

AFRICA AND COLONIZATION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY,

JANUARY 21, 1873,

BY

EDWARD P. HUMPHREY, D. D., LL.D.,
OF LOUISVILLE, KY.

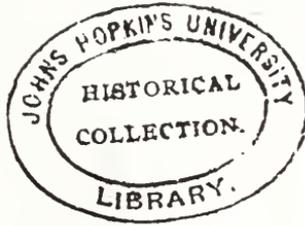
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ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT: Although our Society is now holding its Fifty-Sixth Anniversary, it is only fifty years since the pilgrim fathers of Liberia landed at Cape Mesurado. During this half century very significant changes have occurred in the affairs both of the Society and of Western Africa. By virtue of these changes several of the purposes which were cherished, there and here, at the beginning, have been already accomplished.

One of these purposes was the suppression of the West African slave-trade. This cruel traffic was able to defy or outwit all the great nations which were united for its extermination. Treaties were formed with this intent between the leading Powers of Christendom; and these treaties were faithfully observed. Squadrons were detailed to watch the African Coast, and to chase the slavers on the high seas; and these ships of war were well equipped and well handled. The trade was checked by these measures, but its infernal horrors were immeasurably augmented. But when the Liberian settlers occupied Cape Mesurado and Cape Palmas, with the regions between, they were in possession of some of the chief marts of the traffic. As early as 1853, only thirty years after the Colony was established, the slaver had been driven away from a line of coast equal to the distance between the mouth of the Hudson and the Capes of Florida. In its colonial infancy, in the midst of the neglect and hostility which it encountered, Liberia did more to cleanse from the brow of America and Europe the leprosy of the slave-trade—a leprosy of three hundred years' standing—than the combined diplomacy and naval forces of both continents had been able to accomplish. This work is now completed.

Another of the ideas which gave origin to the colony was not less philanthropic. When the American cruiser seized a slave-ship, the question immediately arose what was to be done

with the victims which were found between the decks. They could not be returned to their native villages, scattered over hundreds of miles in the unknown interior of Africa. Should these helpless savages be landed in New York and turned adrift? Should they be taken to one of our Southern ports or Cuba and be sold into slavery? Or, should they be set ashore in Africa, to fall at once into the hands of the native traders, and be sold again to the slave-ships? This emergency created the necessity of planting a colony on the African Coast, where these hapless refugees might find a permanent home. Most fortunately, this Society was able to offer them such a home at Liberia. More than five thousand and seven hundred of them have from time to time been settled in the Republic. That work is now finished by the suppression of the slave-trade.

Our Society has taken its part in another and greater cause. From the beginning it was seen that the Society would exert a powerful influence on slavery in this country. It proposed nothing more than to colonize in Africa, with their own consent, the free people of color. But even this purpose touched the institution of slavery in many of its vital points. That our founders and early patrons were, without exception, the friends of emancipation, is more than ought to be said; although nobody denies that such was the position of the larger part of them. It was assailed by the two extremes of sentiment. According to one, it was a scheme of the slaveholder to perpetuate slavery. Others denounced it as an insidious and dangerous enemy to the institution. For nearly thirty years the question was debated, whether in point of fact this Society was aiding in the perpetuation or in the overthrow of slavery. The debate was suddenly cut off, not by the dissolution of the Society or of its Colony, but by the extermination of slavery itself. We need not revive the dispute; but I take leave to say—speaking now as a citizen of a slave State since 1835—that according to my best judgment the operations of this Society and the success of its Colony contributed very largely to the formation of a public sentiment hostile to slavery, by force of which slavery went down. And now nothing remains to be done in that direction.

Well, then, let us see where we stand. Three of the leading purposes which gave origin to our Society have been accomplished. The West African slave-trade is wholly suppressed; a home has been provided for the rescued victims of the traffic; and slavery on this continent has ceased forever and forever. This is the record of what has been attempted and finished within the first half century of Liberia.

