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LIBERIA HERALD.

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

To the Honorable.—

Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives.

The period having arrived at which the law of this Republic makes it my duty to meet you, it affords me great pleasure to do so, for the purpose of making representation to your honorable department, of the foreign and domestic affairs of this Republic; as also of recommending such public measures, as I have deemed expedient under existing circumstances.

We have great cause to feel profoundly grateful to the Father of all our mercies, for his preserving care and direction of us and our public affairs through the course of another year, which has been marked by difficulties and dangers of no ordinary nature

The ushering in of my administrative term, was a juncture fraught with many disadvantages and discouragements. About six weeks previously, at a time when this government, and especially that county, were illy prepared for such an event, a most distressing civil war had broken out between the Americo Liberians of Sinoe County, and the aboriginal tribes, known as the Grand and Little Butaw, the Sinoe and the Blue Barree tribes inhabiting said county; which, for some time, threatened the extinction of our settlements in that section of this Republic. Three of the interior settlements had been abandoned; and two others, partly destroyed by the flames of the enemy, were but feebly occupied as outer stations. The crops were nearly all destroyed;—all inland communication, and consequently such supplies as the country usually afforded, were cut off; thus suddenly rendering four fifths of the Americo Liberians in that interesting county entirely dependent on charity for food and raiment, at a time when foreign and domestic provisions were more than fifty per cent higher than usual; so that the extinction of the settlements in that interesting county by war and its concomitants seemed inevitable, and was pretty generally apprehended.

But we have great cause to feel grateful, that Divine Providence has mercifully dispelled during the year, most of the clouds that presented such a portentous aspect, and has measurably caused a genial and encouraging sunshine of security, prosperity, independence and contentedness to ensue.

The military campaign authorized and requested by you, at the last session, to be put on foot, for the purpose of chastising the aggressive tribes of Sinoe county, and for the protection of our settlements there, has been faithfully and effectually prosecuted under the able command of General John N. Lewis. The first Regiment (Col. Payne,) sailed from this port on the 26th of January; and the second regiment (Col. J. D. Washington,) from Grand Bassa, on the 24th of the same month for Sinoe, where they were joined by the third regiment, (Col. S. Dickerson,) and took up the line of march on the 31st., to operate against the Grand and Little Butaw, the Sinoe and Blue Barre tribes, and by the 23d of February, had inflicted such a chastisement, as was necessary to carry out the object contemplated by the Act; and on the 26th February embarked for home, having sustained very little numerical loss. In the prosecution of that campaign, (which, properly speaking, was but the suppression of an insurrection of heathens,) the policy was to adhere as closely as possible to that humane principle in international law, which enjoins "To do the enemy as little harm and as much good in time of war, as may under existing circumstances, accord with a sound discretion."

Considering gentlemen, the relation we sustain to aboriginal Liberia, our great duties, responsibilities and brilliant hopes with respect to their future social, political, and religious welfare, it was generally regretted that measures so revolting to our feelings had to be resorted to for our own, as well as their safety and benefit.

The great pressure of business consequent upon the incipiency of my administrative term, prevented my revisiting Sinoe after the return of the troops, until the 11th of June, when I was happy to find that Judge Murray, associates with Commissioners, had, on the ninth, two days previously, concluded a satisfactory peace in Greenville with the Grand and Little Butaw tribes; and during my stay there, I succeeded on terms mutually satisfactory, in negotiating peace with the Blue Barree and Sinoe Chiefs, who met me in the court house at Greenville for that purpose. Copies of the terms of peace will be duly laid before the Honorable, the Senate, in which it will appear that reasonable indemnities were exacted of them; reparations sufficiently stringent, when taken in connection with the chastisement they had already received, to cause them to reflect seriously in the future before perpetrating similar aggressions; and from their general expressions of regret, exhibitions of humility, and solemn promises of future good behaviour and loyalty, I cannot doubt, if a judicious course is observed by the Americo Liberians, that that county will rest from war at least a score of years, if not perpetually. In order, however, to contribute to the perpetuation of peace, I advise that provision be made, so soon as our pecuniary circumstances will allow, for putting the settlements there, as well as elsewhere within the Republic, in a state of defence.

A great number of our fellow citizens inhabiting that county have long since returned to their deserted villages and homes with new life and zeal, and are praiseworthily laying the foundation of a permanent prosperity and independence.

