1882, No. 443.

of making a survey of the Port-au-Prince harbor. The Despatch remained ten days and rumors began circulating that the United States was planning to annex Haiti. The mission of the Despatch could have been honestly stated. On the other hand it is quite probable the visit indicated the interest of the Arthur administration in the claims of American citizens in Haiti. If the latter supposition is correct, the visit of the Despatch had a measure of success. Shortly after the departure of the Despatch, Salomon's administration accepted the Oaksmith, Heuvelman, Haven and Company claims, and payments were made on five other American claims.³

Due to the absence of the French and British ministers, Langston was once again the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in April 1882. Langston reported that Salomon and a large military force had moved on Cape Haytien to investigate rumors of an impending revolution. The investigation resulted in the arrest of a large number of persons and the placing of Cape Haytien and Fort Liberty under martial law.⁴ Langston found the next report from the north quite shocking:

[The news] casts a gloom over the capital, filling the entire community with sadness, in the intelligence which has just arrived that the government has had executed, shot, twenty-eight of the forty men lately convicted before a military commission. . . . The people are awe-struck, they are filled with consternation.⁵

³Ibid., March 10, 1882, Nos. 446, 448, and July 5, 1882, No. 491.

⁴Ibid., April 15, 1882, Nos. 456, 457, and May 5, 1882, No. 461.

⁵Ibid., May 8, 1882, No. 463.

Langston indicated his concern over the state of affairs in Haiti by submitting a request for an immediate leave of absence. Normally he left on leave in the autumn of the year. His leave request was approved but Langston was unable to find a suitable replacement. His regular replacements, Arthur Bird and John Terres, had left for America themselves. Terres returned in late July and Langston left several days later. He was gone over three months and did not return until November 16, 1882.⁶

Haiti was still in an unsettled condition and in a state of martial law upon Langston's return in November 1882.⁷ It appears he might have spent the major portion of the following three months at his residence.⁸ When the American warship Vandalia arrived at Port-au-Prince in February 1883, Langston remarked that ". . . few things have occurred at this capital within the past five years that have had a more advantageous effect on the Americans here at this capital."⁹

⁶Ibid., May 8, 1882, No. 464, June 1, 1882, No. 474, August 7, 1882, No. 499. Also Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, May 24, 1882, No. 187.

⁷Despatches, Haiti, XV, Langston to Frelinghuysen, November 16, 1882, No. 500. Langston was absent from his post on leave for more than eighteen months during his tenure. His leave requests were never approved for more than sixty days but he often remained away more than ninety days.

⁸Only a few routine reports and several informational despatches were filed during the period, November 1882 to February 1883.

⁹Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, February 19, 1883, No. 516.

In February 1883, the Haitian legislature was called into special session and enacted three emergency laws proposed by Salomon. All three measures were obviously designed to appeal to the black majority and gain their loyalty in time of turmoil and economic inertia. The first law reduced the salaries of all civilian employees of the government. The second measure provided for a drastic change in Haiti's tariffs: all export duties on coffee were reduced by twenty per cent and to balance this loss, all import duties were increased by one third. The third measure, long celebrated by defenders of Salomon, offered free grants of farm land to those willing to farm products selected by the government. After five years of successful farming, this land (fifteen acres) would become the property of the farmer.¹⁰

In March 1883, the Haitian government announced that a force of exiles had departed Jamaica and was located on the island of Great Inagua just north of Haiti. In preparation for an invasion, the government began a build-up of forces around Cape Haytien and Fort Liberty.¹¹

Several weeks after the Vandalia had departed Haitian

¹⁰Ibid., March 20, 1883, No. 534. See also H. P. Davis, Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti. rev. ed. (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1967), p. 22. Davis said that the peasants ignored Salomon's offer of agricultural grants ". . . as soon as they saw that the state rather than themselves was the beneficiary."

