

COLONY OF LIBERIA, IN AFRICA.

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

ACCOMPANIED WITH

A report of the Secretary of State, relative to the colony of Liberia

MARCH 7, 1844.

Read, and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

To the House of Representatives of the United States :

I transmit to the House of Representatives a report from the Secretary of State, with documents containing the information requested by their resolution of the 26th ultimo.

JOHN TYLER.

WASHINGTON, March 7, 1844.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

Washington, March 7, 1844.

The Secretary of State, to whom has been referred the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 26th ultimo, requesting the President "to communicate to Congress (if not inconsistent, in his opinion, with the public interest) the correspondence between the Secretary of State and the United States minister at London, and between the two Governments of the United States and England, relative to the colony of Liberia, in Africa," has the honor to report to the President copies of the papers mentioned in the subjoined list.

Respectfully submitted :

JNO. NELSON.

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

LIST OF PAPERS.

Mr. Webster to Mr. Everett, January 5, 1843.

Mr. Webster to Mr. Everett, March 24, 1843.

Mr. Everett to Mr. Upshur, (extracts,) November 1, 1843.

Mr. Everett to Mr. Upshur, (extract, with enclosure,) December 30, 1843.

Mr. Everett to Mr. Upshur, (extract, with enclosure,) February 3, 1844.

Mr. Fox to Mr. Upshur, August 9, 1843.

Mr. Upshur to Mr. Fox, September 25, 1843.

Mr. Gurley to the President, (with enclosures,) February 2, 1844.

Blair & Rives, printers.

Mr. Webster to Mr. Everett.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, January 5, 1843.

SIR: I transmit to you, herewith, two letters addressed to this department, on the 10th of March and 22d of December last, by officers of the American Colonization Society, together with the accompanying copies of correspondence, therein referred to, between the authorities of Liberia and certain British naval officers on the coast of Africa, relative to difficulties which have arisen from an interference by a few British traders, &c., with the rights of the colony; and showing that other and still more serious difficulties are apprehended.

In accordance with the wishes of the executive committee of the American Colonization Society, I take leave to commend the object of their application to your favorable attention; and to beg that you will take an early occasion to make an informal representation of their complaints, in conversation with Lord Aberdeen.

I suggest that an inquiry may be instituted into the facts alleged, and that measures may be adopted for the prevention, in future, of any infraction of the rights of these colonists, or any improper interference, on the part of her Majesty's subjects on the coast of Africa, with the interests of the colonial settlement of Liberia.

I am, sir, respectfully, your obedient servant,

DANIEL WEBSTER.

EDWARD EVERETT, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Webster to Mr. Everett.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, March 24, 1843.

SIR: I send you, in addition to the papers transmitted with my letter of the 5th of January last, several notes recently addressed to me by the secretary of the American Colonization Society, together with the printed documents, &c., accompanying them.

Mr. Gurley's first communication is dated on the 13th, and the other two on the 16th inst. Taken in connexion with those previously forwarded to the legation, they show that the wishes of the colonists, in regard to the territorial extent of their settlements, are quite reasonable—the settlements extending southeasterly from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas, a distance of about three hundred miles only; and these notes, too, explain the nature of the relations existing between Liberia and the United States. Founded principally with a view to the melioration of the condition of an interesting portion of the great human family, this colony has conciliated more and more the good-will, and has, from time to time, received the aid and support of this Government. Without having passed any laws for their regulation, the American Government takes a deep interest in the welfare of the people of Liberia, and is disposed to extend to them a just degree of countenance and protection.

I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

DANIEL WEBSTER.

EDWARD EVERETT, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Everett to Mr. Upshur.

[Extracts.]

LONDON, November 1, 1843.

SIR: Just as the parcel of despatches by the steamer of the 19th of October was closing, the letters from America by the "Caledonia" (the steamer of October 1st) arrived in London. I now beg to acknowledge the receipt, by that vessel, of your despatch No. 60, enclosing a copy of a note to Mr. Fox on the subject of Liberia, and of despatch No. 61, &c. * * * * *

On the subject of Liberia, I received two communications from Mr. Webster: of which the first, of the 5th of January, was not numbered as a despatch, nor intended, I suppose, to be considered as wholly official; the second was despatch No. 35, of the 2d of April. I have, from time to time, in conversations both with Lord Aberdeen and Lord Stanley, invoked their good offices for the colonists, and deprecated the unkind treatment they appeared to me to have received on some occasions, not only from British traders, but from the cruisers of this nation on the coast of Africa. It has been my purpose, at the earliest moment at which I could prepare it, to address a written communication to Lord Aberdeen on the subject of the complaints of the colonists; but it has hitherto been out of my power. Meantime, I am happy to find, in the very lucid statement contained in your letter to Mr. Fox of the 25th, on the subject of the relations of the colony to the United States, and in your persuasive appeal to the Government of this country for their favorable regard toward the colonists, an anticipation of all that I could possibly have urged on the topics treated by you.