During my visit to Sinoe, I dispatched Capt., Crayton, via Butaw, with friendly assurances to Joe Weah, an interior Chief, with whom for many years we have been on the most friendly terms; the obstruction of whose intercourse to our settlements by the Butaws, who had been waging war against him for several years for that purpose, has proven very retarding to the prosperity of our settlements for years; and the interposition of this government so as to establish free intercourse, contributed in a great measure to the assumption, by the Butaw tribes, of the late hostile attitude towards us. These friendly assurances were cordially reciprocated by Joe Weah and tribes contiguous, and a proposition was made by him, and an understanding had, that, as former obstructions were now removed, a good road be opened from our settlements to his town; in the prosecution of which he pledged the co-operation of his people. It is said by those who have visited it, to be a healthy, fertile, well-watered and timbered country, furnishing an abundance of rice at all seasons, and with contiguous sections abounding with many valuable commodities.

I visited Grand Cape Mount early in May, for the purpose of regulating matters at Robertsport, as well as to bring about a cessation of hostilities among the seabord tribes of that country. I am happy to inform you that I succeeded in making peace between the two principal belligerents, George Cane and Far Forney; and the long obstructed intercourse between them was re-opened and has not been obstructed since: both Chiefs have since died; the former last month, and the later during the month of June.

The term of the enlistment of the volunteers to Robertsport having expired on the first of April, they had become discouraged by the impoverished state of the country induced by constant war; and their discouragement was augmented by their continued disappointment, in an accession by immigration; but I could not for a moment entertain the idea of an abandonment of that promising settlement, after so large an expenditure by government for its establishment. I had therefore, to assume the responsibility of continuing their rations for four months beyond the original term of enlistment—by which time, I indulged the hope that the settlement would be strengthed by immigration—with the understanding that they remain there as permanent settlers. I also assured them, should circumstances require them to be called into actual service up there this year, I had no doubt that you would authorize their adequate compensation.

Though it is possible, we may find it necessary at some future day, to chastise some of the more interior tribes of that section of country, for persisting in the prosecution of their predatory wars, on which they have so long depended for livelihood, yet for the present, it is a very highly gratifying fact, that peace so generally prevails within our borders, and that the aborigines are manifestly increasing in their respect for, and loyalty to this government; and are encouragingly progressing in those principles of civilization that are destined to elevate them to social *and religious blessings, as well as* to national greatness.

During the month of March, I sent up a surveyor to lay out the city of Robertsport, who returned in the month of May, with a certificate from the General Superintendent, stating that four hundred and sixteen lots had been laid off. I am happy to say, that about one hundred of the immigrants by the Elvira Owen were landed there early in September, under the supervision of the Rev. John Seys, Special Agent of the American Colonization Society; and one of the fine commodious receptacles brought out by the same vessel, has been erected at that place for the accommodation of successive companies of immigrants. The volunteers and immigrants have drawn their town lots, and are praiseworthily converting that wilderness into civilized habitations. I know of no seaboard settlement in Liberia possessing more and greater advantages. As it was deemed advisable that the farms be apportioned off ands up the country, which can be reached by ascending the bay and river, I have deferred their assignment until such time as the present settlement shall have acquired sufficient numerical force for self protection; meanwhile there is sufficient public land contiguous to Robertsport, that the settlers can cultivate for the present with more convenience, profit and safety.

I beg to invite your attention to the propriety of making suitable provisions for the administration and government of the local affairs at Cape Mount.

In case you are pleased to constitute it a distinct county, in compliance with the petition of its inhabitants, and will invest it with the ustal county officers and organizations, then my duty will be plain: but should it not be made a seperate county, then it will be necessary for you to make special provisions for the administration and government of their local affairs, so as to obviate in some degree, the great inconvenience and expense that would in such case result from their being so distant from the county seat, and the poor facilities for communication and transportation. In either case, I advise that you constitute Robertsport a port of entry and delivery.