¹¹F.R.U.S., 1883, p. 577.

waters, the American warship Powhatan appeared at Port-au-Prince. The captain of the Powhatan visited Langston and presented him with a formal invitation, signed by the Secretary of the Navy, to board the Powhatan and cruise around the entire island of Hispaniola, stopping at any point Langston desired. When informed the Powhatan planned to stop at Cape Haytien, the area where invasion was expected, he declined the invitation.¹²

On March 31, 1883, the government's newspaper, Le Moniteur announced that revolutionary forces, 106 in number, had departed Great Inagua Island under the command of Boyer Bazelais. The Bazelais force had then been landed by a vessel flying the American flag at Miragoane. When he learned the American flag had been involved, Secretary Frelinghuysen immediately instructed Langston to obtain the name and home port of the vessel.¹³ One month later, Langston learned from Le Moniteur that the Haitian government had already taken care of this action. Haitian consulate officials informed the American port authorities at Philadelphia that the ship involved had been the Tropic. When the Tropic arrived at Philadelphia, the ship was seized and its captain arrested. The captain was later convicted for violation of American neutrality and imprisoned. The American authorities, who had

¹²Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, March 15, 1883, No. 530.

¹³F.R.U.S., 1883, pp. 577, 578., Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, April 17, 1883, No. 201.

been alerted by Haitian consulate officials in America, also libeled the Mary N. Hogan and the E. G. Irwin in May 1883, but Langston's role was one of a non-involved bystander.¹⁴

Over 5,000 troops had been dispatched to Miragoane to rout the 106 insurgents led by Bazelais, but the government was unsuccessful. Bombardment also failed to dislodge them.¹⁵ Langston informed Frelinghuysen that British, French and Spanish warships were now anchored in the Port-au-Prince harbor and requested action be taken to have America represented in the same manner.¹⁶

Despite the moral uplift given Salomon by the American action at Philadelphia, Salomon was in a most desperate plight:

He was having difficulty in suppressing the rebellion while enough spoliations were being committed to promise serious trouble for the future. Not only did it seem impossible to evade much longer the Lazare and Pelletier claims amounting to three million dollars, but the British were threatening to seize the Haitian island of Tortuga as surety for a \$682,000 claim of their own. As he pondered this situation, Salomon hit upon a plan that would solve all his problems. He would foil the British and gain American support by ceding Tortuga to the United States on terms that would extinguish the American claims and strengthen his position against the rebels.¹⁷

¹⁴U.S., National Archives, MSS, Notes from the Haitian Legation in the United States to the Department of State, III, Preston to Frelinghuysen, May 19, 1883, July 17, 1883, and May 15, 1884. See also F.R.U.S., 1883, p. 583. A detailed account can be found in Logan, Diplomatic Relations.

¹⁵F.R.U.S., 1883, pp. 577, 578.

¹⁶Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, May 5, 1883, No. 550.

¹⁷Montague, Haiti, p. 123.

On May 30, 1883, Langston forwarded a confidential message to the State Department stating President Salomon, in a personal conversation, had proposed to cede Tortuga Island to America on the condition the United States make as payment, proper remuneration for all the claims of American citizens now presented against the Haitian government.¹⁸ Secretary Frelinghuysen instructed Langston to seek an audience with Salomon and orally inform him that the United States, while flattered with his proposal, could not accept his offer:

The policy of this government. . . has tended toward avoidance of possessions disconnected from the main continent. Had the tendency of the United States been to extend territorial dominion beyond intervening seas, opportunities have not been wanting.¹⁹

In June 1883, the city of Jeremie in the south was taken by the insurgents without a shot being fired. Langston, in his cherished role as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, was urged by his colleagues to take part in a concerted effort to end the rebellion. Langston informed his colleagues that each nation should attend to its own affairs.²⁰

Langston noted with satisfaction the arrival of the American warship Vandalia on June 19, but expressed regret at its early departure two days later. With his report of

¹⁸Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, May 30, 1883, No. 557. confidential.

¹⁹Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, June 20, 1883, No. 339. confidential.