Mr. Everett to Mr. Upshur.

[Extract.]

LONDON, December 30, 1843.

SIR: In my despatch No. 60, I alluded to the instructions which I had received from the late Secretary of State, on the subject of the complaints of the settlers in Liberia against British cruisers and traders. Although I had, in the course of the past year, had some conversations on these subjects with Lords Aberdeen and Stanley, I had experienced a difficulty in preparing a statement in writing in reference to the alleged grievances of the Liberians, in consequence of not being distinctly informed as to the views of the Executive on the general subject of the relations of that settlement to the Government of the United States. Your note to Mr. Fox of the 25th September last having wholly removed this difficulty, I felt it my duty, under the former instructions of the department, to bring the subject of the conduct of the British traders and cruisers on the African coast to the notice of this Government, which I have done in a note to Lord Aberdeen, bearing date this day, of which a copy accompanies this despatch.

I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

EDWARD EVERETT.

[Enclosure.]

GROSVENOR PLACE, *December 30, 1843.*

The undersigned, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the United States of America, has been directed by his Government to make a representation to the Earl of Aberdeen, her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on the subject of some discussions which have arisen between the authorities of the settlement of Liberia, on the coast of Africa, and her Majesty's cruising officers on that station. Copies of a correspondence between Captain Denman, of her Majesty's sloop "Wanderer," and Mr. Roberts, the Governor of Liberia, in the month of October, 1841; between Lieutenant Seagram, of the "Termagant," on the one side, and the resident agent of the Liberian Government at Bassa Cove, and Mr. Roberts, the Governor of Liberia, in March 1842, on the other side; and between the Commander J. Oake, senior officer on the Sierra Leone station, and the same Liberian authorities, in the month of July, 1842, have been forwarded to the undersigned by the Secretary of State. The undersigned forbears to transmit copies of this correspondence to the Earl of Aberdeen, under the impression that it has been already laid before her Majesty's Government, in the despatches of the officers cruising on the African station. Extracts of a letter of the 16th December, 1841, from the Governor of Liberia to the secretary of the American Colonization Society, (the institution under whose auspices Liberia was settled,) and of the reply of the executive committee of that society, are herewith transmitted for the information of her Majesty's Government.

Lord Aberdeen will recollect that the difficulties which have arisen between the Government of Liberia and the British cruising officers and British traders on the coast of Africa, were referred to in conversation more than once, between his lordship and the undersigned, in the course of the past year. On those occasions, the precise relation between the Government of the United States and Liberia formed a subject of inquiry on the part of the Earl of Aberdeen. All desirable information on that point has, the undersigned believes, lately reached Lord Aberdeen, in a note of 25th September last, addressed by Mr. Upshur, the Secretary of State of the United States, to her Majesty's minister at Washington; and the undersigned deems it unnecessary to dwell on the subject.

The history of the Liberian settlement, as contained in Mr. Upshur's note, will sufficiently account for the interest felt by the American Government in its prosperity. It was founded by a peculiarly interesting class of emigrants from the United States; it affords a convenient means of making a proper disposition of slaves captured by American cruisers, and of persons of African descent desirous of returning from the United States to the land of their fathers; and it has ever been regarded as a powerful auxiliary in the promotion of objects, which the Government and people of America have greatly at heart—the entire suppression of the slave-trade, and the civilization of the African continent.

That an independent settlement of persons of African descent, owing its origin to the impulse of christian benevolence, and still controlled by the same benign influence, should be peculiarly fitted, in some respects, to accomplish these objects of its establishment, is obvious in itself. The testimony of several respectable officers of the British navy might be adduced

in proof of this fact, that something valuable has been already effected toward these great ends, under the laws or the influence of its settlement.

The policy of the United States, in reference to extra continental possessions, has not allowed them, had it been otherwise deemed expedient, to extend that kind of protection to the Liberian settlement, to which colonies are entitled from the mother country by which they are established. It has, in consequence, been compelled to rely on its intrinsic right to the common protection and favor of all civilized nations; and, thus far, for the most part, without being disappointed.

The undersigned forbears to enter much at large into the particular matters discussed between the Liberian authorities and the British cruising officers. The right of the Liberian Government to maintain their jurisdiction over Bassa Cove and the dependent territory, forms the most important of them; and the denial of that right by several British officers is the most serious difficulty, of a political nature, which the Liberian settlement has had to encounter. If the principle assumed by these officers should be sanctioned by her Majesty's Government—namely, that the Liberian settlement can, by treaty with the native chiefs, acquire no jurisdiction over territory on any part of the coast of Africa where an individual has previously established a factory or traded with the natives—it will become impossible for the settlement to make any further addition to its domain, or, in fact, to maintain itself in its oldest establishments.

