Bedford, Massachusetts. John Cuffee died about 1773, when Paul was about fourteen years old, (he was born 1759,) and the care of supporting their mother and six sisters devolved jointly upon Paul and his brothers. The land which their father had left them proving unproductive, afforded but little provision for the family. They, therefore, labored under great disadvantages, and did not possess the means of acquiring even the rudiments of a good education. Paul, however, was not easily discouraged, and found opportunities for improvement, and of cultivating his mind. Through his own exertions, with a little assistance, he soon learned to read and write, and also attained a knowledge of arithmetic. Some estimate may be formed of the natural talent with which he was endowed for the speedy reception of learning, from the fact that he acquired such a knowledge of navigation in two weeks as enabled him to command a vessel in voyages which he subsequently made to England, to Russia, to Africa, the West Indies, and several ports in the United States.

Paul Cuffee's three brothers continued respectable farmers at Westport. He, however, was inclined to the pursuit of commerce, and being conscious that he possessed qualities which under proper culture would enable him to pursue commercial employments with success, he entered in 1775. at the age of 16, as a common hand on board a vessel destined to the Bay of Mexico on a whaling expedition. His second voyage was to the West Indies, but on his third, which was during the American war, he was captured by a British ship. After three month's detention as a prisoner in New York, he returned to Westport, where owing to the continuance of hostilities he spent about two years in agricultural pursuits. The free negro population of Massachusetts being excluded from all participation in the rights of citizenship, bearing, however, a full share of every State burden, Paul, though not yet 20 years of age, felt deeply the injustice done to himself and his race, and resolved to make an effort to obtain for them the rights which were their due. Assisted by his brother, he drew up and presented a respectful petition on the subject to the State Legislature. Notwithstanding the prejudices of the times, the justice of the petition was perceived by a majority of the legislative body, and an act was passed, granting to the free negroes all the privileges of white citizens. This was a day equally honorable to the petitioners and to the Legislature, in which justice and humanity triumphed over prejudice and oppression; it should be gratefully remembered by every person of color, and Paul Cuffee should always be united in its recollection.

This enactment was not only important as far as regarded the State of Massachusetts; the example was followed at different periods by others of the united provinces, so that the exertions of Paul Cuffee and his brother influenced permanently the welfare of the whole colored population of North America.

Paul, being now about 20 years of age, again turned his attention to commercial pursuits, encountering many adverse circumstances, under which most men would have sunk. He began with an open boat, but by prudence and perseverance, he was at length enabled to obtain a good sized schooner, then a brig, and afterwards a ship. By judicious plans, and diligence in their execution, he gradually increased his property. In 1806 he owned a ship, two brigs, and several smaller vessels, besides considerable property in houses and lands. In a pecuniary point of view he became not only independent, but had wherewith to contribute largely to the relief of others, and of the African race especially. Some idea may be gathered from the following circumstance, of the low estimate in which the African race are held, and of the energy required to rise above the crushing weight of prejudice. One of

Paul's voyages was to Vienna, in Maryland, on Nanticoke River. On his arrival, the inhabitants were filled with astonishment and even alarm; a vessel owned and commanded by a black man, and manned with a crew of the same color, was unprecedented and surprising. The fear of a revolt on the part of their slaves was excited among the inhabitants of Vienna, and an attempt was made to prevent Paul from entering the harbor. On examination his papers proved to be correct, and the custom-house officers could not legally refuse the entry of his vessel. Paul combined prudence with resolution, conducting himself with candor, modesty and firmness; and his crew behaved not only inoffensively, but with a conciliating propriety. In a few days the inimical association vanished, and the inhabitants treated the negro captain and his crew with respect and even kindness. Many of the principal people visited his vessel, and at the pressing invitation of one of them, Paul dined with his family in the town.

He sold his cargo, received in lieu of it 3,000 bushels of Indian corn, which he conveyed to Westport, where it was in great demand, and it yielded him a clear profit of a thousand dollars.

Paul Cuffee experienced the disadvantages of his limited education, and he resolved, as far as it was practicable, to relieve his children from similar embarrassments. The neighborhood had neither a tutor nor a school, though many were desirous one should be established. Paul convened a meeting for making arrangements to accomplish this object. A collision of opinion respecting mode and place, occasioned them to separate without arriving at any conclusion. Perceiving that all efforts to procure a union of sentiment were fruitless, Paul took the matter into his own hands, and erected a school house on his own ground, entirely at his own expense, and threw it open to the public. How gratifying to humanity is this anecdote? and who that justly appreciates human character, would not prefer Paul Cuffee, the son of an African slave, to the proudest statesman that ever dealt destruction amongst mankind?

In his person Paul Cuffee was tall, well formed, and athletic, his deportment conciliating, yet dignified and prepossessing; his countenance blended gravity with modesty and sweetness, and firmness with gentleness and humanity; in speech and habits plain and unostentatious. His whole exterior indicated a man of respectability. Piety and religion influencing his mind added, in advancing manhood, to the brightness of his character, and confirmed his disposition to practical good. He joined the Society of Friends and became a minister amongst them, frequently exercising his gift to comfort and edification. When the state of his affairs were such as to render it necessary that all his resources should be employed in the pursuit of his private concerns, Paul Cuffee was still desirous in some way to advance the interests of the community. When he was prevented from pursuing his business during the rigors of the winter, he often devoted his time in teaching navigation to his sons and the young men in the neighborhood. On his voyages he imparted a knowledge of this invaluable science to those under him, and had the honor of training up, both amongst the white and colored population, a considerable number of skillful navigators. He was upright in all his transactions in trade. Knowing himself to be accountable to God for the mode of using and acquiring his possessions, he believed it to be his duty to sacrifice private interest rather than engage in any enterprise however lawful in the eyes of the world, that had the slightest tendency to injure his fellow men. On this ground he would not deal in intoxicating liquors or in slaves, though he might have done either without violating the laws of his country, and with considerable pecuniary gain. Being naturally possessed of a tender, feeling mind, he deeply mourned over the miserable condition of

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