²⁰F.R.U.S., 1883, pp. 582-592.

the Vandalia's departure, Langston forwarded a request for a three month leave of absence.²¹ Frelinghuysen informed Langston that only sixty days would be approved and that the leave might be taken at his customary time in the fall.²²

Haiti's second largest city, Jacmel, fell under rebel control in July. Jacmel, like Jeremie, had virtually welcomed the rebels and the city had been taken without a shot. In August, a large fire broke out in Port-au-Prince. The ordinary Haitian looked upon fires as the precursors of an uprising but Langston said that this fire was simply ". . . an accident and has no political significance."²³ Leaving John Terres in charge, Langston left for his home in the United States on August 18, 1883.²⁴

When Langston returned in November, his report on the events that occurred during his absence indicated how wrong his assessment of the great fire had been. This fire was the prelude to the most disastrous two days ever experienced by Port-au-Prince in all of its turbulent history. The rebels

²¹Despatches, Haiti, XVI, Langston to Frelinghuysen, June 30, 1883, Nos. 566 and 567.

²²Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, July 31, 1883, No. 228.

²³Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, August 8, 1883, No. 582. This writer feels Langston himself believed this great fire had been deliberately started and was a precursor of violence in Port-au-Prince. Langston probably did not want to go on record as evading his responsibilities or take the chance on being ordered to remain in Haiti.

²⁴Ibid., August 15, 1883, No. 585.

had brought the rebellion to the capital city on September 22 and 23, 1883, and it had become a color clash between blacks and mulattoes. On the second day of the carnage, the British, French and Spanish diplomats informed Salomon he could either stop the slaughter or they would repair to their warships and by bombardment, level the entire city, including the National Palace.²⁶ These diplomats had become sickened with the butchery being performed in the name of restoration of order:

[When Salomon's] troops were burning the houses and exterminating the families of his mulatto enemies he threw cordons of police around the doomed neighborhood, as he said, "To prevent unauthorized disorder."²⁷

Salomon must have been convinced these diplomats were serious as he ordered the slaughter to cease. The dawn of the next day found the better part of the city in ruins and thousands of its inhabitants slain.²⁸ Langston reported that his vice-consul, John Terres, ". . . in the exercise of wise discretion, did not sign the ultimatum referred to."²⁹

With the insurgents holding Miragoane, Jeremie and Jacmel, as well as some of the smaller towns, Salomon made his second offer of Haitian territory to President Arthur. In November 1883, Langston forwarded this confidential message:

²⁶F.R.U.S., 1883, pp. 594-596. See also Verox [Hannibal Price], The Haytian Question (New York: Louis Weiss & Co., 1891), p. 80.

²⁷Craige, Cannibal Cousins, p. 117.

²⁸Verox, The Haytian Question, p. 80.

²⁹F.R.U.S., 1883, p. 595.

I have the honor to transmit, as herewith enclosed in its original form and language, a proposition made to me yesterday, in presence of Captain P. H. Cooper, Commander of the Swatara by President Salomon, for your consideration.³⁰

Salomon's proposition began by pointing out the significance of the Mole St. Nicolas in connection with its strategic location to the Panama Canal then under construction.³¹

Salomon offered to cede the Mole on four conditions. The first condition was that America would guarantee Haiti's independence. The second cited the payment of an unspecified sum to be agreed upon at a later date. The third condition required America to furnish Salomon with two warships and two gunboats. The fourth condition sought direct American guarantee of the continuation of Salomon's government rather than some other.³² In February 1884, Frelinghuysen instructed Langston to make an oral report of America's answer to Salomon's proposal:

The president has looked at it, but adversely, the acquisition would require naval support and would be a reversal of the government's present policy. The acquisition would involve responsibility beyond utility.³³

On November 13, 1883, the Haitian government informed Langston the cities of Jacmel and Jeremie would be bombarded

³⁰Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, November 9, 1883, confidential message, no number assigned.

³¹Ibid., Encl. 1. The strategic importance of the Mole is indicated by the fact that America later acquired the area opposite the Mole on the Windward Passage, Guantanamo.

³²Ibid.