This principle, it would seem, can rest on no other foundation than that the settlement of Liberia is a private enterprise, like that of an individual trader, and entitled to none of the rights of a political community. The auspices under which it was founded, the countenance it has received from the Government of the United States, the public objects of the settlement, and the singularly meritorious nature of the enterprise, will, the undersigned trusts, prevent her Majesty's Government from giving its sanction to this principle—a principle which seems to deny to the civilized and christian settlement of Liberia those public rights which would be recognised as belonging to the barbarous native hordes of the African continent.

The undersigned rather hopes that her Majesty's Government, from the interest which he is sure will be felt in the prosperity of such a settlement, will be able to extend its decided countenance to an infant community possessing so many claims to the sympathy of all christian powers. The undersigned greatly fears that, if the right of this settlement to act as an independent political community, and, as such, to enforce the laws necessary to its existence and prosperity, be denied by her Majesty's Government, and if the naval power of Great Britain be employed in protecting individual traders in the violation of those laws, the effect will be to aim a fatal blow at its very existence; to invite the insults of slave-traders and the aggressions of other powers; and to destroy the wholesome influence of Liberia over the natives. These are evils too great, in the estimation of the undersigned, to be willingly caused by her Majesty's Government, on any grounds set forth in the correspondence above alluded to.

Lord Aberdeen will also observe, that the fact that there was any contract on the part of private traders prior to the cession of Bassa Cove to the Liberian Government, is denied by Governor Roberts in his letter to the American Colonization Society. But the undersigned cannot think that the

substantiation of this fact will be deemed of great importance by her Majesty's Government.

If the undersigned is in an error in supposing that the correspondence alluded to in the beginning of this note is already in the possession of her Majesty's Government, copies of it will be immediately furnished to Lord Aberdeen, on his expressing a wish to that effect.

The undersigned avails himself of this opportunity to renew to Lord Aberdeen the assurance of his distinguished consideration.

EDWARD EVERETT.

The EARL OF ABERDEEN, &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Everett to Mr. Upshur.

[Extract.]

LONDON, *February 3, 1844.*

* * * * *

I received last evening, from Lord Aberdeen, a formal reply to my note of December 30th; which I herewith transmit. It contains the substance of the instructions to the British cruisers on the coast of Africa, in reference to the Liberian settlements.

Lord Aberdeen to Mr. Everett.

[Enclosure.]

FOREIGN OFFICE, *January 31, 1844.*

The undersigned, her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the note of Mr. Everett, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the United States of America, dated the 30th ultimo, calling the attention of her Majesty's Government to some discussions which have arisen between the authorities of the settlement of Liberia, on the western coast of Africa, and the officers of her Majesty's cruisers on that station. The undersigned had previously received from Mr. Fox the note from Mr. Upshur to that minister, which is referred to by Mr. Everett, and which explained the nature and objects of the settlement of Liberia—a subject upon which her Majesty's Government had sought information from that of the United States.

The undersigned begs to assure Mr. Everett that her Majesty's Government highly appreciate the motives which have induced the American Colonization Society to found the settlement of Liberia; nor do they doubt that the growth of that settlement may, under judicious guidance, powerfully contribute to promote the object for which it was established; and the undersigned conceives that he cannot better reply to the representation which Mr. Everett has now been directed to make upon this subject, than by informing him, without reserve, of the tenor of the instructions which have been given to her Majesty's naval commanders for their guidance in their communications with the Liberian settlers.

These instructions, which have been issued subsequently to the date of the discussions with the authorities of Liberia, to which Mr. Everett refers,

enjoin her Majesty's naval commanders, whose duty it is to extend a general protection to British trade on the western coast of Africa, to avoid involving themselves in contentions with the local authorities of the Liberian settlements, upon points of uncertain legality. In places to the possession of which British settlers have a legal title, by formal purchase or cession from the rightful owners of the soil, no foreign authority has, of course, any right to interfere. But, in other places, in which no such ostensible right of property exists, great caution is recommended to be observed in the degree of protection granted to British residents, lest, in maintaining the supposed rights of those residents, the equal or superior rights of others should be violated; and at the same time that her Majesty's naval commanders afford efficient protection to British trade against improper assumption of power on the part of the Liberian authorities, they are instructed and enjoined to cultivate a good understanding with the inhabitants of that settlement, and to foster, by friendly treatment of them, such a feeling as may lead the settlers themselves voluntarily to redress whatever grievances may have been the subject of complaint against them.

The undersigned requests Mr. Everett to accept the assurance of his high consideration.

ABERDEEN.

EDWARD EVERETT, Esq. *&c.*, *&c.*, *&c.*

Mr. Fox to Mr. Upshur.

WASHINGTON, August 9, 1843.

SIR: I had recently the honor to state to you, verbally, that her Majesty's Government have, for some time past, been desirous of ascertaining, authentically, the nature and extent of the connexion subsisting between the American colony of Liberia, on the coast of Africa, and the Government of the United States.

