Extracts of despatches from Dr. James Hall, to J. H. B. Latrobe, Esq. dated Cape Palmas, Oct. 15, 1834.

In my last, per schooner Sarah and Priscilla, I informed you that an embargo had been laid upon all our commerce by our neighbour king, and that we should soon be in want of provisions. I will briefly state the cause of this movement on the part of his majesty. There had been a large quantity of plank stolen, belonging to Mr. Wilson; and the people of this town and Grahway mutually accused each other of taking it. I had a talk with king Freeman upon the subject, and he agreed to send to Boleo, and examine into the business. After a few days, he came up and informed me he had sent a man, and Boleo had examined his people's houses and found none, and that none could have gone to Grahway. A short time after, I was informed by Boleo, that the king had sent no messenger to him, and he had heard nothing about the plank. Thus stood matters when the expedition arrived. After despatching the vessel I sent word to Boleo and Baphro to come and receive their goods. On the morning of the day in which I expected them, king Freeman came up and complained that I had not treated him properly, as head king, in not sending him word, and letting him call the others. I then told him that I could not trust him to deliver any message; that he had deceived me in his pretended communication with Boleo, and that I could not respect him as king, unless he acted like one, and punished thieving instead of fostering it; that I was sensible, if he pleased, he could at once put an end to it. At this he became enraged, and proceeded as above stated. He forbade the other kings, Boleo and Baphro, from taking any goods due for territory, or even the letters which you sent out, and allowed no one to communicate with our town.

Thus matters stood for about three weeks, and I had determined not to yield or make him any satisfaction, until he would take some measures to stop their unceasing depredations. We were almost out of rice, and had no hopes of obtaining any, except through this town; but I had concluded to put the whole colony upon half rations, myself among the rest, and make no overtures of reconciliation, until the whole was expended: and then to demand what was due us from their people, which I knew was already in their houses, or to let some come from the neighbouring towns. I had little doubt, if left entirely to themselves, they would come forward and make honourable proposals for setting the palaver,* ere our rations would be entirely expended.

In this interesting state of affairs, with savage men threatening on one hand, and starvation on the other; when we had voluntarily submitted to bear the privations and anxieties incident to our present precarious situation, solely with a view to secure our property from the unceasing

* This term is used technically by the natives to mean any negotiation.

depredations of the natives, I had the extreme, the overwhelming mortification, to see one of our colonists sent up to me by the king, charged with stealing cassada from their fields. His guilt was unquestionable. The king sent a message, desiring to know why I sent him to steal, that if his boys stole from me, I accused him of countenancing it; that he had a right to suppose the same of me. This entirely changed the state of affairs. The tables were completely turned, and we had nothing to do but back out. It mattered not that I offered to give him up to the king, to make him pay, or that I put him in irons, and confined him to public work. The colonists were branded as thieves, and reduced to a level with them, and the ground that I had taken, to make the king responsible for thefts, was by this movement rendered untenable. I could, in justice, do no less than acknowledge it. Some days after this, the king came up, in order to receive his goods, presents, &c. On being told what was due, he affected to be in a great rage, and pretended that other articles, to a great amount, were due, and among the rest one puncheon of rum. I knew this was a mere sham, and only a pretext to extort something from me at this time, knowing my present necessity for provisions. I stated the matter of our purchase and the amount paid, and called evidence, reasoned, coaxed, and threatened, but all to no purpose. They well knew that this was the last time that they would have the like advantage, and they were determined to improve it. I affected at last to believe that the interpreter had misunderstood me at the time of purchase, and compromised matters.

After the palaver was fairly set, trade again commenced, and we have now on hand some hundred bushels of rice.

Nothing, however, was done respecting the thieving, until one William Davis, a brother of the king, who had been some years at Sierra Leone, came home. He is a shrewd, cunning, energetic fellow, and was very soon convinced that matters were badly managed in town, and set himself about breaking up the business. We very soon had some half dozen hoes, axes, hatchets, crows, &c. &c. returned, that had long been missing. I cannot but hope, that in a short time we can make some permanent arrangement that will render the property of the colonists more secure.

A short time since, I received a visit and dash* from Weah, king of Half Cavally. I endeavoured to open negotiations for his territory, (which, you will recollect, is excepted in our purchase, although lying within our limits.) but I found that it would not be advisable to press it at present, but wait until schools had been established at Grahway and the Cavally river, then they will see the advantage of being 'America men,' and eagerly come forward and give up their territory to our control. King Tom, a mighty old chief on the Cavally river, also sent me

* This word among the natives signifies *a present*.

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VIII. Commissions and Reports

D. Reports of the Board of Managers
1835-47