³³Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, February 1, 1884, No. 258, confidential.

on November 18 and 21, respectively, and suggested Langston take action to secure the evacuation of American citizens from those cities.³⁴ Langston, upon receipt of this urgent message, stated he took the following action:

I simply acknowledge [d] the receipt of the despatch, with its enclosure, reserving any rights which may pertain in anywise to American citizens being in the cities named at the time of their bombardment.³⁵

Upon learning of Langston's action, Frelinghuysen reprimanded Langston for his callous disregard for the safety of American citizens. Frelinghuysen said that Langston's technical protest was insufficient and ". . . it does not appear you took any active measures in their behalf. . . . If you had no ship to dispatch why did you not ask one of your colleagues to do so?"³⁶ Since the Swatara had been anchored in the harbor since his return from leave, Langston merely acknowledged the reprimand without comment.³⁷

In December 1883, the Alliance joined the Swatara in the harbor of Port-au-Prince.³⁸ When Langston reported her arrival, he also remarked upon the leisurely progress of the rebellion:

No positive advantage seems to be gained by either the government or the rebels. . . . The investment of Miragoane is continued without change.³⁹

³⁴F.R.U.S., 1884, pp. 295, 296.

³⁵Ibid., p. 295.

³⁶Ibid., p. 297.

³⁷Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, January 14, 1884, No. 610.

³⁸Ibid., December 7, 1883, No. 597.

³⁹Ibid., December 7, 1883, No. 598.

Langston took advantage of the lull in the fighting and the presence of the two American warships to correspond with the Haitian government about the Lazare and Pelletier claims. He also formally presented the claims of six citizens of the United States for damages suffered on September 22 and 23, 1883, in Port-au-Prince. The six American claims amounted to approximately \$100,000, but of this only \$20,000 represented property loss. The remaining \$80,000 was claimed for personal insult and injury, principally made up of the claim of C. W. Mossell, the pastor of the African Methodist Church. Mossell, a light-skinned Negro, had the misfortune of being located in the mulatto section of Port-au-Prince which had been ravaged by Salomon's blacks.⁴⁰

The Haitian government, having spoliation claims from other nations represented at Port-au-Prince, effected settlement of all these claims during the next two years, but at a much reduced rate and more in line with actual property loss. Five of the six American claimants received approximately \$1,000 each, with the largest award of \$5,600 going to the Negro pastor for his claim of \$65,000.⁴¹

In December 1883, the insurgents surrendered the cities of Jacmel and Jeremie, but it was not until January 1884,

⁴⁰F.R.U.S., 1884, pp. 311-313, and Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, December 7, 1883, No. 599.

⁴¹F.R.U.S., 1884, p. 299, and Despatches, Haiti, XVIII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, October 30, 1884, No. 680, XIX, Langston to Bayard, March 21, 1885, No. 726, May 22, 1885, No. 740, and June 25, 1885, No. 751.

that Miragoane finally fell:

Boyer Bazelais, the swashbuckling leader of the light-skinned opposition to President Salomon. . . held an army of 13,000 Negroes at bay from March 26, 1883, to January 8, 1884, accounting for 8000 of them, until every last Mulatto had been killed.⁴²

⁴²William H. Ferris, The African Abroad or his Evolution in Western Civilization (New Haven: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Press, 1913), p. 27.

CHAPTER VIII

APPOINTMENT TO SANTO DOMINGO AND RECALL

While the Dazelais rebellion was going on in November 1883, Langston received word he had been nominated for the additional duty of Chargé d'Affaires to Santo Domingo:

[Congress has declared] that the diplomatic representative at Port-au-Prince shall also be accredited as the Chargé d'Affaires of this government near that of the Republic of Santo Domingo. . . . It is unnecessary to establish a permanent office at Santo Domingo. Two annual visits, with a sojourn of three or four days at that capital, will it is thought, suffice for all the needs of direct ceremonial intercourse.¹

No sooner had he received the news of his nomination than he received the shocking news that his nomination was being held in abeyance pending an investigation of charges presented against him:

I transmit herewith, a copy of a letter addressed to the Department by the Hon. John F. Miller, Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations of the Senate, of the 17th Instant, relative to your nomination to be Chargé d'Affaires at Santo Domingo and reciting the substance of serious charges touching your personal and official character at Port-au-Prince which have come to the knowledge of that committee.²

The basis of the charges presented against Langston

¹U.S., National Archives, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State: Santo Domingo. MSS, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, November 12, 1884, No. 1. Cited hereafter as Instructions, Santo Domingo.

²Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, December 21, 1883, No. 250.

was three letters from American residents of Port-au-Prince, John C. Garsfield, R. L. Murray and John G. Gilchrist. These Americans charged Langston with immorality, in that he had installed a woman of doubtful reputation as his housekeeper but who in actuality was his mistress. He was also accused of lobbying for private interests for remuneration while ignoring other American interests in Haiti. All three claimed he had frequently absented himself from his post to look after his own interests and that he was not respected by American residents in Haiti nor by the Haitian people. John C. Garsfield further charged that thirteen Americans had been killed during revolutions in Haiti and that Langston had done nothing about it.³

Langston's reply to these charges in a letter to Senator Miller was a masterpiece of rebuttal. Apparently his reply was acceptable, for his nomination was confirmed by the Senate on February 12, 1884.⁴ Langston, taking the most outrageous charge first, explained that the official record proved no American, and certainly not thirteen, had been

³Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, January 14, 1884, No. 611. It was necessary to utilize Langston's letter of rebuttal to enumerate the charges brought against him as the copies of the charges which accompanied Frelinghuysen's instructions are no longer a part of that file. It is assumed these copies were removed after the charges against Langston had been refuted and dropped. This writer feels that Garsfield may have been correct if the descendants of the American Negro slaves that Langston denied American citizenship status are included, Supra, pp. 55, 56.

⁴Instructions, Santo Domingo, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, February 20, 1884, No. 5.

killed during his tenure. Langston pointed out that his record in the promotion of American trade could be established by a review of his annual commercial reports. These reports had received the praise and commendation of Secretary Evarts. To the charge of immorality, he protested he had maintained a respectable married couple as his chief domestics and this couple, if called upon to do so, would testify to his high morality. Langston attached seventeen letters of praise and appreciation of his personal and official conduct and commented that the remainder of the charges were too absurd for further explanation.⁵

The Senate Committee, ". . . after appraising the charges put forth by the three men, after considering Langston's explanations, held that the charges were unfounded."⁶

⁵Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, January 14, 1884, No. 611. Langston's seventeen letters of appreciation consisted mainly of letters from Americans in Haiti who had claims pending against the Haitian government. Five of the letters were written by captains of American warships who had visited Port-au-Prince and thanked him for his hospitality. This writer feels that Langston's official record tends to sustain all the charges brought against him with the exception of immorality. A reading of the only contemporary work on Haiti, St. John, Hayti or the Black Republic, indicates that the maintenance of one or more mistresses was an acceptable social custom in Port-au-Prince. St. John said he was a dinner guest at the palace when Salomon asked his guests to guess which of his children belonged to his various mistresses.

⁶Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 199. It appears that Cheek felt the only valid charge against Langston was that he had installed a well-known prostitute in his residence.

On March 15, 1884, the United States warship Galena arrived at Port-au-Prince, presumably for the purpose of transporting Langston to Santo Domingo for the presentation of his credentials. On March 26, 1884, Langston presented his Letter of Credence to President Ulises Heureaux, and departed for Haiti the next day.⁷ This was Langston's first and only visit to Santo Domingo. During his tenure, Langston sent twenty-eight messages to the Secretary of State. The majority of his correspondence concerned the handling of two claims referred to him by Frelinghuysen. These claims were from the Remington Arms Company for the payment of arms and ammunition supplied to the Dominican Republic in 1872, and the claim of an American who stated his ship-wrecked vessel, the Sunrise, had been looted by Dominican citizens in 1880.⁸ Langston settled the Sunrise claim but was ordered to cease his efforts for Remington Arms by the new Secretary of State, Thomas F. Bayard, in March 1885. Secretary Bayard said that since Santo Domingo refused to recognize the Remington Arms claim, the matter was a question of a private contract with that company and Santo Domingo.⁹

Other than handling these two claims and a few routine reports, ". . . Langston's duties as Chargé d'Affaires

⁷Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, March 31, 1884, No. 631, and April 12, 1884, No. 633.

⁸Instructions, Santo Domingo, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, March 18, 1884, No. 6., and June 17, 1884, No. 10.