Now, it must be said that unless some other important objects are set before this Society, the Society itself must shortly be dissolved. By an organic law of human progress, every institution, even the noblest and wisest, must disappear when its ends are accomplished. The analogy from nature shows itself in those orders of animals which perish in giving birth to their offspring. The vigorous anti-slavery societies in Great Britain were dissolved when slavery throughout the empire was abolished. The American Anti-Slavery Society, with rare discretion, adjourned without day on the adoption of the "thirteenth amendment." This principle takes an illustration not only from human institutions, but from the ordinances of God as well. It pleased the Almighty, in old times, to choose out a people for Himself; to plant them in a chosen land; to establish them as, at once, a mighty nation and a consecrated church; to give them a civil constitution and a directory for worship—both instruments being not only inspired, but reduced to writing; and to raise up for the people judges and kings and priests and prophets, each one of whom held a personal divine vocation. God made Himself manifest among His people by signs and wonders innumerable—in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the Wilderness, in Canaan, and in Babylon. He made Himself responsible for an unbroken succession of heirs-male in the family of Aaron for fifteen hundred years, and in the family of David for a thousand years, the like of which, considered as a fact in genealogy, has rarely occurred on earth. But when Judaism had finished its purposes, then it perished. Though divine in its origin, in its constitution as a church-state, and in all its laws and ordinances, though guarded and defended by all the powers of Heaven, yet Judaism, having done its special work as preparatory to a better dispensation, was taken down by its builder and maker, who

was God. Temple, altar, the holy city, the kingly crown, the priestly splendor and the array of angels, all passed away like a moving cloud.

Standing to-day face to face with this supreme law in human affairs, we are bound to inquire whether the American Colonization Society, having done, if we may reverently say, many mighty works, shall now cease out of existence? Has it fulfilled the whole law of its life, and must it now submit to the law of dissolution? We must meet that question sooner or later: let us meet it now. Let us set before ourselves, most distinctly, some great endeavor not yet concluded; or let us submit, manfully, to the destiny of enterprises which have a grand history, but neither promise nor prophecy. We have lived in honor; now, if our work be done, let us die with dignity.

The constitution of Liberia points out the labors which yet remain to be undertaken—labors that are more difficult, more enduring, than those which have been finished. In that instrument it is declared, that “the great object in forming these Colonies was to provide a home for the dispersed and oppressed children of Africa, and to regenerate and enlighten their benighted continent.” (Const. Lib., art. V, sec. 13.) Here, then, is the sphere of labor into which we are cast: a sphere which embraces two continents. We are appointed in the providence of God to give shape as best we can to the destinies of five millions of the African race in this country, and a hundred millions on the other side of the sea. Is, then, our occupation gone? Let us, just now, answer this question by referring to our work in Africa.

The Divine method for the conversion of the heathen is clearly made known in the Word of God. The gospel is to be preached in all the world by the ministers of the gospel. The Church has, in all ages, conducted its foreign missions according to this rule; and after this method, and after no other, Africa is to be redeemed. To those who deem this ordinance unwise and insufficient in its application to Africa, the answer must be that the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man. But in order to give effect to this Divine plan of missions, special provision must be

made for conditions which are peculiar to the western and central portions of that continent. These conditions have arisen out of slavery and the slave-trade, the hostile relations which have long existed between the white and colored races, our ignorance respecting the interior of that vast continent, the mortal sickness to the white man of the Coast and of the river-margins, the jealousy of the half-caste Arabs and other Mohammedan races, the ferocity of the Pagan tribes, and the stupid idolatry of Fetichism. These obstacles have hitherto defeated the labors of the missionary. They have now been met, by the watchful providence of God, in the establishment of a free Christian Commonwealth at Liberia.

Here we have a domain with a sea-coast of five hundred miles, and extending somewhat indefinitely into the interior, resembling in shape and dimensions the region between the Atlantic and the Alleghenies. The territory has been honorably acquired—by purchase, by treaty, by annexation, with the consent of the native owners of the soil. Here is a nominally Christian population of fifteen or twenty thousand. Here, also, in the outlying districts, is a native population of about six hundred thousand, among whom Christian missions have been planted. The Liberians have established a free Republic, described and defined by a written constitution. The Government is administered by a President, a Congress in two Houses, and courts of justice, inferior and supreme. The Liberians have their periodical elections, with all the machinery of party conventions, caucuses, and contests for office. Not to be outdone by the sister Republic on this side of the water, the two Houses gravely consider cases of contested elections; they engage in wrangles which lock for the time the wheels of legislation; they have entertained themselves with a dispute about a north-western boundary; and they have conferred upon their constituents the “blessings of a national debt.” More intrepid even than we are, the Liberians have, for cause, removed a President from office, not by the process of impeachment, but by the act of a “sovereignty convention.” When the offender refused to submit to the popular will, the authorities sent him to jail. What with these things, and with a national flag, an army and navy in the germ, police courts, newspapers, worry,

