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AND

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AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY.

It may be proper at the commencement of our work, to give a concise history of this Institution. The objects proposed by this Society, had, long before its origin, attracted the attention and occupied the thoughts of several enlightened and intelligent individuals. As early as the administration of Mr. Jefferson, the Governor of Virginia, at the request of the legislature of that state, addressed a letter to the President, with enquiries concerning the best means of obtaining a territory for the colonization of free people of colour. The opinion expressed in reply was, that an establishment should be formed in Africa similar to that then existing in Sierra Leone. A short time before the organization of the Society, this subject was brought forward more prominently by Virginia, in certain resolutions adopted by her legislature, by which the executive was instructed to "correspond with the President of the United States, for the purpose of obtaining a territory on the coast of Africa, or some other place not within the State, or territorial governments of the United States, to serve as an asylum for such persons of colour as are now free, and may desire the same, and for those who may hereafter be emancipated in this commonwealth."

But those operations which gave existence to the Colonization Society, are to be traced principally, to the thoughts and exertions of a retired, but eminent Christian in New Jersey. For years had the condition of the free coloured population of our country, excited the compassion of the Reverend Robert Finley, and aroused the whole vigour of his intellect, to form plans for their relief. In the exiled children of Africa, this good man saw not merely the heirs to a
temporal, but to an eternal existence; not those possessing merely the virtues of natural and social affection, but also capacities for the high improvements and joys of an immortal state. In the prosecution of his object, Dr. Finley exhibited great disinterestedness and perseverance. In a report recently presented to our Board, by the Rev. George Boyd, and Dr. Ayres, we have been happy to find a more minute and interesting account of the exertions of this gentleman, than we had before seen, and which all must peruse with pleasure.

"The Rev. Robert Finley, (at that time) residing at Basking-Ridge, in the state of New Jersey, in the year 1816, began to disclose with freedom, to his friends and to the public, the noble and benevolent scheme, in behalf of the free people of colour in the United States, which he had been for some time meditating, and which he prosecuted with his characteristic zeal and perseverance, until principally through his instrumentality, the Colonization Society was formed at Washington, in December, 1816. The following extract of a letter addressed to John P. Mumford, esq. of the city of New York, exhibits some of his early views and operations in regard to this matter:

"Basking Ridge, Feb. 14th, 1815.

Dear Sir,

The longer I live to see the wretchedness of men, the more I admire the virtue of those who devise, and with patience labour to execute plans for the relief of the wretched. On this subject, the state of the free blacks, has very much occupied my mind. Their number increases greatly, and their wretchedness too, as appears to me. Every thing connected with their condition, including their colour, is against them; nor is there much prospect that their state can ever be greatly meliorated, while they shall continue among us. Could not the rich and benevolent devise means to form a colony on some part of the coast of Africa, similar to the one at Sierra Leone, which might gradually induce many free blacks to go and settle, devising for them the means of getting there, and of protection and support till they were established? Could they be sent back to Africa, a three-fold benefit would arise. We should be cleared of them—we should send to Africa a population partly civilized and christianized for its benefit. And our blacks themselves, would be put in a better situation. Think much upon this subject, and then please to write me when you have leisure."

"The subject in general which Mr. Finley had deeply considered, and the opinions of his friends whom he had consulted, furnished so much encouragement, that he resolved to make a great effort to
carry his benevolent views into effect. An important question was then to be decided—in what place, and in what manner would it be best to commence active operations, in pursuing the proposed objects? In contemplating this preliminary inquiry, and in making additional preparatory arrangements, he spent a considerable part of the fall of 1816. Towards the close of November, he became determined to test the popularity, and in some measure the practicability of the whole system, by introducing the subject to public notice, at the city of Washington. The contemplated plan appeared to him to be so vast in its nature, and so difficult of attainment, the interests involved in it so numerous, extensive, and complicated, that he was persuaded it could be carried into effect only by being made an object of national patronage.

"Mr. Finley arrived in Washington about the 1st of Dec. 1816, and began immediately to make arrangements preparatory to a meeting of the citizens. He visited several members of Congress, the President, the heads of departments, and others. His heart during the whole of this time was much engaged, and he said he would cheerfully give, out of his limited means, five hundred dollars to ensure the success of the scheme. His conversation and zeal had a considerable influence in collecting people to the meeting, and in conciliating many, who at first appeared opposed. He proposed a prayer meeting for the success of the undertaking; which was held, and in which he was earnestly engaged in prayer. Some were incredulous, and though they did not oppose, laughed, and ridiculed the thing altogether. When told of this, he remained unshaken in his purpose, and meekly replied, "I know this scheme is from God."