⁹Ibid., Bayard to Langston, March 13, 1885, No. 20.

were undemanding."¹⁰ Even Langston's autobiography, not distinguished by modesty, only briefly mentions his Santo Domingo service.¹¹

In April 1884, Langston suddenly departed Haiti, and sent the following wire to Frelinghuysen from Jamaica:

Ask permission to come home. Domestic reasons. Advise immediately.¹²

Frelinghuysen wired his approval and later clarified his wire by instructions to Langston at his residence in Washington.¹³ It appears the real reason for Langston's abrupt departure concerned the arbitration protocol for the Lazare and Pelletier claims. In a letter written at his home in Washington, Langston advised Frelinghuysen to agree to arbitration.¹⁴

Upon Langston's return to Port-au-Prince, his first order of business was to answer instructions concerning the confinement of an American citizen by the Haitian police on an indebtedness charge.¹⁵ Charles Van Bokkelen had been

¹⁰Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 200. This writer finds himself in complete agreement with Cheek's evaluation of Langston's tenure in Santo Domingo.

¹¹Langston, Virginia, p. 396.

¹²Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, April 19, 1884, telegram.

¹³Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, April 19, 1884, telegram, and April 25, 1884, No. 273.

¹⁴Despatches, Haiti, XVII, Langston to Frelinghuysen, May 20, 1884, letter.

¹⁵Instructions, Haiti, II, Frelinghuysen to Langston, April 21, 1884, No. 272.

jailed by the Haitian government upon the complaint of an American firm, Toplitz and Company of New York City, for nonpayment of \$3,000.¹⁶ Langston explained that Haitian law permitted the imprisonment of debtors and he had been aware of the case since Van Bokkelen's arrest and confinement on March 6, 1884:

I have watched this case of Mr. Van Bokkelen from the very moment of its beginning. I have no doubt that under the law of this country, properly interpreted and applied, . . . Mr. Van Bokkelen has a right to make an assignment of his property in the interests of his creditors, as he seeks to do judicially, and should thereupon be released from prison.¹⁷

The Haitian government refused to permit Van Bokkelen to leave jail to sell his property on the grounds that his ownership of real property, which included the building Langston rented for the American Legation, was invalid. Haitian law did not permit the ownership of real property by foreigners.¹⁸ Perhaps this explains why Langston was able to obtain ". . . a more commodious and convenient location where the rent was more reasonable," when he moved the legation from where Bassett had it located.¹⁹ Van Bokkelen remained in jail for more than a year, and this article in New York Times tells the story of his release:

¹⁶F.R.U.S., 1884, pp. 306-308.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁸Despatches, Haiti, XVIII-XIX, 1884-1885, passim. See also Commercial Relations, 1878, p. 812, wherein Langston stated foreigners could not legally own property in Haiti.

¹⁹Despatches, Haiti, XI, Langston to Evarts, March 8, 1878, No. 34. Also Supra, p. 27.

Letters to this city state that the Government of Hayti [sic] has paid the debts of Charles A. Van Bokkelen, an American citizen and released him from jail. It is said to have done so on account of a rumor on the streets of Port-au-Prince that Minister Thompson was proceeding from Washington in a man-of-war to demand the prisoner's release, and secure it by force if necessary. . . . Minister Langston was baffled in every effort to secure his release by extended communications on the subject hurled at him by the Salomon Government. . . . Secretary Bayard examined the papers in the case and told Minister Thompson to get the man out or force would be employed. While this case has been pending a British subject was put in jail by the Haitiens [sic] for an identical act. The British Consul secured his release within 24 hours by exhibiting a dispatch for a man-of-war to come and blot the island out of the way of passing vessels.²⁰

On January 30, 1885, as a result of the election of Grover Cleveland, the Democratic candidate for president, Langston submitted his resignation to take effect in March 1885.²¹ On March 3, 1885, President Cleveland nominated George Washington Williams of Massachusetts to be United States Minister to Haiti.²² His name was later withdrawn as this article in the New York Times indicates:

Mr. Williams, who was sworn in as Minister-Resident and Consul-General to Hayti [sic] on the morning of President Cleveland's inauguration, has not yet qualified and probably will not qualify. He has told a story of rude treatment at the hands of Secretary Bayard and Chief Clerk Sevellon Brown, which is denied by both gentlemen. Secretary Bayard was very kind to Mr. Williams when he met him, but he told him that his record with the department was one upon which he could not be allowed to go abroad.²³

²⁰New York Times, June 3, 1885.

