CHAPTER XXI.

EVENTS OF 1832.

The fifteenth anniversary meeting of the American Colonization Society was held on Monday, the 16th of January, 1832, in the hall of the House of Representatives of the United States. At the hour of meeting the hall was filled to overflowing with an assembly composed of many of the officers of government, members of both Houses of Congress, distinguished strangers and citizens, and a large number of the ladies of the metropolis.

The Hon. Charles F. Mercer, one of the vice-presidents, took the chair.

Among the earliest communicatioas made to this meeting, were letters from Lafayette, from James Madison, and from John Marshall. It cannot but be gratifying to be able to communicate some of the sentiments of Mr. Madison, and that near the close of life, on this interesting subject. After mentioning the difficulty which he now found to use the pen, he says, "I may observe, in brief, that the society had always my good wishes, though with hopes of its success less sanguine than were entertained by others, found to be better judges; and that I feel the greatest pleasure at the progress already made by the society, and the encouragement to encounter remaining difficulties, afforded by the earlier and greater ones already overcome. Many circumstances, at the present moment, seem to concur in brightening the prospects of the society, and cherishing the hope that the time will come, when the dreadful calamity which has so long afflicted our country, and filled so many with despair, will be gradually removed, and by means consistent with justice, peace, and the general satisfaction: thus giving to our country the full enjoyment of the blessings of liberty, and to the world the full benefit of its great example. I never considered the main difficulty of the great work as lying in the deficiency of emancipations, but in an inadequacy of asylums for such a growing mass of population, and in the great expense in removing it to its new home.

"The spirit of private manumission as the laws may permit, and the exiles may consent, is increasing, and will increase; and there are sufficient indications that the public authorities, in slave-holding States, are looking forward to interpositions in different forms, that must have a powerful effect. With respect to the new abode for the emigrants, all agree that the choice made by the Society is rendered peculiarly appropriate, by considerations which need not be repeated; and if other situations should be found eligible receptacles for a portion of them, the prospects in Africa seem to be expanding in a highly encouraging degree."

But we would call the attention of our readers especially to the following expression of opinion of this clear-sighted and upright politician, contained in the same letter.

"In contemplating the pecuniary resources needed for the removal of such a number to so great a distance, my thoughts and hopes have been long turned to the rich fund presented in the western lands of the nation, which will soon entirely cease to be under a pledge for another object. The great one in question is truly of a national character; and it is known that distinguished patriots, not dwelling in slave-holding States, have viewed the object in that light, and would be willing to let the national domain be a resource in effecting it. Should it be remarked, that the States, though all may be interested in relieving our country from the coloured population, are not equally so, it is but fair to recollect, that the sections most to be benefitted, are those whose cessions created the fund to be disposed of.

"I am aware of the constitutional obstacle which has presented itself, but if the general government be reconciled to the application of the territorial fund to the removal of the coloured population, a grant to Congress of the necessary authority could be carried, with little delay, through the forms of the constitution.

"Sincerely wishing an increasing success to the labours of the Society, I pray you to be assured of my esteem, and to accept my friendly salutations. James Madison."

The Hon. Judge Marshall, in his letter, read at the same time, goes into the same subject, treated by Mr. Madison, respecting the western lands, as a resource from which the necessary funds for the purpose of transporting the people of colour might be derived. He says, speaking of the right of the government

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XIV. Books
3.
A History of Colonization on the West Coast of Africa
by Archibald Alexander, Philadelphia, 1846