

L. C. Label

A
BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF THE
SETTLEMENT AND PRESENT SITUATION
Letter of Mr. F. Douglass
OF
THE COLONY
OF
SIERRA LEONE,
IN AFRICA;

AS COMMUNICATED BY PAUL CUFFE. (A MAN OF COLOUR)
TO HIS FRIEND IN NEW-YORK: ALSO, AN EX-
PLANATION OF THE OBJECT OF HIS VISIT,
AND SOME ADVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF
COLOUR IN THE UNITED STATES.

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED,

An address to the people of colour, from the Con-
vention of Delegates from the Aboli-
tion Societies in the U. States.

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1812.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT, &c.

HAVING been informed that there was a settlement of people of colour at Sierra Leone under the immediate guardianship of a civilized power, I have for these many years past felt a lively interest in their behalf, wishing that the inhabitants of the colony might become established in the truth, and thereby be instrumental in its promotion amongst our African brethren. It was these sentiments that first influenced me to visit my friends in this colony, and instead of repenting, I have cause to rejoice in having found many who are inclined to listen and attend to the precepts of our holy religion. Nevertheless, I am convinced that further help will be requisite to establish them in the true and vital spirit of devotion ; for although there are many who are very particular in their attendance of public worship, yet I am apprehensive that the true substance is too much overlooked ; and by thus mistaking the form for the substance, that their religious exercise is rendered rather a burden than a pleasure. It is not however my object to extend these observations at present. I merely wish to convey a brief account of the situation of the colony as I found it, hoping the information may prove serviceable and interesting to some of my friends in the United States.

Sierra Leone is a country on the west coast of Africa. Its situation is inviting, and its soil generally very productive. A river of the same name passes through the country, and the land for a great extent on each side is peculiarly fertile, and with the climate well calculated for the cultivation of West-India and other tropical productions. In the year 1791 an act passed the British parliament incorporating a company called the Sierra Leone Company, whose object was to settle and cultivate these lands, and open a trade with other countries in the products of the soil. The first settlers amounted to about 200 white persons, and a number of free blacks or people of colour from North America; and their experiments in sugar, cotton, &c. soon convinced them that they would be abundantly rewarded for their labour. The promising appearance of the settlement soon attracted the attention of the neighbouring chiefs, who with their subjects generally, became very friendly. The colony is now considerably increased, and continues to be in a flourishing situation. The population at present as taken by order of Governor Columbine in the 4th mo. 1811, is as follows, viz.

Europeans,	22	4	2
Nova-Scotians, . . .	188	295	499
Maroons,	165	195	447
Africans,	20	43	37
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	395	537	985
			537
			395
			<hr/>

Making together, 1917

Besides which there are CO1 Crue Men, so called from their being natives of a part called Crue Country, from which they have emigrated since the establishment of this colony.

These people have not yet been enrolled in the list of citizens, but are generally hired by the inhabitants as labourers. The disposition prevails very generally to encourage new settlers who may come amongst them either for the purpose of cultivating the land, or engaging in commercial enterprise. A petition, of which the following is an outline was lately presented to his excellency governor Columbine, and signed by several of the most respectable inhabitants, viz.

1st That encouragement may be given to all our brethren, who may come from the British colonies or from America, in order to become farmers, or to assist us in the cultivation of our land.

2d. That encouragement may be given to our foreign brethren who have vessels for the purpose, to establish commerce in Sierra Leone.

3d. That those who may undertake to establish the Whale Fishery in the colony may be encouraged to persevere in that useful and laudable enterprise.

There are at this time 7 or 8 schools established throughout the colony. One of these is for the instruction of grown persons, and the others contain together about 250 children, who are instructed in all the necessary branches of education.

The inhabitants have likewise six places of public worship, which are generally well attended. Their times for meeting on the sabbath are at 5 and 10 o'clock in the morning, and at 2 and 6 o'clock in the evening. Also, the week through, many of their meetings are attended at 5 in the morning and 6 in the evening. There was also

a society formed here some time since for the further promotion of the christian religion. I have met with one of their epistles, which I shall insert at the close of my communication.

An institution was formed on the 1st of the 12th mo. last for the relief of the poor and disabled. It is now regularly held on the 1st second day in every month, at which time proper persons are appointed to take charge of those under the care of the institution. A general meeting is held once every six months. Every one can judge of the happy effect of such institutions as these in improving the dispositions and softening the manners of our native brethren.

The colonists have instituted 5 courts, consisting, first, of the

Court of Quarter Sessions, which is held four times in the course of the year. The governor always presides as judge, and is attended by a justice of the peace, sheriff's clerk, messengers of the baliff and constables. The petit jury consists of 12 men selected from the Europeans, Nova-Scotians, and Maroons.