The Institution in whose organization Dr. Finley had acted so important a part, was only permitted to bear public testimony to his worth, by enrolling him among its Vice Presidents, when he was called from his Christian labours to his eternal reward.

During the year 1818, the Rev. Messrs. Mills and Burgess, visited Africa, to acquire such information, as might facilitate the operations of the Board, and especially to ascertain at what point on the coast, land eligible for the location of a colony, might most easily, be obtained. On their passage to this country, after a very faithful and able discharge of the duties of their mission, the death of Mr. Mills deprived the world of one of the best and most useful of men.

The Elizabeth sailed in 1820 with two agents for the United States government, the society's agent, and about eighty emigrants; but arriving at an unfavourable
season, and selecting for a temporary residence an unhealthy spot, and experiencing the miseries of carelessness, indolence, and in subordination, too generally prevalent among the colonists, the three agents and twenty-four settlers died in the course of a few weeks. This unfortunate expedition greatly discouraged the public mind. In 1821, Messrs. Andrews and Wiltberger on the part of the Society, and Messrs. Winn and E. Bacon the United States agents, proceeded to Africa with a considerable reinforcement of colonists; and in obedience to instructions, sought and obtained permission for the settlers to reside at Sierra Leone, until their negotiations with the natives might prove successful.

Fruitless efforts were made by Messrs. Andrews and Bacon, to purchase land in the Bassa country, but immediately after his return to Sierra Leone, the former died, and was soon followed by Mr. and Mrs. Winn into the heavenly world. Dr. Ayres was now appointed agent for the Society, and in company with lieutenant Stockton, of the United States schooner Alligator, proceeded with great resolution to effect the object of this Institution. After much perplexity and delay, the perseverance and ability of these two gentlemen were successful, and the natives ceded to the society a tract eligible, and for the present sufficiently extensive; including cape Montserado, which afford a site better adapted, perhaps, to the purposes of a colony, than any other station on the windward coast of Africa. To this territory, since called Liberia, the colonists were immediately removed, and Dr. Ayres, after superintending the earliest improvements of the settlement, returned to this country to make a statement of its wants, and obtain the requisite supplies. Before his arrival, however, Mr. J. Ashmun was on his way to Liberia with fifteen recaptured Africans, and thirty-five colonists. He received a commission of agency, under which he was to act, in case of the absence or death of Dr. Ayres. He arrived in time to prevent the extermination of the colony, which was repeatedly attacked by the natives (amounting at one time to 1500,) in December, 1822. About thirty colonists only, were able to bear arms. The defence of the infant settlement by Mr. Ashmun, still suffering the effects of the fever of the climate, evinced a courage and ability, which have seldom, if ever been surpassed.

In April, 1823, Dr. Ayres revisited Africa in the Oswego, accompanied by sixty colonists. In December of the same year, he was compelled by extreme illness to return. On the tenth of January, 1824, the ship Cyrus sailed with one hundred and five emigrants.
During the present year, sixty-seven colonists have taken passage in the brig Hunter. Of the safe arrival of this vessel we have not heard, as about six weeks only have elapsed since she took her departure.

The colony in Liberia (reckoning those in the Hunter,) consists of nearly four hundred individuals. Since the visit of the society’s agent in August last, it has enjoyed a degree of prosperity, and been marked by a rapidity of improvement, which has rarely been exceeded in the history of any similar establishment. God has given it his blessing. The eye of the stranger is struck with the religious aspect of the settlement. He beholds on cape Montserado, standing in lonely beauty, a Christian village. There flourish the virtues of the gospel, defended by the Almighty from the influences of paganism, cherished and refreshed by the dews of his grace.

There is in the colony a prevailing, increasing spirit of obedience, industry, enterprise and piety. Schools are established, churches are building, government is respected, agriculture receives general attention, and the wilderness is retiring before the face of civilized man.

COMMUNICATION.

Mr. Editor,

The friends of freedom and humanity have reason to rejoice that a spirit appears to have gone abroad upon the earth, which promises great things for poor persecuted Africa. It is passing from heart to heart—it begins to fill our land, and must sooner or later pervade the whole Christian world, for it is surely from God. Philanthropy was long deaf to her feeble cries—until lately she had no advocate—but her cause has now been pleaded before assembled senates; and mighty nations have confederated for her protection. The benevolent enterprize to which your publication is to be devoted, has been formally recommended by the highest and most august assemblies in the land, both ecclesiastical and political.

The venerable General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, the Methodist General Conference, the Baptist General Association, and the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, together with many of their subordinate conventions, have earnestly presented it to the favour of the religious public. The legislatures of Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio, New Hampshire, and New Jersey, have bespeaking for it the patronage of the nation; and from every branch