CHAPTER VII.

FIRST EXPEDITION TO AFRICA IN THE ELIZABETH.

The American Colonization Society being satisfied from the report of the Rev. Mr. Burgess, and the journal of the lamented Mills, that the establishment of a colony on the western coast of Africa was a practicable enterprise, were solicitous, in the commencement of the year 1819, to send out a select company of black people, under suitable superintendence, to commence the contemplated settlement. And it seemed to be a special interposition of Providence in favour of their design, that Congress, on the 3d of March, the last day of their session, passed an act, authorizing the President of the United States to institute an agency in Africa, for the purpose of providing an asylum for such Africans as should be liberated by our ships of war, from vessels seized in violation of the provisions of the law for the suppression of the slave trade. This act without recognizing the plan of colonization, as it had been repeatedly commended by the society to the favourable notice of Congress, authorized a collateral measure, so nearly identified with it, as in effect, to subserve nearly the same purpose. The society, therefore, resolved to improve the advantage which was thus offered to them. In this view, it was determined to make the station of the government agency the site of the colonial settlement, and to incorporate in the settlement all the blacks delivered over by our ships of war to the American agent, as soon as the requisite preparations could be made for their accommodation.

As a suitable person to be employed in this agency, the Rev. Samuel Bacon, a minister of the Protestant Episcopal church, was strongly recommended. This gentleman, though still young, had passed through an eventful life. Brought up in more than common ignorance, he was seized, when grown up, with an inextinguishable desire for learning; and after encountering and overcoming the most formidable obstacles, he succeeded in completing a liberal education, at Harvard. He afterwards was occupied as a teacher, in Pennsylvania. He then received the commission of lieutenant in the corps of

marines, and, in a short time, was advanced to be a captain in the same. Finding leisure, however, from the duties of his profession, to study law, he qualified himself for the bar, and practised with success and reputation in the county of Adams, Pennsylvania, and adjacent counties. But having, about this time, come under very deep and abiding impressions of religion, he felt it to be his duty, as it was his strong desire, to preach the gospel of Christ. Being naturally of an active and enterprising disposition, Mr. Bacon devoted much attention to the institution of Sunday schools, and also to their instruction. His exertions, in this useful and benevolent department of labour, will be long held in remembrance in York, Pennsylvania, where he then resided. He first entered the communion of the German Lutheran church, of York, which is much the largest in the place; but, in a few months, he transferred his ecclesiastical relation to the Episcopal church, in the same town.

After having pursued the requisite course of reading for some time, he visited Philadelphia, and received ordination from the hands of the venerable bishop White. Soon after Mr. Bacon's entrance into holy orders, he was selected as a suitable agent to travel through the State, and present the cause of the Bible, in behalf of the Philadelphia Bible Society. This work was congenial to his ardent mind. He entered on it with alacrity, and fulfilled the duties of his office with wisdom, energy, and fidelity.

Scarcely had he brought this agency to a close, when he was fixed upon as a suitable person to be employed as a government agent, to go to Africa.

But before he received his appointment from government, he entered with zeal into the service of the American Colonization Society, in which he continued until the eighth of January, 1820, when he received from the Executive of the United States, a commission and instructions, for the agency to which he had been previously designated.

The government having determined to send a transport and a sloop of war to the coast of Africa, for the purpose of carrying out two agents, and as many mechanics and labourers as might be necessary to prepare a receptacle for any persons that might be liberated from American slave ships, the sloop of war Cyane was put in commission, and the Elizabeth, a merchant

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XIV. Books

3.

A History of Colonization on the West Coast of Africa
by Archibald Alexander, Philadelphia, 1846