

AFRICA

AN ESSAY

BY

REV. ROBERT HAMILL NASSAU, M D.

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PREFACE.

These verses were written on the occasion of an invitation to address the Literary Societies of the Lawrenceville, N. J., Classical and Commercial High School (now, the John C. Green Foundation School) in March, 1872.

The present remarkable Movement toward the Light, in the West Africa Mission, of which my closing lines were almost prophetic, has induced me to bring them out from their forty-year seclusion.

R. H. NASSAU.

Philadelphia, Pa.

April, 1911.

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N.Y.

AFRICA.

PROLOGUE.

The Hunter seeks each foreign land,
The wild beasts' rage to dare;
Returns, with full well-trophied hand,
From mountain, field, and lair.

The Man of Science roams the world
Of flow'r and insect life;
Nor recks he, though his way be hurled
Through scenes with danger rife.

The Merchant sails the stormy sea,
Self-exiled but for gain,
And bears privation willingly,
Earth's treasures to obtain.

The Farmer, on the furrowed field,
Contented casts away,
Not doubting that the Harvest-yield
His Spring-time toil will pay.

These give their life, their time, their gold,
Hopeful e'en when deceived.
Loss warns with story truly told,
But never is believed.

But, when one goes to heathen land,
And gives, in moral strife,
His toil to loose from Error's hand,
And save immortal life,

His task is called Utopian;
His zeal, fanatic fire;
His death, a useless waste; his hope,
A puerile desire.

FIRST VIEW.

GEOGRAPHICAL.

Lo! Africa, an ancient land,
Of forests rich; of golden sand;
Of wondrous tales of mystery
Unwritten in pure History.
Long known in ages of the Past,
Unknown To-day, and locked up fast,
As if Hesperides were true,
Hiding its fruits from foreign view,
By gates of pestilence and fire
And jungles filled with monsters dire.



The Sahara. The broad Sahara stretches wide
On Northern coast from side to side;
Its arid wastes that lie between
Setting the rare oases' green.
And there in untamed freedom roam
Hyena, lion, fleet gazelle.
But human being makes no home
To break by love the dreary spell,
Save Tuareg, with his nature wild,
The Desert's scourge, a Desert-child.



South Africa. Far to the South, in Temp'rate zone,
Civilization's light has shown.
Now, where the Navigator's eye
First saw the Tabled Mountain's form
That gave a "good hope" to his heart
Seeking, through famine, war, and storm,
The path (to win his monarch's smile)

To Eastern sea and Indian isle,
A better hope for future days
Rises, like incense, from the lays
Of faith and truth, devoutly sung
To cultured tune by savage tongue
Of Zulu, Kaffir, Hottentot,
And Boschmen tribes, whose former lot
(Some e'en have said) was sunk so low,
Of God's mere Name they did not know.



Rivers and
Lakes.

Great Rivers pour the mighty flood
They drain from mountain, lake, and wood,
Coming from springs unseen, afar,
Of unexplored Interior.
The Nile, a solemn mystery,
As in the ages gone,
Flows in majestic loneliness
From Source as yet unknown.
That Source kings sought, past Egypt's soil,
Past Nubia, past Sennar.
And volumes writ, with various toil,
Of rumor near and far.
But, ever, like the pursuit vain,
A rainbow's promised gold to gain,
Whene'er they thought the end they'd won,
The endless river still flowed on.
But, now, perhaps, we dimly learn
Where lies the Nile's great fountain-urn,
Snow mountain streams that flow to make
The queenly *Nyanza's sea-like Lake.

