order to get the advantage of whatever demand may happen to exist for Tobacco, Gun-powder, Muskets, Crockery, Salt, Rum and Soap;—that all purchases of land or houses made by foreigners are ordered to be null and void;—and that American traders ridicule the regulations and restrictions of the Liberians, and tell them—British traders—plainly that if they are driven to abandon the trade, they will at once take it up.

Is it not astonishing that men in their senses should make such representations, so totally void of truth, to Her Majesty's Goverment!

Captain Patten, of Her Majesty's Brig Hound, arrived here on the 18th, ultimo, and entered immediately upon the investigation of the various complaints of Messrs Laurie Hamilton &Co, London, who appear to be the principal complainants; and who certainly have indulged unjust and unwarrantable charges and accusations against the Liberian Authorities.

It is possible, indeed I will not doubt, that those gentlemen, acting upon statements made to them by their agent, believed that they were making correct and truthful representations to Her Majesty's Government. It is to be regretted, however, that they so readily gave credence to such statements—without, apparently, giving themselves the least trouble to ascertain the real facts of the case.

Full explanations of the several items of complaints were furnished to Captain Patten; and every facility afforded to enable him to examine thoroughly the invidious charges and imputations that have been prefered and insinuated against the Government and People of Liberia. No one could be more particular and minute, in the investigation of the charges and complaints refered to, than was Captain Patten. And I have great satisfaction in being able to inform the Legislature that he expressed himself fully satisfied and convinced, that gross misrepresentations have been made to Her Majesty's Government: in which, great injustice has been done the Authorities and people of this Republic; and distinctly condemns the course of Captain Murray in resisting the laws of this Government.

Captain Patten, however, without naming any particular provision of the law regulating Navigation, Commerce, and Revenue, insinuated a wish that the Legislature would reconsider some of the sections of said law, which he considered rather restrictive, and would extend to British traders every possible facility for conducting business with the citizens of the Republic.

I assured him that the Government and people of Liberia entertained the most friendly feelings towards British subjects; and that the Legislature would not hesitate to rescind or amend any existing regulation,—which may be done without seriously prejudicing the interests of the Government,—that can in any respect obstruct or cripple British commerce. The various correspondence on the subject of the complaints refered to above, will be laid before you.

Gentlemen, permit me to remark here, that the duty on articles of merchandize specified in an Act entitled "An Act to raise a Revenue," the sale of which the government monopolizes, that foreigners consider excessive; I beg, therefore, particularly to recommend that said Act be wholly repealed; and that you adopt other measures for supplying an adequate Revenue.

With respect to trading establishments along our coast, whether owned by citizens or foreigners, I am still of opinion that a license should be obtained from the Government, for which a reasonable and liberal sum shall be paid, to be applied exclusively to the promotion of civilization and education among the aboriginal inhabitants.

I beg also to recommend that the amount realized from the sale of licenses under the 1st: and 3rd: Sections of the 8th Article, of the Navigation, Commerce, and Revenue law, be granted to the several corporations for the improvements of streets, &c, in their respective townships.

Gentlemen, in view of the primary importance of providing every facility for carrying the laws into prompt and faithful execution, and to render the administration of justice as convenient to the people as may consist with their present circumstances,—I cannot omit, once more, to recommend to your serious consideration the Judiciary system of the Republic. No branch of our political organization is more interesting than this to the public happiness; and to none can those improvements which have been suggested by experience be more beneficially applied.

The compilation of the laws of the Republic, as authorised at your last session, I regret to say, has not been accomplished, to the extent of your wishes. I ask the appointment of a committe of the legislature to examine the work, as far as it has gone and to report upon its correctness, and the circumstances which have delayed its completion.

The importance of agriculture, as an efficient contributary to the welfare and prosperity of the human family, and especially of the people of Liberia, is so fully recognized and understood, that I deem it quite unnecessary for me to urge upon you, at any length, its claims to all the aid, and encouragement it may be in your power to give to every well directed effort for its improvement. It cannot be doubted that the cultivation of the earth, with other branches of rural economy, supply the vital principle—the very life blood—to every other department of human industry.

Among the most successful of the various measures adopted, in other countries, to give impulse to agricultural improvements, are agricultural societies,—and I could wish to see such societies established in every part of this Republic.

But, in my opinion, a central agricultural association, is at present, particularly needed. One that would be able to extend its beneficial influencee, so generally as to awaken and keep alive through-out the country an active interest in its proceedings. Such an association would certainly deserve in a liberal degree your countenance and aid.

Many of you, gentlemen, are from agricultural districts, and are entitled, far better than myself to interpret the wishes of those engaged in agricultural pursuits; therefore, on the present occasion, I have only to say, that whatever measures you may adopt for advancing the interests of agriculture shall have my ready and cheerful concurrence.

With respect to common schools, and the importance of extending the means of education---I feel that I cannot do better than to invite your attention to what I had the honor of communicating to the Legislature, on this subject, at its last session. I am quite sensible of the feeling of the legislature with regard to the extension of the facilities of education; and I exceedingly regret, gentlemen, the pecuniary disability which still exists; and which alone, I am sure, prevents your doing all that you desire to do for the promotion of useful knowledge. It is, however, a source of much gratification to know that our friends abroad—especially in the United States—in this respect, are interested in our behalf. Besides the valuable assistance we are receiving, in the education of the youth of this Republic, from various missionay societies in the United States: you are doubtless, aware gentlemen, that an association has been formed in Boston, U. S. and has been chartered by the Legislature of the State of Massachusetts, for the purpose of receiving and managing the funds, and the general scope and plan of a college in Liberia. A member of the corporation in a letter to me dated June last, says:—"We shall soon need a free communication of your views on this subject of education, on all points that may occur to you.