heats, and restlessness, Liberia is a genuine republic—a very fair imitation, on a small scale, of its model in and about Washington City. The Republic has framed treaties, and exchanged consular and diplomatic agents with the leading Powers of the world. The Government has proved itself strong in peace, and equal to the stern necessities and strain of war. It is supported by schools, a College, and lyceums. Seven denominations of Christians have planted their congregations and missions along that Coast: seven golden candlesticks, in the midst of which, let us hope, there is one that walketh who is like unto the Son of Man.

We are now ready to answer the question, What advantages does Liberia afford to Christian Missions in Africa? Liberia is not a church, nor is it, strictly so called, a missionary settlement; nor has its Government any of the functions either of the church or of a missionary society. It has no authority to preach the gospel, or to establish churches among the heathen within or beyond its borders. It is simply a State, a Christian State, originated for the purpose of securing “the blessings of the Christian religion, and political, religious, and civil liberty.”

The relations of Liberia to the redemption of Africa may be easily defined. In the first place, it gives to the Church a foothold upon the edge of the continent and access to the interior. The geographical form of Africa seems, in its own peculiar way, to repel foreign influences. The Mediterranean Coast approaches the older seats of civilization; but that border is separated from the interior by the barrier of the Great Desert. The Western Coast, along which it fronts our own continent, projects into the ocean no important cape or peninsula, nor anywhere opens its gates to receive the waters of the sea into navigable bays or sounds. That long line of Coast is relieved by neither inlets nor harbors worthy of the name. Its low sunken shores are indented with rivers, but their mouths are filled with sand-bars. It would seem that the Creator had intended to shield the inhabitants of those regions from the ferocity of the slave-trade by the barrier of a dreary and inhospitable sea-border. But when the time came, the same august Providence planted midway from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Cape of Good Hope a Christian Commonwealth. Liberia now

offers to the Church a permanent foothold on the margin of its wide field of missionary labor—a place where it may lay down securely the base line of its future operations in the now unknown regions of Equatorial Africa. This is one of the facilities afforded by Liberia to the cause.

There is another. The citizens of the new Republic are exclusively colored people. The white man is disfranchised by an express provision of the constitution. This rule puts a wide difference between the settlement of Cape Mesurado and the settlements effected at Plymouth and Jamestown. Our fathers came to America to prepare a new home for themselves and their children. They did not propose to incorporate the aborigines into the body politic. They purchased the territory for their own use and occupancy, with the stipulation that the Indian tribes should remove from the lands, and give to the white settlers exclusive possession. Our fathers sought the conversion of the natives, but rarely with the intent to bestow on their converts the privileges of citizenship. The end of all this is, that the native tribes on this continent have melted away in the presence of the white race, until our Indian problem is likely to be solved by the extinction of the aborigines. But the law of Liberia, not the organic law of the Republic only, but the law of climate, the law of common origin and consanguinity, the character impressed upon the Colony from the beginning—every part of the original plan of its founders—looks to opposite results. The citizens are of the same color and race and affinities with their heathen neighbors. The whole policy of the State, working now slowly perhaps, is directed to the preservation of the natives; to their education, secular and religious; to their full enfranchisement as citizens; to their equality before the law; to their social equality; and ultimately to the processes of nature by which the colonists and natives shall be fused down together in one common society.

These things being so, it is difficult to set limits to the expansion of the Commonwealth, by the annexation of the outlying territories and tribes far towards Central Africa. How rapidly that expansion should be allowed to take place is a serious problem. It is one of the highest opportunities of our Society to aid in the best solution of that problem, by sending

to Liberia, from year to year, large companies of intelligent Christian emigrants. Through them we shall invigorate the State at the seat of life, and shall enable the Republic both to extend its borders and stimulate its vital energies: at once to lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes.