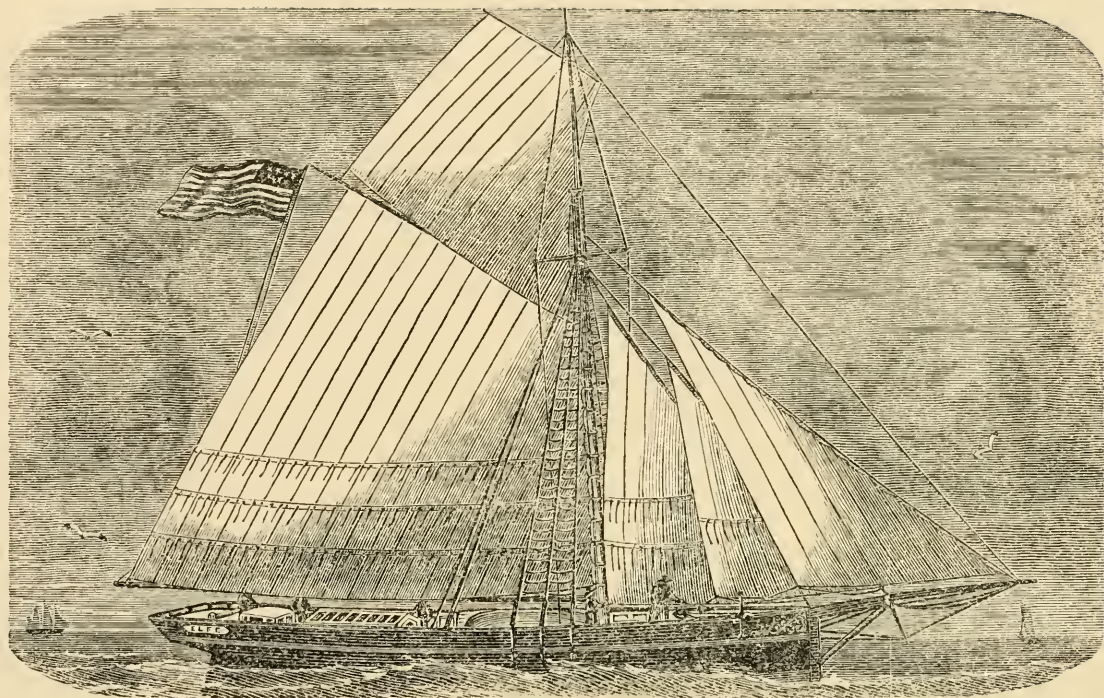
NOTE.—* The Victoria Nyanza, of Capt. Speke.

In sisterhood of Central Lakes
Pre-eminence the Nyanza takes.
And *Luta-Nzige, by her side,
A Consort-Prince in royal pride.
And, †Tanganyika, like a leech,
Winds southward far, as if to reach
Another outlet to the sea
(A project vain and vain endeavor)
Through Nyasa's stormy mountain-lake
And Zambesi's lordly river.

A lordly river 'tis, indeed,
Gath'ring its waters day by day
From mountain-side and flow'ry mead.
And, in its path, in giant play,
The earth devours with open jaw
(An African Niagara)
The thund'ring Cataract that raves
In ‡Mosi-o-a-tunya's waves.

From the same central fountain-heads,
Whence the Zambesi eastward spreads,
In westward course and torrent flow,
The blood-dyed wave of red Kongo
Marks where the Slave-Trade holds a seat,
(Its *kingdom* once) its last retreat
On Western Coast. That ruddy stain,
Washed from the soil by tropic rain,
In solid stream with billowy sweep,
Tints many a sea-mile on the deep.

NOTE.—* The Albert Nyanza, of Sir Saml. Baker.
† The Sea of Ujiji, of Capt. Burton.
‡ The Victoria Falls, of Livingstone.



THE "ELFE."

Adown that stream glide Floating Isles,
Torn from the marshy banks away,
In living green and flow'ry smiles:
For ocean-gods a grand bouquet!

There, too, Gaboon, (an ivory mart)
With fervor stirs the Christian heart.
Its tide, once marred by Slavery's trail,
Is hallowed by the “*Elfe's” sail.

Where graceful †Eyo's waters glide
To ‡Mbâdë's bluff, it laves
§Bolondo's feathery Palms, beside
Benita's mission-graves.

The Niger in its current strong,
From mountain recess of the Kong,
Its yellow tide with surf-beat song
Pours from her Delta-ed lips.
And, like a siren, with her toils,
She calls in pestilential breath,
From lagoons redolent of death,
At whose palm-banks with their rich oils,
Each foreign vessel sips.



Mountains. E'en there, beneath that Torrid sky,
Some Mountains lift their heads so high
They reach the line of constant snow
On lofty ||Kilima-njaro;

NOTE.—* A Mission Yacht.
† Native name of the Bonito river.
‡ Station of the Rev. George Paull.
§ Miss Nassau's School.
|| Of Dr. Krapf, of the Eastern Coast.



Vt-2

MBÂDE.

And on the Peak of Teneriffe,
Whose rosy brow the clouds surround,
To give the raptured eye relief,
Lest intense beauty sight should wound.
(As, once, to classic maid's desire,
Olympian Zeus, revealed, was fire.)
And, on the Peak of Kamerun,
That fronts Fernando Po,
Majestic Pillars of the "Gate"
Brave *Hanno first passed through.

Islands. There Islands dot the low-lined coast,
Some bearing names that History boast.
And one, great Madagascar's isle,
Of Christian Martyrs was, erewhile,
The grave. But, hosts have promptly sprung
From that dear martyr blood.
And, where once idol rites were sung,
Are praises to our God.