It is obvious that a charter from your government will be needed for the proposed college, with suitable ground for such buildings as may be required, and such patronage and aid towards the erection of buildings as the government may be able to bestow. We shall of course do nothing more than collect and invest funds, until we receive a communication of your mind, on the subject.—Whether the instructors shall be appointed by our Board of Trustees, with the concurrent approval of your government, or by the latter alone; or by the corporation to be chartered in Liberia—are questions which you will consider and favour us with your minds. In reply to this communication I have assured the gentleman that every facility that this government can afford for carrying out the important objects of his Board, will readily be granted; I, at the same time, intimated to him the embarrassed state of our public finances, and that but little, if any, pecuniary assistance could, at present, be rendered by this government; but that I would call the attention of the legislature to the subject, and communicate to him the result of your deliberation. I therefore ask an expression of the Legislature on the points, suggested above, for transmission to the Board of Trustees.

The experience of another year has but strengthened the conviction entertained and expressed in my address to the legistature at its last session; that our present militia system was rapidly tending to utter disorganization. It is with much regret that I feel obliged to say, that in my opinion all hope of reviving or sustaining it in its present form may as well be abandoned at once. It is evident that circumstances demand its entire reorganization upon other principles and with essentially different features. My own sense of the importance of establishing, cherishing, and supporting a strong and efficient militia force, is undiminished—not, however, that I advocate war, to this my feelings are decidedly averse; and it is in view of this, that I advocate the embodying of a militia. Surrounded as we are, gentlemen, by heathen tribes whose ruling passion is war; I look upon the military organization of this government as the most efficient anti-war measure that can possibly be adopted. But how to organize such a system, as will answer the ends contemplated, in the present state of popular feeling on the subject, is to me a problem of difficult solution. I must confess, gentlemen, my own inability to suggest a plan that is satisfactory to myself, or that I would take the responsibility of offering to your consideration. I recommend the subject to your attention, and pledge my ready concurrence in the adoption of any system that shall give the promise of being an improvement upon the present one.

Gentlemen, I have the honor to inform you that your resolution, of the 24th. of December last, authorizing the removal of the cannon from central Fort, to Fort Norris Battery, has been carried into effect; as yet, however, these cannon have not been mounted. The carriages are being prepared, and it is hoped to have them in a short time ready for use. I regret very much that we were not able to have the carriages constructed of more durable materials, as cast iron for instance, which would relieve the government of the almost annual expense of supplying new ones, or keeping wooden ones which rapidly decay, exposed as they necessarily are to the weather, in repair. I hope that the legislature will, as soon as it may find it convenient, to do so, order iron carriages for all our stationary cannon.

In this connection I beg to call your attention to the dilapidated condition of nearly all the gun carriages in our frontier settlements.

Hitherto, the citizens of those settlements with the exception of a very little aid, some year or two ago from the government, have met the expense of the repairs of those carriages. But for some time, feeling themselves in no danger, they have neglected the repairs, and now look to the government to relieve them from this tax.

I scarcely need remind you, gentlemen, that the fiscal Affairs of the government will demand your serious attention. In the early part of the year the most flattering anticipations were indulged of relieving the government from its pecuniary embarrassments. No one I belive entertained a doubt on the subject: and I fondly cherished the hope of being able, at this session of the legislature, to congratulate you on the efficency of your present revenue system. But, gentlemen, by reference to the Treasurer's accounts, you will observe that there still remains a balance against the government of $36,000: of which amount, about two thirds are due to foreigners. I sincerely hope that the legislature will adopt measures that will enable the Secretary to discharge speedily these claims. Necessarily a great proportion of the public resources is derived from duties on imports, and, as you are already aware, various circumstances, which were impossible to foresee and provide against, have concurred, during the year to embarrass the officers of the customs, in collecting the tariff dues; and in some instances large quantities of merchandise have been landed on the Liberian coast, upon which the duties could not be secured, and of consequence, produced a serious deficiency in the receipts anticipated from that scource.

The Secretary of the Treasury has been directed to lay before you, at an early day, an estimate of the appropriations necessary for the ensuing year: and also accounts, in detail, of the receipts and expenditures for the fiscal year ending 30th. September last. The following is a concise statemion of the accounts, the Secretary will lay before you, viz. * * * * * * *

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In Conformity with a resolution of the Legislature adopted the 28th of December last, authorizing the appointment of auditors of public accounts, &c &c,—I appointed Messrs Warner and Hicks to that duty. They have been laboriously engaged, for some months, in examining the vouchers and accounts of all transactions at the Treasury Department since the new organization; and they will have ready in a few days, to be laid before you a full report of their doings.

There are other matters, gentlemen, that deserve Consideration, and to which I shall take occasion, during your present meeting, to invite your attention, by special Communication.

Gentlemen, I now commend you to the Source of all wisdom and knowledge; and I pray that God will guide and direct all your deliberations to His praise, and to the happiness and prosperity of the people of this Republic, and of Africa in general. Feeling, as I most certainly do, that you will avoid all hasty, and ill-considered projects; and that you will avail yourselves of the current experience of the times; and that that experience will not suffer delay, in its application in consequence of any obstinacy in the exercise of delegated power—I beg to assure you that your labors, to promote the general good will receive from me the most prompt and decided co-operation.

J. J. ROBERTS

Government House
Monrovia December 3rd 1850

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XII. Newspapers
B. Liberia Herald

February 1842(XI,4)--February 18,1857(n.s. VII,4)

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