We must look to Liberia, thirdly, to furnish the men and women who shall carry the gospel to the Mohammedan kingdoms and Pagan tribes of Africa. This consideration rests upon the insalubrity of the climate to white men. The facts which belong to this part of the case are familiar to us all. It is known that "the Roman Catholic missionaries labored in Western Africa for two hundred and fourteen years; but every vestige of their influence has been gone for many generations. An English attempt at Bulama Island, in 1792, partly missionary in its character, was abandoned in two years, with the loss of a hundred lives. There were eighteen Protestant missionary attempts before the settlement of Liberia, all of which failed." Mr. Edward Everett, in his admirable address before this Society just twenty years ago, said: "When that most noble expedition, I think in 1841, was fitted out under the highest auspices in England, to found an agricultural colony at the confluence of the Niger and the Chad, out of one hundred and forty-five white persons that formed a part of it, one hundred and thirty sickened and forty died. On the other hand, out of the one hundred and fifty-eight colored men that formed part of the expedition, only eleven sickened, and they were men who had passed some years in the West Indies and in Europe, and not one died."

Now, we must take the case as we find it. The white man, whether intent on gain or on some better or more enduring substance, meets terrors on that Coast which are too strong for him. His blood is poisoned by the exhalations from jungles, from mangrove thickets, from tepid and putrid swamps. The vertical sun smites him with its fiery darts. On the other hand, the colored man, although born in this country, encounters but few of these perils.

An instructive series of facts appears in the Report of this Society just adopted. Fifty-two ordained ministers of the gospel are now laboring in Liberia. All but one are colored

men. Of these, only two were sent out from this country as missionaries. Liberia itself furnished the fifty out of its own population. Six of these are converts from the heathen tribes; forty-four were found among the Liberian colonists. In addition to these, the Christian missions there employ ninety men and women, not ordained, nearly all of whom are Liberians—emigrants from this country or their children. This single fact carries away all doubts before it. It teaches us that in proportion as we multiply the emigrants from this country, we multiply also the Christian laborers.

Then we come to the native-born Africans. These children of the soil and the sun—by the subtle chemistry of their organs of life, separate from the tainted air its sweeter influences. From the descending floods of the tropical rains, they take only the waters that quench their thirst. From the rays of the tropical sun, they gather a cheerful light and grateful warmth. We must look to Liberia, to its churches and schools and colleges, for the men who shall receive the divine vocation to carry the gospel to the innermost regions of the continent: men fitted for their work by the grace of God, by physical peculiarities, and by the sympathies and affinities of a common lineage.

From this train of thought the transition is easy to another. In order to the redemption of Africa, a thorough exploration of the interior is necessary. For this enterprise Liberia must furnish both the point of departure and the explorers. The atlas shows for the midlands of Africa a blank space, covering millions of square miles, designated as "Unknown Regions," or relieved by imaginary mountains, lakes, and rivers. This is the standing reproach of geographical science. Four thousand years ago the caravans traversed the Arabian desert from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates. An active commerce between Europe and India has for centuries found an open way by the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope four hundred years ago offered another route by sea to India. The expeditions from the West passed along the northern border of Africa; and the navigators of the Atlantic, sailing west and south, gave a wide berth to the continent. No honorable traffic despatched its caravans into its interior.

It was a huge barrier, not a pathway or a field of commercial enterprise. Africa was turned over to the slave-trade. That trade laid waste the coasts; rooted out the industry, both in agriculture and the useful arts of the native tribes; burned their villages, plunged them into a state of merciless war—war to the knife and spear, to the poisoned arrow, to the branding-iron and the hand-cuff. The country was desolated for thousands of miles, and the survivors of the captives and the slain sank into barbarism. Their acquired ferocity, unnatural even to savages, together with the insalubrity of the climate, has hitherto hindered exploration in Western and Central Africa.

We know something about South Africa and the region of the Nile. The world is waiting with impatience for Livingstone's brilliant discoveries near the fountains of Herodotus. Let us hope that we shall receive from him something better than a story of mere personal adventure. We need to hear nothing more from expeditions fitted out for the capture of lions and giraffes and zebras and gorillas. African travelers, in narratives which are perhaps true, if not to their experience at least to their imaginations, delineate filthy negro villages, rivers swarming with hippopotami seventeen feet long, and forests alive with elephants ten or twelve feet high. They describe, in letter-press and wood-cuts, crocodiles and lizzards and earwigs and tsetse-flies, and half-caste Arabs trading in ivory and slaves with Zanzibar. And this is nearly all the knowledge which they give to us about large portions of Africa. Its effect is to keep alive in the popular mind a feeling of contempt for the plans which are devised to redeem a hundred millions of our fellow-men from barbarism.

