an embassy and dash. He no doubt would be glad to come in and join us, but I think it best to wait awhile, until they clearly see the advantages which the inhabitants of Cape Palmas, Grahway, and Cavally enjoy, and they will be glad to have us settle among them for no other consideration than the establishment of schools, and a few presents to the head-men. When I make any addition, I think it will be best to purchase the whole from Jarroway to the Cavally river, or even to Tabou point, and have them all come into a league, offensive and defensive, to have all matters of difference between any two towns adjusted by the agent here, in fact, to unite them under one government, and perfect that government by degrees, as they become capable of bearing it.

An incident occurred some days since, which I will trouble you with, that you may judge in some measure of the ultimate advantage we shall be to this country, when we can with safety interfere with their private government.

They have a custom like our pious and sapient forefathers of Salem, of attributing all the great calamities of life to witchcraft, particularly all sudden deaths of the middle aged and active. In such cases, the greegree man, doctor, or grand devil, synonymous terms, is consulted, and he points out the witch or necromancer so offending. In order then to prove whether the suspected is actually guilty, he is compelled to drink large quantities of the decoction of a poisonous tree, called saucy wood. Should he survive, he is deemed innocent; but otherwise, should it prove fatal. Quite a number have been subjected to this ordeal, since our settlement here, and some have died in the most excruciating tortures. Should the culprit vomit freely, within half an hour or so after taking it, before it has time to effect the system or influence the stomach, he experiences but little inconvenience from it. But should it remain on the stomach an hour or two, that organ, and the whole alimentary canal, become highly inflamed; constant and violent vomiting, and purging succeed, and continue until the subject is completely exhausted. And to add greatly to his misery, he is placed, at the moment of taking the decoction, under a guard of soldiers, who keep him constantly in motion, racing about on the sand beach in the hot sun, hardly allowing him rest during his violent evacuations. When his strength begins to fail, they force him to continue his movements by sharp sticks, knives, and bayonets. The poor wretch now becomes frantic, and vainly attempts revenge upon his persecutors, until completely overcome by the potency of the poison and his excessive exertions, he sinks upon the sand, and expires in the most excruciating agonies. One of the natives, who has frequently officiated as soldier of the guard in such cases, informed me that the torments of the victims were so great, in the last stages, that the guard were frequently obliged to go to a distance, and turn their backs that they might not see their distortions, or hear their wailings and blasphemies. Since our residence here, nine months, four or five

have been subjected to this ordeal, two cases of which have terminated fatally. But a few days since, one of the head-men, and one who has uniformly befriended the colony, was arraigned and found guilty of bewitching sundry members of the family of one of his rivals, and doomed to the trial of saucy wood. He had taken his first potion before I was informed of it, and they had commenced driving him about. It had a very severe effect upon the poor fellow, but he was quite comfortable at night. But the grand devil declared that, inasmuch as it wrought thus hard with him, he must turn to and take it again on the morrow. Being informed of this, I went down early in the morning, called a palaver, and endeavoured to have the man released. But all reason, entreaties, gifts, and threatenings were of no avail. They appeared to owe him a deep grudge, which nothing but his death could appease. On returning home, I was informed that they have an ancient rule something like this:—that in case a man is condemned to drink saucy wood, that any friend of superior rank or standing, can clear him by taking him by the hand, when the potion is about to be administered; but the one so doing takes upon himself the responsibility, and is liable either to supply his place or pay heavy damages. In this case the king wished and had attempted to clear Posso, the prisoner, but he knew the consequence would be dangerous, so great was the excitement against him. Upon hearing this, I immediately set off for the sand beach, and arrived just as they were driving off his wives and children, who had been taking their last farewell. About five hundred people were collected, and formed into a hollow square, in the midst of which was his Satanic Majesty in full panoply, just raising a two gallon pot, filled to the brim, with the poisonous decoction, to the lips of the wretched Posso. Poor fellow! he was so altered from yesterday's drenching, and the dismal prospect before him, that I should not have recognized him had he been mixed with the crowd: his countenance was despair itself. I briefly told them, that if any one had any palaver for Posso, that I would satisfy him according to our laws, and would be responsible for all that they could prove against him: then taking him by the hand, marched him off, amid the mingled shouts and execrations of his friends and persecutors. This one circumstance would demonstrate to you the beneficial influence we even now begin to exert among the natives, and that our hopes of overthrowing their barbarous and long established customs, are not visionary. The number that annually fall victims to the accursed machinations and blind zeal of these greegree men, a compound of priests, doctors, and devils, is incalculable. During the nine months since our arrival, four have been killed in this way, in this one town; and within twenty miles of us, we can number ten or fifteen towns, equally large, where this business is practised to the same extent. The sacrifices of Juggernaut cannot compare with this, either with regard to the number of victims, or the horror of the sacrifice. In that case, it is a religious

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VIII. Commissions and Reports

D. Reports of the Board of Managers
1835-47