Forests. O'er all that Equatorial land,
Abundant Nature's lib'ral hand
Has scattered, with amazing power,
A nameless wealth of Tree and Flower.
In forest aisles of giant trees
The sunbeam's fervid lance
Scarce penetrates. From walls of green
Its broken fragments glance.
A leafy wall of changing green;
As great variety

NOTE.—* Admiral of the Carthaginian Exploring Fleet.

As in the Autumn tints are seen
Of our own forest tree.
And o'er this verdant robe there grasps
A drapery of vines.
It climbs, and twists, and trails, and clasps,
And 'round the mass entwines.
Within the shades, on rainbow wing,
The birds flit in and out.
Their notes discordant chorus ring
With antic monkeys' shout.



Unhealthful-
ness.

To view, the scene is beautiful,
And charms surpassingly;
But, Pestilence and Fear are there,
And Death lies treacherously.
Beneath those leaves an Asp can hide.
There's Poison in that flower.
There Python and the Boa glide;
And Leopards lurkingly abide
In recess dark by man's wayside;
There, the Gorilla's power.
And where the stilted Mangrove leaps
The margins of the streams,
The Fever-fiend in sun-light creeps,
Or stalks 'neath night's star-beams.

SECOND VIEW.

MORAL.

God's Earth is fair,
But Sin's dark roots
Have made it bear
Us bitter fruits.
Where Nature glows
Most rich and free
More darkly grows
Man's infamy.



Slave Trade. A Niobe, that country stands,
Her children sold to other lands,
And weeps the living death they die
In unrequited Slavery.
Weeps that the white man's stony heart
For dusky skins could find a mart;
Weeps her own greed of foreign pelf
That turned her sword against herself,
And, for the trinkets of a day,
Called to a chain her child from play.



Foreign Evils. Unchristian Commerce, a Pandora,
Lies at the mouth of ev'ry river,
And gifts seductive scatters far
That curse the given and the giver.

2

Intemperance, with fiery blast,
Like lava in its flow,
Melts with its touch the tribes that fast
Down to destruction go.

And foreign Vice of cultured air,
 With native vice entwines.
 Both worship pay, a shameless pair,
 At Lust's unholy shrines.



Polygamy. A parasite, Polygamy,
 Saps of its life the social tree.
 Its roots remorseless eat away
 What else would grow 'neath Love's mild
 sway.
 In ev'ry household act is seen
 Reflections of its hideous mien.
 A little girl you there shall see,
 Scarce graduate of her mother's knee,
 Bought by some aged reprobate,
 Whose frown brings fear, his smile^{er} her hate.
 Where Innocence secure should rest,
 Or Love-birds build their downy nest,
 Her rudely-wakened heart soon gives
 Covert for birds of filthy lives.
 Ere Childhood's years are passed away,
 She's taken by that old man grey,
 A new caprice, toy of a day,
 To learn a life with bitter lives
 Of household *slaves* mis-called his "wives."
 The new-found fav'rite uses power
 Despot for her little hour;
 (Her impudence her only wits;
 On marriage-troth slight fealty^{sets})
 Then sinks among the jealous crew,
 With common cause 'gainst fav'rite^{er} new.
 The slavery is still the same,

For her it's only changed its name.
But change of name brings occupation
Consistent with her lower station.
If Wifehood brought no Motherhood,
"Drawer of water, hewer of wood"
Is thence her lot. And, in that round,
The lonely drudge's life is bound.

Thus:—Day by day, the food to cook
For ev'ry lazy guest
Her lord receives on Friendship's claim
Or Gluttony's request.
And, often, like proud Pharaoh's slaves,
Without the straw to make the brick,
Though garden fail and tempest raves,
Though back be sore, and heart be sick.
If children gather 'round her knee,
Their care is all her own,
And burdens of their infancy,
Until their strength be grown.
And then the father claims them all,
To please his selfish wish;
The girls, in woman's lot to fall;
The boys, to hunt and fish.



Superstition, How strong is Superstition's hand!
Binding the heart with iron band.
In life, in death: for There or Here,
Bidding men quail in craven fear!

1

Not Love constrains those heathen minds.
The mystery of the Soul
To them is hid; it only finds
Demoniac control.

2

They see in ev'ry rock and tree
 Not God, but demon sign.
 The effort of their life will be
 To thwart the Power malign.

3

The Spirits live in Air and Earth,
 In beasts, and bird, and fish;
 In rags, and shells of meanest worth,
 And watch our ev'ry wish.

4

And, watching thus, perhaps may grant,
 If fav'rably inclined;
 Or, if the Spirit's chosen haunt
 The devotee can find.

