

powerful nation. It has the right then, in common with other nations, to enact laws and to adopt regulations to suit its circumstances without consulting or knowing if they will be agreeable to others or not. It is sufficient that the Government and people of Liberia know that such laws and regulations are necessary for their interest and security, and that they do not conflict with international nor conventional law. The Government of France, and every other Government, holds it as an inherent right—a sacred privilege, to enact such laws as circumstances point out, for its advantage and protection, and no one has the right to complain about them. Those who do not like their operation, need not place themselves under their influence. If the laws of Liberia are unfavorable to the operations of M. Chevalier, it would be manly in him, and more to his honor to keep clear of their action. It strikes us also, that Commander Laporterie could find much more honorable employment, than that of encouraging the violation of our laws, and offering unprovoked insults to a Government, because of its weakness and its reluctance to assume a hostile attitude toward him,—an employment no doubt, that suits him, better than any other. All along, the people of Liberia, have believed that their strength consisted in their very weakness—but it is left to this accomplished Commander to teach them another lesson.

Nothing further need be said in this connection. M. Chevalier under the protection of the guns of Commander Laporterie continued for a time on the Liberian coast, in utter violation of its laws and in part consummated the object of his voyage.

The Secretary of State through the French Consul replied to Commander Laporterie—a copy of which here follows,

DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

MONROVIA, MARCH 20, 1857.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of a Despatch, addressed to you by the Commander of H. Im: M's Steamer "Euphrate" which you transmitted to me with your note No. 1, dated March 19,

To the Despatch I beg to reply in general terms, without confining myself to a reiteration, in regular order, of the queries and propositions therein contained.

First—The Law regulating the Commerce and Revenue of this Republic is plain and explicit, requiring that all vessels coming within the territories of the Republic, and trading at ports of entry—of which there are five—shall pay a duty of six per centum

advalorem on the amount of sales; and in case such vessels wish to trade coast wise, they are required to enter the whole of their cargoes, and pay a duty of eight per centum on their prime cost; obtaining at the same time, assurance from the comptroller of Customs that a draw-back of duties shall be allowed on all such parts of said cargoes as are not sold within the limits of this Republic; ardent spirits and wines excepted. Further, every trade vessel is required, on entering at the Custom House, to deposit her papers in the office of the Representative of the nation to which she belongs; in the absence of such a Representative the papers must be deposited at the Custom House of the port she enters; which arrangement renders it necessary that such vessel, having prosecuted a coast-wise trade, should return to the port where she first entered. These provisions apply to all vessels importing goods into the territory of the Republic for the purpose of any kind of exchange whatever.

The case of the "Phenix" does not furnish an exception; for the bestowing of Merchandize upon those who are of service in facilitating the prosecution of our business, whatever it be is, to all intents and purposes, bartering such merchandize; the bestowing of the goods being in consideration of the rendering of services.

Secondly. In regard to the Passports, I beg to say, as such a scheme of emigration as that being prosecuted by M. Chevalier was not contemplated by this Government, the Legislature has made no provisions for the furnishing of passports to persons wishing to leave the Republic, at any other place than at Monrovia, nor by any other individual than the Secretary of State.

Thirdly. The limits of the territory claimed by this Republic, are included between the Shebar on the North-west, and Grand Cess on the South-east. In cases where direct purchase of any intermediate points has not been effected by this Government, the Chiefs or Head-men of said points have, by treaty stipulations, ceded to this Government political jurisdiction over those points.

It is a matter of very deep regret to this Government that from an expressed desire on its part of carrying out the provisions of its Commerce and Revenue Law; by placing an inspecting officer on board of vessels trading on this coast, there should be inferred a disposition to call in question the honor and dignity of the nation to which such vessels belong; and that the absence of a regularly established police along the Liberian coast, to afford facilities to an isolated and singular scheme, should be regarded as an infringement of the laws of nations. It is certainly not consonant to the law of nations that one Government should, for the sake of its own convenience, infringe upon the rights of another.

It is the earnest hope of this Government that this matter will be settled satisfactorily to all concerned, without involving the necessity of any protracted debate on the subject.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XIII. Colonization Pamphlets

6. Message of the President of Liberia,
...January 6, 1859 Monrovia, 1859