²¹Despatches, Haiti, XIX, Langston to Frelinghuysen, January 30, 1885, No. 710.

²²New York Times, March 3, 1885.

²³Ibid., April 17, 1885. See also Despatches, Haiti, XIX, Williams to Bayard, May 19, 1885, letter.

On May 9, 1885, Langston asked Bayard for a leave of absence ". . . if there is to be delay as to the arrival of my successor."²⁴ Secretary Bayard instructed Langston to remain at his post until his successor arrived.²⁵ John W. Thompson, Langston's successor, arrived at Port-au-Prince on June 25, 1885, and Langston's Letter of Recall and the new minister's Letter of Credence was presented to President Salomon on June 30, 1885. His mission in Haiti terminated, Langston returned to the United States in July 1885.²⁶

²⁴Despatches, Haiti, XIX, Langston to Bayard, May 9, 1885, No. 737.

²⁵Instructions, Haiti, II, Bayard to Langston, May 28, 1885, No. 356.

²⁶Despatches, Haiti, XIX, Thompson to Bayard, July 1, 1885, No. 6.

CONCLUSION

William Francis Cheek III, in his dissertation, devoted thirty-one pages to Langston's ministry and approximately one third of these pages concern Langston's political activities in the United States while on leave. This writer has no quarrel with Cheek's emphasis but does argue with Cheek's overall evaluation of Langston as the United States Minister to Haiti:

Though his ministry was unspectacular, Langston nevertheless seems to have handled his post competently and with some degree of imagination. He also had managed to turn his yearly vacations to his advantage by traveling widely in the states and speaking out on the issues that directly reflected on his people.¹

Cheek's evaluation of Langston's ministry as being "unspectacular" is not appropriate. Langston's dishonorable and dishonest actions in the promotion of the claim of an attempted slave-trader and the fraudulent claim of his secretary assures him of a lasting and dubious place in Haitian history. His method of meeting a crisis by absenting or abandoning his post does not lend itself to the definition of "competence." Langston's denial of the sons of former American Negro slaves presented a curious picture, incongruent

¹Cheek, Forgotten Prophet, p. 202. This writer feels that the "Forgotten Prophet's" ministry will be well remembered and that Langston's official correspondence does not indicate a talent for prophecy.

with his "speaking out on the issues that directly reflected on his people."²

The study of Langston's ministry also revealed several informational sidelights. Even after the British representative had developed a coolness towards Langston, the suggestion of an entente between the two diplomats remained. Langston's cowardice must have disgusted Major Stuart when he compared Langston with the resolute and courageous Bassett. Langston's ministry reflects a low point in United States relations in the Caribbean. The advent of Secretary of State Thomas F. Bayard came as a refreshing breeze after the leadership of William M. Evarts and Frederick T. Frelinghuysen. It had been a long eight years since words like honor and honesty had been heard under Hamilton Fish.

It was essential to the maintenance of the "Monroe Doctrine" and to peace and stability in the Caribbean for the United States to carry on diplomatic relations with Haiti. Haiti's Mole St. Nicolas, which overlooked the Windward Passage to Panama, was the "Gibraltar of the Caribbean." Although Salomon's offer of the Mole was refused by the Arthur administration as involving "responsibility beyond utility," constant vigilance was required to prevent it from falling into other foreign hands. President Salomon, whose desire to remain in power knew few bounds, was perfectly

²Ibid.

willing to bargain Haitian territory to another foreign power in exchange for support to his oppressive but troubled regime. Another valid reason for maintaining continual relations with Haiti was that Port-au-Prince was a favorite location for the formulation of revolutionary plots in the Caribbean. The United States Legation in the Haitian capital served an important "listening post" function.

Spenser St. John's book, Hayti or The Black Republic, which appears to be the only contemporary published work for the period, not only told of Haiti's misery, bloodshed and degrading experiment in self-government but predicted even lower depths of ruin were gaping wide to receive it. Present day Haiti, under "President for Life" Francois Duvalier, and his Tonton Macoutes, sport-shirted thugs who kill at whim with presidential blessing,³ suggests that St. John's disheartening prediction might have been correct.

³"Haiti: Rum and Rumors," Newsweek, June 23, 1969.

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