The Rev. John Seys, well known as a devoted christian missionary for a long time in Liberia, arrived in the ship Elvira Owen in the month of August, as Special Agent of the American Colonization Society; and among other important duties, he is charged with the mission, by permission of this government, of making exploration interior, for the purpose of selecting a suitable locality for the formation of an interior settlement, with a view of testing the comparative healthiness of our seaboard and interior in the acclimation of immigrants. This laudable enterprise was originated some years ago, by the New Jersey Colonization Society; but circumstances have prevented its prosecution hitherto. I am sanguine that its prosecution under well considered and judicious provisions meets your cordial approbation: and as this government has not as yet, to my knowledge, formally signified its concurrence in the measure, I beg to invite your attention to it at this session. I have already advised the Society of the propriety of a sufficient expenditure by them, in order to provide adequately for the security of said settlement. I shall be pleased to carry out any recommendation of yours in this matter.

I beg to invite your attention, at an early day of your session, to the communication of the 19th of April 1855, addressed to the President of this Republic by Governor Wright, President of the State Board of Colonization of Indiana, in reference to their procurement of land in Liberia at a fixed price, for the purpose of making additional grants to immigrants from that State, to the quantity of land allowed immigrants by the existing laws of Liberia; as also soliciting information on other important matters connected with the future operations of said Society. As the operations of the Board have no doubt been retarded in consequence of your action on that communication not having been consummated at your last session, and as a reply will be awaited with some anxiety, at an early day after this commencement of your session, I beg that you will give it your earliest attention.

I have also to invite your attention to the matter in dispute between the Ex-Collector of Customs of this port, and Capt. Josiah Webber, of Salem Mass., U. S. A., in reference to an amount of duties he was required to pay on a quantity of ardent spirits landed in this Republic after the first day of May 1855, on which he claims to have paid duties previously, under the operation of the law immediately preceding that date; and he now asks a refundment of the last amount paid; and as this can be done only by a special act of yours, I believe that the subject will receive such attention and action as justice demands. As this matter was submitted to you at the last session, and remains among the unfinished business, you are in possession of the documents connected therewith.

In the month of August, there were furnished by the Secretary of State to H. B. M. Government, on official appplication, the tariff of this Republic, also the value of the different foreign coins circulating within the same. The latter, in the absence of any statute fixing their value, were based upon usage. I advise the regulation of their value within this Republic by law at this session, so as to secure a legal uniformity in their valuation throughout the State. I also beg, that you will constitute the copper coin, procured by this government partly through the beneficence of the late lamented S. Gurney, Esq., a legal tender of this Republic; and that you will authorize the issue and circulation of such an amount of the engraved bills of this Republic, as you may deem accordant with a sound policy under existing circumstances.

I have to call your attention to the "Bounty land bill," which passed both houses nearly at the close of your last session; the which, from some objectionable features and provisions, was not approved. Without adverting to all I consider objectionable in it, I will simply invite your attention to the fact, that the Act actually places it out of the power of its intended beneficiaries to dispose of their bounty lands; in case they wish to do so; which I cannot believe to have been the intention of the framers of the bill, but was an oversight, through the great pressure and hurry at the time of its passage. This feature would render at least two thirds of the claims entirely unavailing to the claimants, for reasons too manifest to need mentioning here. I beg therefore, your reconsideration of the bill, and that you make such amendments as will carry out more satisfactorily, the very commendable object contemplated.

I have also to recommend the passage of a law defining citizenship of this Republic; that is, as to what shall constitute one a citizen of this Republic; as well as making provisions for carrying the same into effect. The passage of such a law should not be delayed longer, if we would obviate serious difficulties, not only among ourselves, but with foreign powers; a warning against which, we have had this year, in the attempt of the notorious A. T. Woods.

I have to further recommend, that you so amend the act entitled "An Act authorizing the appointment of surveyors for each County, and defining their duties," approved January 30th, 1855, as to require persons who may order land surveyed through the Land Commissioner, to pay the expense of surveying the same, provided the person thus ordering does not appear and have the said land sold at the succeeding Quartely Court; and that the Land Commissioner be authorized to adopt such measures, as will insure its prompt and immediate collection.

The increase of cases of larceny within the Republic the last two years manifestly proves, that the statutory provisions made for its punishment, approved January 9th 1854, are not sufficiently stringent. The bare requisition of fourfold if detected, will likely always prove a temptation to the committal of such acts, by the dishonest, acute speculator. If the thief can satisfy himself, that the chances of his escape are good for five out of six, he will be encouraged to prosecute the business for a livelihood. It is highly important gentlemen, that

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

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