Certain differences which have arisen, and which, I believe, are still pending, between British subjects trading with Africa on the one hand, and the authorities of Liberia on the other, render it very necessary, in order to avert for the future serious trouble and contention in that quarter, that her Majesty's Government should be accurately informed what degree of official patronage and protection, if any, the United States Government extend to the colony of Liberia; how far, if at all, the United States Government recognise the colony of Liberia as a national establishment; and, consequently, how far, if at all, the United States Government hold themselves responsible towards foreign countries for the acts of the authorities of Liberia.

It is also very desirable, if the United States Government recognise and protect the colony of Liberia, that her Majesty's Government should be authentically informed what are considered to be the territorial limits of the colony; and, also, by what title the amount of territory so claimed has been acquired. For it appears that (during the last year, in particular) the authorities of Liberia have shown a disposition to enlarge very considerably the limits of their territory; assuming, to all appearance quite unjustifiably, the right of monopolizing the trade with the native inhabitants along a considerable line of coast, where the trade had hitherto been free; and thus

injuriously interfering with the commercial interests and pursuits of British subjects in that quarter.

It is not for a moment supposed that the United States Government would, either directly or indirectly, sanction such proceedings; but, in case of its becoming necessary to stop the further progress of such proceedings and of such pretensions, it is very desirable, in order, as before mentioned, to avert causes of future dispute and contention, that her Majesty's Government should be informed whether the authorities of Liberia are themselves alone responsible on the spot for their public acts; or whether, if they are under the protection and control of the United States Government, it is to that Government that application must be made when the occasions above alluded to may require it.

I avail myself of this occasion to renew to you the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

H. S. FOX.

HON. ABEL P. UPSHUR, &c., &c.

Mr. Upshur to Mr. Fox.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, September 25, 1843.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th of August last, informing me that her Majesty's Government have, for some time past, been desirous of ascertaining authentically the nature and extent of the connexion subsisting between the American colony of Liberia, on the coast of Africa, and the Government of the United States; and requesting me to give you the desired information.

The colony, or settlement, of Liberia was established by a voluntary association of American citizens, under the title of the American Colonization Society. Its objects were, to introduce christianity and promote civilization in Africa; to relieve the slave-holding States from the inconvenience of an increase of free blacks among them; to improve the condition and elevate the character of those blacks themselves, and to present to the slave-holder an inducement to emancipate his slaves, by offering to them an asylum in the country of their ancestors, in which they would enjoy political and social equality. It was not, however, established under the authority of our Government, nor has it been recognised as subject to our laws and jurisdiction.

It is believed that the society has confined itself strictly to the professed objects of its association. As an individual enterprise, it has no precedent in the history of the world. The motives which led to it were not those of trade, nor of conquest; the individuals concerned in it promised themselves no personal advantage nor benefit whatever. Their motives were purely philanthropic, and their objects strictly disinterested. In spite of the unexampled difficulties with which they have had to contend, they have, by patience and perseverance, succeeded in placing their colony upon a safe and prosperous footing. It is just beginning to exert, in a sensible degree, its beneficent influences upon the destinies of the African race; and promises, if it be duly sustained, to do much for the regeneration of that quarter of the globe. Hence it has received, as it richly deserves, the

respect and sympathy of the whole civilized world. To the United States it is an object of peculiar interest. It was established by our people, and has gone on under the countenance and good offices of our Government. It is identified with the success of a great object, which has enlisted the feelings, and called into action the enlarged benevolence, of a large proportion of our people. It is natural, therefore, that we should regard it with greater sympathy and solicitude than would attach to it under other circumstances.

This society was first projected in the year 1816. In 1821 it possessed itself of a territory upon the continent of Africa, by fair purchase of the owners of the soil. For several years it was compelled to defend itself by arms, and unaided, against the native tribes; and succeeded in sustaining itself, only at a melancholy sacrifice of comfort, and a lamentable loss of human lives. No nation has ever complained that it has acquired territory in Africa; but, on the contrary, for twenty-two years it has been allowed, with the full knowledge of *all* nations, to enlarge its borders from time to time, as its safety or its necessities required. It has been regarded as a purely benevolent enterprise, and, with a view to its success, has been tacitly permitted to exercise all the powers of an independent community. It is believed that this license has never been abused, and that the colony has advanced no claims which ought not to be allowed to an infant settlement just struggling into a healthy existence. Its object and motive entitle it to the respect of the stronger powers, and its very weakness gives it irresistible claims to their forbearance. Indeed, it may justly appeal to the kindness and support of all the principal nations of the world, since it has already afforded, and still continues to afford, the most important aid in carrying out a favorite measure of their policy.

It is not perceived that any nation can have just reason to complain that this settlement does not confine itself to the limits of its original territory. Its very existence requires that it should extend those limits. Heretofore, this has never been done by arms, so far as I am informed, but always by fair purchase from the natives. In like manner, their treaties with the native princes, whether of trade or otherwise, ought to be respected. It is quite certain that their influence in civilizing and christianizing Africa, in suppressing the slave-trade, and in ameliorating the condition of African slaves, will be worth very little, if they should be restrained at this time in any one of these particulars. Full justice, it is hoped, may be done to England, without denying to Liberia powers so necessary to the safety, the prosperity, and the utility of that settlement as a philanthropic establishment.