In the meantime, however, some accurate and useful information is gradually leaking out. We have reason to expect that we shall, ere long, receive from Livingstone the knowledge of one of the most wonderful portions of the earth—the lacustrine region—wonderful for its natural scenery, its fertility, and its advantages as a seat of empire. We hear also from Western and Central Africa of a group of kingdoms, five or six in number, along the southern border of Sahara, some of which have been in existence for more than a thousand

years. They are well advanced in Mohammedan civilization. They contain wide districts of fertile and beautiful country, towns and villages, and vast fields of cotton, rice, and corn. The people weave cloth, they work in iron, they make agricultural instruments, domestic utensils, and weapons of war. They collect gold dust, they express palm oil, they gather ivory. They have schools, where the pupils are taught to read the Koran and to write in the Arabic character. The country is salubrious to the native races. Its surface rises into highlands, and is adorned with tropical beauty. In the Report submitted to-day, we have the description of a mountainous region, within one hundred and twenty miles of the Liberian Coast, where the air is cool and sweet; where walled towns are built upon an elevation of two thousand feet above the level of the sea; and where the fertility of the tropics is combined with the salubrity of the temperate zones. On the other hand, the districts south of these kingdoms are almost unknown, and they await the visit of intelligent explorers. We have a right to expect that the Liberians will take upon themselves the honors and labors of a thorough exploration of the regions now hidden from the civilized world.

One other golden opportunity will in due time present itself to Liberia—the creation of a new civilization. No empire, no historical race, worthy to be so described, has yet sprung up between the tropics. No illustrious man, Mohammed only excepted, has been born beneath the vertical sun. Nor has any form of Christian civilization arisen within the vast equatorial belt, extending through three continents and covering more than forty degrees of latitude. The redemption of Africa must in its progress originate new empires of power and mind. The type of civilization to be created must of necessity be altogether new and peculiar, because its constituent elements have never before been brought together. Its materials will be exclusively the African races. Its territorial seat will be the African equatorial zone. But its traditions, some of them grateful, some of them painful, will be taken from America; its form of government, let us hope, will be free; and its spiritual forces will be derived from the Christian religion. It would be difficult to foreshow the precise form which

this new civilization will assume. It will resemble our own, so far as our own ideas of liberty and law, our systems of government and jurisprudence and education, our habits and customs, and above all our Protestant faith, shall project themselves on New Africa. It will differ from our own so far as the social forces are controlled by climate, soil, dress, dwellings, diseases and the aspects of the seasons, by the absence of winter, by the perpetual glow of summer, by the causes which increase the supplies and lessen the wants of the people.

It is an auspicious sign that a Christian nation is rising at Liberia, to take a leading part in shaping the new civilization. The Greek colonists, in their migrations, carried with them the sacred fire which burned in the town-hall of their native city. From this they kindled a flame in the hall of their colonial city, and if extinguished, it was lighted again from its original source in the mother country. Let us hope that the sacred fire which has been taken from our own Christian sanctuaries may burn brightly on a thousand altars in the new land of promise beyond the seas. Are we over-sanguine when we anticipate the rise of a splendid intertropical civilization, instinct with the life drawn from the gospel?

Such is our answer to the question, Is our occupation gone? Our most arduous labors are only now just begun. Our first half century has been fruitful in noble results. Our second half century brings us into the presence of grave responsibilities and unending toils. We must strengthen Liberia, by sending thither every year hundreds of our colored citizens, picking our men as best we may; by encouraging agriculture, the common arts of life, and skilled labor; by fostering the institutions of religion, learning, and good government; by cherishing there and here a far-seeing solicitude with respect to the relations between the citizens of Liberia and their heathen neighbors;—and by committing all these immense interests to the care of that Great Being who has hitherto helped us. Nearly three thousand colored people to-day implore our Society to send them to Liberia. Twenty thousand free citizens in that young Republic await their coming. One hundred millions in Africa are perishing for the Bread of Life. Let us consider our duties. Let us be true to our obligations.