2d. Mayor's Court. This formerly sat on the 5th day of every week; but the time for holding it has since been prolonged to every three months.

3d. The Court of Requests which is held on the 7th day of every week. The power of this court is confined to the trial of debts not exceeding two pounds. 12 men are selected for this purpose, and four out of the number transact the business of a sitting.

4th. The Police Court, which is likewise held on the 7th day of every week, and is constituted of the same number of persons as the court of requests. Their business is confined to the trial of persons for disorderly conduct.

5th. The Court of Vice Admiralty ; which is held as occasion may require.

The inhabitants are governed entirely by the British law, and are generally peaceable and willing to abide by the decisions of their civil magistrates. Governor Columbine lately issued a proclamation in which he offers the protection of these laws to any slave who may arrive in the colony with the consent of his or her owners, and leaves them at liberty to remain or go elsewhere, as they may think proper.

On the 18th of the 3d month, I travelled in amongst the natives of Africa. The first tribe I met with was called the Bullone Tribe. Their king, whose name is George, appeared to be very friendly. He could speak but very little English himself, but had a young man with him by the name of Peter Wilson, who had received his education in England, and appeared to be a man of very good information. This tribe, from what I could gather have adopted the mode of circumcision, and seem to acknowledge by words, the existence of a Deity. So accustomed are they to wars and slavery that I apprehend it would be a difficult task to convince them of the impropriety of these pernicious practices. I gave the king a Testament and several other books, and let him know by the interpreter the useful records contained in those books, and the great fountain they pointed unto.

The Mendingo Tribe professes Mahometanism. I became acquainted with two men of this tribe who were apparently men of considerable learning ; indeed this tribe generally, appeared to be a people of some education. Their learning appeared to be the Arabic. They do not allow spirituous liquors to be made use of in this tribe.

They have declined the practice of selling their own tribe ; but notwithstanding this, they continue to sell those of other tribes, and thought it hard that the traffic in slaves should be abolished, as they were made poor in consequence thereof. As they themselves were not willing to submit to the bonds of slavery, I endeavoured to hold this out as a light to convince them of their error. But the prejudice of education had taken too firm hold of their minds to admit of much effect from reason on this subject.

ADDRESS.

*To my scattered brethren and fellow countrymen
at Sierra Leone.*

Grace be unto you and peace be multiplied from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten a lively hope in remembrance of you ; and for which I desire ever to be humbled, world without end. Amen.

Dearly beloved friends and fellow countrymen,

I earnestly recommend to you the propriety of assembling yourselves together for the purpose of worshipping the Lord your God. God is a spirit, and they that worship him acceptably must worship him in spirit and in truth ; in so doing you will find a living hope which will be as an anchor to the soul and a support under afflictions. In this hope, may Ethiopia stretch out her hand unto God. Come, my African brethren and fellow countrymen, let us walk together in the light of the Lord—That pure light which bringeth salvation into the world, hath appeared unto all men to profit withall. I would recommend unto all the saints, and elders, and sober people of the colony, that you adopt the mode of meeting together once every month in order to consult with each other for your mutual good. But above all things, let your meetings be owned of the Lord, for he hath told us that “where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he would be in the midst of them.” And I would recommend that you keep a record of your proceedings at those meetings in order that they may be left for the benefit of the young and rising generation. In these meetings let it be your care to promote all good and laudable institutions,

and by so doing you will increase both your temporal and spiritual welfare. That the Prince of Peace may be your preserver, is the sincere desire of one who wishes well to all mankind.

PAUL CUFFE.

The following advice, though detached from the foregoing address, appears to be intended to accompany it.

ADVICE.

First. That sobriety and steadfastness, with all faithfulness, be recommended, that so professors may be good examples in all things ; doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly.

Secondly. That early care be extended towards the youth, whilst their minds are young and tender, that so they may be redeemed from the corruptions of the world—such as nature is prone to—not swearing, following bad company and drinking of spirituous liquors. That they may be kept out of idleness, and encouraged to be industrious, for this is good to cultivate the mind, and may you be good examples therein yourselves.

Thirdly. May servants be encouraged to discharge their duty with faithfulness ; may they be brought up to industry ; may their minds be cultivated for the reception of the good seed, which is promised to all that will seek after it. I want that we should be faithful in all things, that so we may become a people, giving satisfaction to those, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, in liberating us from a state of slavery. I must leave you in the hands of him who is able to preserve you through time, and to crown you with that blessing that is prepared for all those who are faithful unto death.

Farewell, PAUL CUFFE.