This Government does not, of course, undertake to settle and adjust differences which have arisen between British subjects and the authorities of Liberia. Those authorities are responsible for their own acts; and they certainly would not expect the support or countenance of this Government in any act of injustice towards individuals or nations. But, as they are themselves nearly powerless, they must rely, for the protection of their own rights, on the justice and sympathy of other powers.

Although no apprehension is entertained that the British Government meditates any wrong to this interesting settlement, yet the occasion is deemed a fit one for making known, beyond a simple answer to your inquiries, in what light it is regarded by the Government and people of the United States. It is due to her Majesty's Government that I should inform

you that this Government regards it as occupying a peculiar position, and as possessing peculiar claims to the friendly consideration of all christian powers; that this Government will be, at all times, prepared to interpose its good offices to prevent any encroachment by the colony upon any just right of any nation; and that it would be very unwilling to see it despoiled of its territory rightfully acquired, or improperly restrained in the exercise of its necessary rights and powers as an independent settlement.

I pray you to accept the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

A. P. UPSHUR.

HENRY S. FOX, Esq., &c., &c., &c.

Mr. Gurley to the President.

WASHINGTON, *February 2, 1844.*

SIR: I have the honor to transmit, herewith, copies of two letters, addressed by me, as secretary of the American Colonization Society, during the last year, to the Secretary of State; copies of which were, I believe, transmitted by him to our minister in England.

I need hardly observe, sir, that the Colonization Society, which was founded in 1816, was, for several years, an unincorporated body; but that an act of incorporation (which I have the honor, herewith, to transmit) was granted to it in 1831, by the Legislature of Maryland, and renewed, with some modifications, in 1837. The first purchase of territory in Africa was made by the society's agent, Dr. Eli Ayres, aided by Captain Robert F. Stockton, of the United States schooner Alligator, in December, 1821; and a few colored emigrants from the United States took possession of Cape Mountserado, in July, 1822.

In the spring of the same year, eighteen recaptured Africans were sent out, by order, and at the expense, of the Government; Mr. Monroe, then President, having selected this place as the one at which the humane provisions of the act of Congress of the 3d of March, 1819, for the benefit of these unfortunate persons, could most effectually be fulfilled.

The first emigrants sent by the society to Africa, consented, on their departure, to submit to such rules and regulations as the board of managers might prescribe, and to the authority of the agents appointed by that board to administer the affairs of the colony. They took with them what might be termed a bill of rights, or a few elemental principles of free government, prepared for them, and which were to be recognised as fundamental in any system of government to be established. They were to be governed mainly, at first, by the authority of the agents of the society, and by such regulations as the board of managers might deem expedient or necessary to ordain. Many difficulties arose under this very imperfectly adjusted condition of things; and on some occasions, not only the good order, but also the very existence, of the colony was endangered.

The evils of disaffection and insubordination had, at the commencement of the year 1824, attained such a growth, that the managers of the society represented strongly to the Executive of the United States the importance of sending an armed vessel to the colony, with some individual duly commissioned by the Government and society to examine the entire condition of the agency, the people, and the property of the United States and society;

and empowered to make such arrangements, for the society, of the public interests and the government of the establishment, as, upon proper consideration, circumstances might, in his judgment, require. The writer was intrusted with this joint commission; and, during his visit to the colony, in August, 1824, in conjunction with the late lamented Mr. Ashman, drew up the form of government which, with some modifications, has continued to the present time. The whole adult male population of the colony were assembled, and the plan of government read and explained in their hearing; and beneath the thatched roof of the first rude house for Divine worship ever erected in the colony, stood the little company of one hundred colored emigrants, who had adventured all things to gain for themselves and their children an inheritance of liberty, and by solemn vote adopted the constitution, and promised fidelity to the trust committed to their hands.

It was understood, at this time, that the managers of the society were authorized, by the terms upon which the emigrants had placed themselves under their care, to confirm, modify, or change this constitution. The society not even regarded itself, however, as possessed only of authority derived from the assent of the colony, without power of any kind to enforce its decisions. Its whole object has been philanthropic—to assist an unfortunate people, anxious to improve their condition, in establishing themselves as a free and independent community; and it has even avowed, both to them and the world, the purpose of withdrawing all parental authority the moment its exercise should be either unnecessary or inexpedient.

Early in 1839, some changes in the constitution of the colonial government were proposed by the board of directors, and transmitted, both to the colonial council and to assemblies of the people, for consideration and adoption. The constitution, thus modified, was approved by the citizens of Liberia, and is the present constitution. A copy is herewith transmitted.

