order to attract to the service of the cause, talents and influence, of which the value had been tested in other situations. These overtures were met generally by hesitation; sometimes by rejection; and yet oftener, after a partial acceptance, they were ultimately declined; an indecision which accumulated embarrassments on the action of the Board.

At this critical juncture in the affairs of the society, the cause found a friend and benefactor in Judge Samuel Wilkinson, of Buffalo, in New York. This gentleman generously volunteered his personal services and aid to the Board to help them to extricate the society from its pressing embarrassments. He nobly offered to take the personal superintendence of its pecuniary concerns, and went so far as to pledge a portion of his own property as security for his fidelity. Judge Wilkinson was accordingly appointed general agent of the society for the whole Union, with authority, under instructions from the Board, to commission, instruct, or remove such agents as he might deem necessary; to fix the amount and the mode of their compensation; to receive and apply to the payment of the debts of the society, the sums which might be collected by himself, or the agents of his appointment; and to adopt and execute such other measures in aid of the great object of the society, as he might deem expedient; it being understood that he should keep the Board regularly and fully informed of his proceedings. Doubts existed as to the competency of the Board to delegate such essential portions of the trust which had been confided to them; but a crisis was believed to have arrived which necessitated, and therefore justified, measures of unusual strength. Representations of Judge Wilkinson's high character for integrity, of his energy and ability as a man of business, of his extensive acquaintance throughout the Union, and of his disposition to make extraordinary personal sacrifices in behalf of the cause, determined the Board, that if so liberal a confidence could properly be reposed in any individual, a fitter depositary of it could no where be found. Judge Wilkinson accepted the appointment, declining any compensation for his services, and promptly proceeded to the execution of his duties.*

Before Judge Wilkinson accepted this appointment, he had conceived a plan whereby he hoped fully to test the

* Annual Report, January, 1839, Vol. XV. African Repository.

capability of black men for independent exertion and self-reliance, in the conducting and management of enterprises, and at the same time to make this a means of educating them to these qualities. He proposed to raise subscriptions for the purchase of a ship, to be manned entirely with black men, and to ply as a packet between Liberia and this country. "The first idea of this project," says he, "was suggested to me by observing that few coloured men in any section of our country are prosecuting any extensive business, but they are generally engaged in subordinate capacities, and in performing the most menial services. Feeling a great desire for the elevation of the coloured man, I embraced every opportunity afforded by several visits to the Southern and South-western States of making myself acquainted with the condition of both slaves and free people of colour, and their susceptibility of elevation in this country. I found among the slaves as skilful mechanics as our country affords. The Dover Iron Works, among the most extensive in America, are carried on by slaves, from digging the ore, and cutting the wood for coal, to refining the iron, and rolling it into bars and plates, and the extensive and complicated machinery kept in the most perfect order. The mechanic labour on the plantations in the Southern States is usually performed by slaves. They are in fact the blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, weavers, and shoemakers, of the country, and their work is performed with skill and expedition. I am satisfied that the coloured man is as capable of acquiring trades as the white man, and that the reason he is so seldom found in the Middle and Eastern States carrying on mechanic business, is not for want of ability to acquire the knowledge and skill, but on account of the difficulties and discouragements incident to his condition, and which are alike applicable to all coloured men who seek to elevate themselves in this country. The merchant will not employ them as clerks; the mechanic will not employ them as journeymen; should he perchance find such employment, he applies for board and is refused—other workmen will not eat with him; thus he meets at the very outset in life with difficulties which he cannot surmount. He may have education, and mechanic skill; of what avail are they so long as neither can be profitably employed? He has no one to take him by the hand and help him onward—his heart sinks with discouragement—he must either steal, beg, or accept of menial employ-

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The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

XIV. Books

3.

A History of Colonization on the West Coast of Africa

by Archibald Alexander, Philadelphia, 1846