LETTER FROM JOSEPH J. NICHOLSON, ESQ. COMMANDER OF THE U. S. SHIP POTOMAC, TO J. H. B. LATROBE, ESQ.

U. S. SHIP POTOMAC,
Hampton Roads, March 3, 1837.

DEAR SIR:

It affords me very great pleasure to be able to give you a favourable account of Cape Palmas, the infant colony of our native state, which I visited during the late cruise of the Potomac. Its location is decidedly preferable to that of either of the other settlements: the harbour is very easy of access, the climate is found to be better, and the natives more quietly and industriously disposed. The site of Harper is on the summit of the cape, a very commanding position, which may be rendered impregnable to any native force at a trifling expense. There are two native towns, of two thousand inhabitants, under King Freeman, between it and Latrobe, which is laid out on a fine level, about half a mile from Harper, extending to the sea on its southern side, and enjoying a full share of the sea-breeze. The natives, profiting by the example of the colonists, are rapidly clearing their land for farms, and devoting themselves to their cultivation. A very few years will manifest the wisdom of the Society in encouraging agriculture and prohibiting premature trade, the source of ruin to many of the other settlers. In time, when they shall have made themselves independent of the natives and traders, by the resources of the soil, a profitable commerce will repay their prudent forbearance; for I am assured that, even now, five thousand bushels of rice, and one hundred and fifty puncheons of palm oil can be procured in the season.

Already, with a population of only one hundred and ninety, our colonists have in cultivation forty-seven farms, beyond Latrobe, chiefly of five acres, and a farm of fifty acres, intended as a model, from which they procure abundance of corn, and fine vegetables of various kinds; and from the Hoffman river, fish and oysters of excellent quality. They have prepared good houses for the accommodation of two hundred emigrants, until they can occupy their farms, which are laid out on each side of the Maryland avenue, and they have made good roads, of four or five miles, in different directions; they are, however, much in want of beasts of burden. Jacks and mules would be, perhaps, best adapted to the climate. King Freeman and King War, who is at the head of a powerful tribe about forty miles in the interior, visited the Potomac, and were astonished at her size, and delighted with their reception on board. They expressed the strongest friendship for the Americans, and begged that more white men might be sent among them.

The Rev. Mr. Wilson has under his tuition, at the missionary establishment in Latrobe, about one hundred of the native children, and a few adults. I was agreeably surprised at the correctness with which some of them could read our language; and as there are among these

children, the descendants of kings, who may in time become kings themselves, it is impossible to foresee the happy effect upon the civilization of the African that may be produced by this school. More missionaries ought to be sent, to aid Mr. Wilson in his labours of usefulness.

Our little colony has advanced surprisingly in solid prosperity in the short space of three years, and with the judicious control and assistance of its friends, must continue its career, to the honour of its founders and the happiness of the coloured man.

I enclose a copy of the letter I addressed to the present agent, Mr. Russwurm, as a proof of the interest I feel in the success of your worthy efforts, together with a list of the supplies furnished the colony, in accordance with the views of the department All our settlements in Africa, Monrovia, New Georgia, Caldwell, Millsburg, Bassa Cove, Edina, and Cape Palmas, have been visited by myself or the officers of the ship, and a detailed report made to the honourable the secretary of the navy.

I am, with great respect and esteem, dear sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. NICHOLSON.

To J. H. B. LATROBE, *Esq. Baltimore, Md.*

LETTER FROM JOSEPH J. NICHOLSON, ESQ. COMMANDER OF THE U. S. SHIP POTOMAC, TO J. B. RUSSWURM, GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND IN LIBERIA.

[COPY.]

U. S. SHIP POTOMAC,
Cape Palmas, Dec. 17th, 1836.

DEAR SIR:

I was much pleased to observe, in my visit yesterday to the settlement at Cape Palmas, the very prosperous state of the colonists, exemplified by the excellent condition of the farms under cultivation, and the contented appearance of their occupants.

From the good disposition shown by the native chiefs towards the colonists, I am induced to hope that no interruption to the harmony heretofore existing will take place; but as it would be well to be prepared for any emergency, I will suggest some precautions, which would, in my opinion, put the settlement in a better state to resist attack than it appears at present to be.

As the natives in this vicinity greatly outnumber the colonists, the latter would be obliged, in case of attack, to retire to some shelter, in order to oppose an enemy so much superior in force. A sufficient protection can only be obtained by erecting a fort, mounting thereon the guns in your possession, and making it a magazine for all the arms and ammunition belonging to the colony. A signal of two guns fired in succession should be established, which, on being made at the fort, would be understood as an alarm, calling every one to its defence.

Maryland Historical Society

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