The society, in the preamble, speaks of this constitution as *granted* to the citizens of the colony; yet this term must be understood as restricted in meaning by the nature of the authority of the society; and as this was not political, the grant could not be of political power; nor was the grant deemed valid, or of effect, until formally accepted or adopted by the people of the colony. How far, if at all, the political rights of the colonists are affected by the fact that the public lands have been acquired by the American Colonization Society; that the inhabitants acknowledge the right, by mutual agreement of the society, to appoint the governor, and to revoke, should it judge best, the enactments of the colonial legislature, as well as to ratify or annul treaties with the African tribes for the acquisition of territory; or, by the relations sustained formerly by the colonists to the United States, or still sustained by a portion of its population (the recaptured Africans) to the United States Government, naturally suggests itself, and may, perhaps, be deserving of consideration.

If, however, the society has no political power, it would appear to be incompetent to impart it, and the Government of the United States has never assumed any control over the government of the colony; and since Liberia has entered into no political relations with European or other civilized countries, it would seem entitled, politically, to the character of an independent State.

I beg leave to present, with this communication, a copy of Mr. Kennedy's report to the last Congress, in which are clearly and strongly stated the reasons for some early action on the part of our Government in regard to the

relations which are, in future, to subsist between Liberia and this country. The decision of this question may affect, to a great extent, the interests of our commerce, as well as the still greater interests of civilization and humanity.

The friends of the colony of Liberia may congratulate themselves, sir, that this subject has attracted your attention; that it has already entered into the correspondence between our Government and that of Great Britain; and that, through the friendly interest the Executive is pleased to take in the few, feeble, but most interesting settlements of Liberia, we may cherish, confidently, the hope of their multiplication, growth, and increasing prosperity, until a mighty and independent commonwealth of freemen and christians shall extend its power and beneficence over the wide regions of western Africa. And, may I be permitted to add, that among all the acts, even of the most fortunate and splendid administration, none could be more worthy of enduring fame, than that which should secure to the small, but well-organized State of Liberia, a permanent and independent existence, and such countenance from civilized nations as shall open before it an unlimited prospect of influence and improvement.

I feel assured that the board of directors of the American Colonization Society will be disposed to concur in the measures of the Government for this end; though, having recently resigned my office as secretary of the society, you will please to regard this an unofficial communication.

I have the honor to be, sir, with profound respect, most faithfully, your friend and obedient servant,

R. R. GURLEY.

His Excellency the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

[Enclosures.]

OFFICE OF THE COLONIZATION SOCIETY,
Washington, December 22, 1842.

SIR: I have the honor to communicate the following resolution, adopted on the 2d instant, by the executive committee of the American Colonization Society:

“Resolved, That the secretary confer with the Secretary of State on the subject of the difficulties existing between the colony of Liberia and British traders; also, prepare a communication on the subject, either to him, or to our minister in England, Mr. Everett, as shall be judged best; also, communicate the correspondence between the Governor of Liberia and certain British naval officers on the coast of Africa, to the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Navy.”

You, sir, are well acquainted with the origin, design, and general proceedings of the American Colonization Society. It was organized by benevolent individuals, from different sections and various States of the Union, in December, 1816, and was created a body corporate by an act of the legislature of Maryland, in December, 1831, which act, somewhat amended and enlarged, was renewed in March, 1837. The object of the society, as defined in the second article of its constitution, “is to promote and execute a plan for colonizing, with their consent, the free people of color residing in our country, in Africa, or such other place, as Congress shall deem expedient; and the society shall act, to effect this object, in co-operation with

the General Government, and such of the States as may adopt regulations on the subject."

The founders of this society regarded their scheme as one of enlarged humanity towards the whole African race; and believed that, if perseveringly prosecuted, with adequate means, it must confer rich blessings upon our free people of color, encourage emancipation, aid to suppress the slave trade, and establish a civilized and free government and the Christian religion upon the coast of Africa. They early addressed memorials for countenance and support to the State Legislatures and to the General Government. Congress, at their suggestion, adopted more effectual measures for the suppression of the slave-trade, and, revoking forever the authority of any State Legislature to dispose of such unfortunate Africans as, in violation of law, were brought under their jurisdiction; authorized the President of the United States to make such regulations and arrangements as he might deem expedient for their safekeeping, support, and removal beyond the limits of the United States, and to appoint a proper person or persons, residing upon the coast of Africa, as agent or agents for receiving those persons of color delivered from on board vessels seized in the prosecution of the slave-trade by the commanders of the United States armed vessels.

The then President of the United States, Mr. Monroe, perceiving that the benevolent provisions of this law for the benefit of the recaptured Africans might be most economically and effectually fulfilled by securing a home for these persons within the limits and under the protection of such colony as might be founded by the efforts and donations of the members and friends of this society, determined to act in co-operation with the society in regard to the station to be chosen for the temporary or permanent (as might be) residence of such Africans; and when the society had obtained possession, by purchase, of a portion of the tract of country in Africa, since designated by the name of Liberia, such persons were placed upon its soil, under the care of an agent of Government, with such means of subsistence and defence as might enable them ultimately to attain the advantages which it was the endeavor of the society to secure to all free voluntary emigrants to their colony.