5

And, here steps in the Sorceror bold,
 With claim of magic skill,
 And rites, to common eyes untold,
 A potent charm to fill.

6

That Fetish-charm, an amulet,
 Hung on the door, or dress, or tree;
 Or, planted where two ways are met,
 Shall guard health, life, and property.

7

Such reverence for Amulets
 An influence for evil sets
 On ev'ry act, from birth to death,
 And e'en beyond the dying breath.

Witchcraft. Around the dying and the dead
A shadow dark and grim is spread,
And acts of horrid name and tone
At Witchcraft's stern behest are done.

1

The sick man died. Quick, from his hut,
The voice of wailing rose,
As if Joy's door fore'er was shut,
And Grief's could never close.

2

The fatal news, by forest path,
Flies swift, or by the ocean's strand,
Before the avenger's well-known wrath
The villages in terror stand.

3

"Who killed this man?" said Sorcery.
"Who took his life away?
Except for poison Witchery,
Sure he were here to-day!"

4

The Sorcerer and his chosen few,
In secret dark conclave,
The dead man's history review,
With freeman and with slave.

5

This one (they said) once, long ago,
Had cursed the dead man's mother.
That one in anger struck a blow,
Or said, "You're not my brother!"

6

This woman never would obey,
 Nor did the food prepare.
 That enemy, crumbs stole away
 And clippings of the hair.

7

On such as this amazing ground
 One was condemned to die;
 Was seized, and chained, and guilty found,
 On charge of Witchery.

8

The crowd that stands about that slave
 Is witness, judge, and jury.
 She stands alone; accusers rave
 Around her in their fury.

9

The spear and club, thorns, fire, and knife
 Compel her to confess.
 Vain hope! to buy with perjured life
 Relief from Torture's stress.

10

With false confession, self-condemned,
 The witch is mocked in song.
 While vengeful heart and brutal hand
 Her agonies prolong.

11

Down to the margin of the sea
 Her struggling form they drew;
 With murderous haste and frantic glee,
 Sprang in a large canoe.

They paddled quick; a sharp knife gleams;
Her throat was o'er the side.
And, one by one, her mangled limbs
The reddened waves divide.

THIRD VIEW.

EVANGELISTIC.

From scenes and characters like these
Turn we to others that may please
The Christian heart;
And, of the good, for which you've prayed,
Recount some works in which I've played
An humble part.

Dotting that country's Western strand,
There Mission-Stations scattered stand,
Like beacon-lights to point the road
That leads the heathen up to God.



Teaching. Lo! where the Teacher's patient hand
Guides her informal School,
Unfolding to untutored band
The Book of heavenly rule.

2

Abroad, the light reflected glares;
While insects' strident hum,
And voice of birds, and scented airs,
Through th' open window come.

3

A light breeze fans the feverish cheek,
And lifts the rustling page.
Pray that a breath of Life Divine
Those young hearts may engage!

4

Their eager eyes the letters scan,
For knowledge quick, intent;
On pow'r that shall ennoble man,
Th' awakened mind is bent.

5

Not like a sheet of clear blank white,
On which the willing pen may write;
But, like a tablet foul, that mind
From Error first must be refined.

6

The entering Word its light can give
Those op'ning hearts into;
Break Vice's chain, bid Virtue live,
And Conscience bring to view.



Preaching. Or, follow where the Preacher goes
To villages around,
With news of Peace, where 'mid their woes
Sin's captives sad lie bound.

2

He passes through the village street,
(The unused infants flee)
And in the *Ikenga takes a seat
Where all can hear and see.

3

He tells them he's a messenger,
And asks their quiet ear.
Awhile the wondrous News he tells,
The crowd press close to hear.

4

The speech is strange, and some one laughs.
Up starts a patriarch's hand,
On women, chickens, children, dogs,
Strict silence to command!

NOTE.—* The public Reception-room.

5

Perhaps the Preacher lifts his voice
 In cheerful hymn of praise;
 The native ear is musical,
 And quick attention pays.

6

And, then, the Message is out-spread,
 The Story old and true,
 Befitting youth and hoary head,
 And ever fresh and new,

7

How God exists, and made each star;
 And us made pure and good;
 That, though we've wandered sad and far,
 His Love has near us stood,

8

And sent a Son, whose victor-strife
 With Sin and Fear and Death,
 Can save, and lead to better life
 Beyond this mortal breath.

9

The seed is sown. No doubt some seeds,
 Though buried long they lie,
 And sadly choked with tare and weeds,
 Shall bloom beyond the sky.



