

letters has never perhaps had more censors than now; but as many consult less the light of their intellect, than prejudice or some other foreign motive, the most docile and least prejudiced authors would often be embarrassed, were they disposed to regard all the criticisms passed on their works. I may be allowed to cite my own example.

When the History of St. Domingo appeared, one censor found the whole first volume useless; others wished that I had omitted all reference to the freebooters and buccaneers; but what kind of history of St. Domingo would it be, that described neither the island, nor its discovery, nor the Spanish settlements, nor the revolutions which that people experienced there, nor how this first of their colonies in the New World became the mother of all the others, nor what reduced it to the pitiable state in which we behold it now; nor, in fine, by whom and how the French planted there the finest establishment which they have ever had in America? Had I listened to these different criticisms, would I not be like the man in the fable, whose two wives plucked every hair from his head?

On the other hand, I am aware that others find fault with my conciseness as to certain facts, where I confined myself to what seemed to belong to my subject; they would have wished me, for example, to have followed the career of Cortez to the close of the conquest of Mexico, as though his actions in St. Domingo would justify or require my giving the whole life of that Conquistador. On the same principle, I should have had to follow Almagro and Pizarro, Valdivia and all others who had ever been settlers in St. Domingo, through all their expeditions, and the history of St. Domingo would swell into one of almost the whole Spanish empire in America.

I experienced the same clashing criticisms on the History of Japan. The author of the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, estimable for his learning, imagined that I wished to depreciate Kœmpfer's work. Yet I have every reason to believe that this able writer had not, at the time, read either the German Doctor's work or mine, of which he would perhaps have spoken more favorably, had he not been in a bad humor. I esteem Kœmpfer's work, and I cannot be reproached with failing to do him justice; but his two volumes contain only three or four historical facts, and these related on tradition; and I think that I have shown them to be almost all disfigured in the main circumstances. It is only necessary to see what is said of Peter Nuits, in Formosa: Kœmpfer makes it a romance, in which not even probability is retained. In the *Voyages au Nord*, which I followed, it is a curious circumstantial event, connecting