Thus, the colony of Liberia rose into existence both as a home for recaptured Africans, humanely restored by our Government to their country, and as a well-organized community of free colored men, prepared and disposed to extend their useful arts, laws, civilization, and christianity, far abroad among the native population of Africa.

The society proceeded without delay to explore the western coast of Africa, and to obtain, by fair negotiation with the native tribes, and by actual purchase, eligible tracts of country for colonial settlements. Enterprising free men of color were assisted to emigrate, organized into a government after our own republican model, and by some of our own citizens devoted to their interests, and eminently qualified to be their guides, instructed in their social and political duties. They constitute a free and christian commonwealth. Comprising a population of several thousand persons, they have founded churches, schools, tribunals of justice, the press, and made successful experiments in agriculture and commerce. Laws are enacted by a legislative council chosen by the people, while all engaged in their administration (the Governor alone excepted, who is appointed by the society) derive their authority from the same source. The missionaries of several communions have entered through the various avenues, and under the

protection of this colony, upon their benevolent enterprise among the native Africans, many of whom have sought refuge within its bounds, and submitted to its government. By the law of Liberia, the slave-trade is denounced as piracy, and is utterly driven from every spot over which it has power of right to extend control. As the numbers of the colony have increased, no means at its command have been neglected for the acquisition of territory; and while many points from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas (a distance of nearly 300 miles) have been secured by absolute cession, the right of pre-emption exists towards others, and it is of great importance to bring this whole line of coast under the government of Liberia. The correspondence heretofore placed in your hands, between Governor Roberts and certain English naval officers, and that which I have the honor herewith to transmit, shows the difficulties which have arisen from the interference of certain British traders with the rights of the colony, and the still more serious difficulties to be apprehended. Under color of a prior claim granted by certain native African chiefs to individual Englishmen to establish factories for trade, or to occupy small portions of land purchased for the same purpose by such Englishmen, the political jurisdiction of the colony over territory ceded to the colonial government is called in question, and the aid of British naval officers invoked to prevent the enforcement of the several revenue laws of the colony.

As neither the Government of Great Britain, nor any European government, claim, as far as we know, any political jurisdiction from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas; as such claim, if by possibility it may exist, has arisen long since the establishment of the colony and government of Liberia; as this colony is composed of enterprising and adventurous free men of color from the United States, who have gone, aided by benevolent American citizens, to plant themselves as a free, independent, and christian community, on this remote and barbarous coast, in the hope of rising to honor and power as a civilized State, attracting to it the unfortunate and widely dispersed children of Africa, from this and other lands, while exerting a renovating influence on her home population,—it is essential that they be not disturbed in the possession of rights already acquired, or precluded from extending their influence and laws over the entire line of coast (from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas) generally known as Liberia.

The executive committee venture to solicit your friendly interposition, in such way as you may deem expedient, with the governments of Great Britain and France, to prevent any interference by these governments themselves, or their citizens, with the rights and interests of the colonial settlements of Liberia, and also a recognition of the just title of these settlements to be regarded as neutral in case of war.

The late Secretary of State for the colonies of Great Britain, Lord John Russell, assured me of the disposition of her Majesty's ministers to consider with candor the claims of Liberia, provided the subject was brought to its notice through the channels of our Government; and Dr. Lushington, judge in the high court of admiralty, promised his best offices to secure from the various European governments a recognition of the neutrality of this colony.

Inasmuch as nearly half the States of this Union have expressed, through their Legislatures, their approbation of the cause of African colonization, and several invoked in its behalf the aid of the General Government, and others made valuable appropriations of money to promote it; and

since the Congress of the United States has repeatedly referred this subject to select committees, and by the act of March 3, 1819, (passed in consequence of a memorial of the American Colonization Society,) authorizing the President of the United States to provide for the removal of recaptured Africans to the coast of Africa, and their temporary support and defence there, indicated the policy which the Executive has adopted of placing such unfortunate persons on the soil and under the protection of this colony; and since the government and people of Liberia are contributing very effectually, and, in their progress, will still more contribute, to that great object of humanity and religion, to which the United States and England stand pledged to each other and the world, by their recent treaty—the overthrow of the slave-trade; and, finally, since the permanency and growth of this colony are very important to American commerce, and of inestimable value to the interests of civilization and christianity in that quarter of the globe, (to say nothing of its relations to great and agitating questions in this country,) we trust you may see reasons for bringing its difficulties and claims distinctly to the consideration of the governments of Great Britain and France.

While it is deeply regretted by the committee that the hopes of the founders of the American Colonization Society, in regard to support for their scheme from the State and National Governments, have not, as yet, been fully realized, and the colonists of Liberia are left without adequate assistance and protection from this nation, they see in their weakness and exposure, as well as in their lofty purpose, self-denying energy, christian fortitude, and virtuous conduct, the strongest recommendation to the confidence and friendly regards of all civilized and powerful nations.

