



History of the American colony in Liberia

J. Ashmun

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Excerpt from History of the American Colony in Liberia: From December 1821 to 1823

The truth is, that the intrinsic grandeur of all human actions consists wholly in their moral character; and it is the share which the virtuous heart takes in those actions, that after all, is the just measure of their greatness. It is this principle of estimation alone, which puts it in the power of the humblest part of mankind to equal in real magnanimity of character, and absolute grandeur of exploit, the achievements, and the moral elevation, of the proudest. It is this scale of distribution, by which the benevolent Father of mankind, divides, to all the race, the little stock of their joys and sorrows. - I will add, too, that the first secret of a virtuous mind is folded up in its wisdom to discern, and disposition to applaud, amidst those gilded heaps of splendid trifles which continually solicit the admiration of the world, the genuine traits of moral greatness in their least, imposing forms.

It is in the beautiful light of a theory so just, and at the same tune so gratifying to the benevolent heart, that many of the readers of the following memoir will delight to contemplate the genuine actings of heroic virtue; of which the theatre was too remote from the observation of the world, and the actors too little practised in the arts of ostentation, to expose their motives to the suspicion of vanity, or admit of the agency of the ordinary stimulants of great achievements.

To arrive at the remote spot on which these humble scenes were transacted, I must tax the reader's imagination with a flight across the Atlantic ocean, which, by limiting the circle of his ordinary avocations, may hitherto have bounded the range of his liveliest sensibilities.

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