I have the honor to be, sir, with great respect,

R. R. GURLEY.

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER,
Secretary of State.

OFFICE OF THE COLONIZATION SOCIETY,
Washington, March 18, 1843.

SIR: In reply to your inquiries this morning, I have the honor herewith to transmit the report just submitted to Congress by Mr. Kennedy, of the Committee on Commerce, with the memorial (to which it refers) of the late colonization convention, together with a speech of the late Francis S. Key, esq., on the nature and extent of protection and aid justly expected for the colonists of Liberia from the General Government.

The constitution of the American Colonization Society declares "that the society shall act, to effect its object, in co-operation with the General Government, and such of the States as may adopt regulations upon the subject;" and the meeting that adopted this constitution appointed a committee "to present a respectful memorial to Congress, requesting them to adopt such measures as may be thought most desirable for securing a territory in Africa, or elsewhere, suitable for the colonization of the free people of color." In the opening of their memorial, this committee declare that they are delegated by a highly respectable association of their fellow-citizens, recently organized at the seat of Government, to solicit Congress to aid with the power, the protection, and the resources of the country, the

great beneficial object of their institution—an object deemed worthy of the earnest attention, and of the strenuous and persevering exertions, as well of every patriot, in whatever condition of life, as of every enlightened, philanthropic, and practical statesman.” You are aware, sir, that in consequence of this and subsequent memorials from the society to Congress, the slave-trade was made piracy by our laws; that the President of the United States was requested to enter into negotiations with foreign powers, to secure the denunciation and punishment of this traffic, as piracy, by all civilized nations; that he was authorized to take charge of any Africans captured by our arms from vessels unlawfully engaged in this trade on the ocean, or when about to land such persons in the United States; that Mr. Monroe, (then President,) believing that the humane provision of this law could be most economically and effectually fulfilled by placing such Africans within the limits and under the protection of such colony as might be founded by the efforts of the society, determined to act in co-operation with it in regard to the station to be chosen; that the first agent sent out with emigrants by the society, should be the agent also of the Government; and that arms, lumber, and other supplies to this first expedition, were furnished at the expense of the Government; that the first purchase of territory in Liberia was effected by the aid of Captain Stockton, one of our naval officers; that very important assistance has repeatedly from that time been given by our ships of war on the African coast; and that, as doubts had been expressed by the legal officers of the Government in regard to the interpretation of the act of Congress of the 3d of March, 1819, a memorial was addressed to Congress, at its last session, praying that some appropriation, free from doubt and restriction, might be placed at the disposal of the Executive, for the support of any such recaptured Africans as, through the operations of the recent treaty, might be sent to the agency for the same in Liberia; and the sum of five thousand dollars was appropriated for this purpose.

I beg leave further to submit the following extracts from instructions given by the Navy Department to commanders of United States vessels, in relation to the colony of Liberia:

To Captain Spencer, June 11, 1822.

“When you arrive on the coast of Africa, you will proceed off Cape Messurado, and visit the colony established near this place, and afford all the aid and support in your power to Dr. Eli Ayres, the agent of this Government and the colonists.”

To the same.

“By recent accounts received from Cape Messurado, on the coast of Africa, it appears that the American settlement there has been attacked by the natives, and the safety of the people endangered. Their situation is, therefore, such as requires immediate relief and protection. I wish you to remain near them until you shall be relieved, or receive further instructions from this department, and afford to the settlement and to the agent of the Government all the aid and protection in your power.”

To the same, April 8, 1823.

"For the greater security of the settlements made at Messurado, be pleased to station at that place, so long as you shall continue on the coast of Africa, or while the settlement is endangered by the natives, as many marines as can conveniently be spared from the United States ship Cyane under your command."

"It is," said the late Chief Justice Marshall, in a letter dated December 14, 1831, "of great importance to retain the countenance and protection of the General Government. Some of our cruisers stationed on the coast of Africa could at the same time interrupt the slave-trade—a horrid traffic, detested by all good men—and would protect the vessels and commerce of the colony from the pirates that infest those seas. The power of the Government to afford this aid is not, I believe, contested."

I will only add, what is stated in my former letter, (a copy of which accompanies this,) that while it is vitally important to secure to the government of Liberia incontestable jurisdiction from Cape Mount to Cape Palmas; and that while the enlargement of these settlements, and their multiplication, will prove most powerful auxiliaries to the overthrow of the slave-trade, and the growth of peaceful and useful commerce—the true objects contemplated by the United States and Great Britain, in one article of the recent treaty—I feel assured that no endeavors on your part, sir, will be wanting to preserve their rights and secure their prosperity.

I have the honor to be, sir, with the greatest respect, your most obedient servant,

R. R. GURLEY.

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER,
Secretary of State.

To the Editor of the Liberator

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th inst. in relation to the subject of the slave trade. I am glad to hear that you are so deeply interested in the cause of the oppressed, and I am sure that your efforts will be successful in bringing about the desired reform.

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