Itinerating. The Mission-boat is on the sea,
 Its errand there may various be;
 To transport food; the Word to preach;
 The sick a healthier spot to reach;
 A life to save; for letters, guests;
 Or, sent on exploration's quests.

1

Day's heat is past. The boat is launched.
 The sun sinks toward the west.
 Take in the oars! Put up the sail!
 With good wind we are blest!

2

The night is clear. Stars mark our way;
 Cassiopea's Chair,
 Orion, Taurus, (no North star)
 But the "Pointers" two are there.

3

The Utembâni's fair east wind
 The main-sail's sheet keeps taut;
 And, while it lasts, the crew may find
 Their sleep on box or thwart.

4

At last the night grew dark,
 And strong the south wind blew,
 The parted waves swept by our barque,
 As up that wind we flew.

5

But, now, this tack we've run enough;
 This long boom must come o'er.
 "Ready!" "About!" "Belay there!" "Luff!"
 Speed for the distant shore!

6

We're flying from the cruel sea;
 But yonder breakers' roar
 Speaks to our hearts more cruelly.
 Tack out to sea once more!

7

A time to try a heart though bold!
 A precious freight is there!
 Not self, nor crew, nor goods, nor gold.
 A child and woman fair!

8

These waves are fearful, and the rain
 Is pitiless and cold.
 So, tack toward shore, we'll take down sail,
 And waiting there shall ride the gale,
 If anchor-chain will hold.

9

Perhaps, when standing in to shore,
 We found a sheltered quiet bay;
 And, landing, sought the hut's rude door
 Above the cove's white sand that lay.

10

The missionary's name is known.
 He's welcomed at the fire,
 Where dripping clothes are hung to dry.
 By food and bed unskilled hands try
 To meet the confidence thus shown,
 And hearty trust inspire.

11

When 'cross the sea the morn up-rolled,
 The storm had passed away.
 Th' assembled villagers were told
 We could no longer stay.

12

The Word is preached; a prayer is made;
New native friendships sought;
Small gifts received, and debts repaid,
And fresh provisions bought.

13

Then, out again, the wave to try;
By sail to tack, or oar to ply.
With varying breeze swift miles to pass,
Or slow to creep a sea like glass.

14

Through all those sultry hours of day,
The captain, sea-sick, there would lie;
Or find from pain a slight surcease
By sleeping e'en 'neath noon-tide sky.
Seeking in troubled rest the ease
The storm-night's vigils took away.

15

That long day passed. Another night
Fell 'round us on the sea.
Here anchor. By to-morrow's noon,
We'll at our haven be.

A Communion
Sunday.

—◆—
This is the Church. On rough-made seat,
We'll claim awhile its cool retreat.

1

'Tis Sabbath-Day. Communion Week
Has brought, with bright and solemn hours,
The gath'ring companies who seek
The bamboo church's opened doors.

(27)

2

A motley crowd has hither rolled,
 To see the "Great Feast-day,"
 Of heathen, Christian, young and old,
 Attired in best array.

3

Some come to show the brilliant tags
 They've never worn before,
 Reserved through months of dirt and rags,
 And hid in secret store.

4

Some come to please the white man's eye.
 Each great and special friend
 Is hopeful that gifts by-and-by
 The foreign hand will send.

5

Some come to see how others dress;
 Or, travels to recount;
 To hear new converts Christ confess
 At Table or at Font.

6

The few look on that sacred scene
 With reverence and love;
 With knowledge what its symbols mean,
 And hopes this earth above.

7

Around the Table they have come,
 Once, wanderers in Sin.
 While trav'ling toward the Father's Home,
 This is their Wayside-Inn.

FOURTH VIEW.

TRIALS.

Sickness. Disease was on the air last night.
To-day's sun struck with pow'r.
The Mission plans don't work aright.
Depression rules the hour.

2

Then Sickness enters at the door.
(Unasked, a hungry guest.)
He's entered often there before,
And *life* his sole request.

3

Beneath his fever touch the brain
Throbs wildly. From the heart,
Through bounding artery and vein,
The rapid pulses start.

4

The light step heavy grows as lead,
And weary drop the hands
That strive to fill, in weakness still,
Th' excited will's commands.

5

Alternate cold, alternate heat,
The poor weak body racks;
While thought runs on, with pinion fleet,
O'er infinite long tracks.

6

The thoughts of home, of fear, of love,
Of work, of plan, of care.
The busy brain has strength above
The strength to do or dare.

Death.

Some, when the storm of Fever flew,
Quick as tornado blast,
Like reeds, low bowed, awhile it blew,
And rose when it was past.

2

But, some rise not. The pliant reed
Had borne blasts oft and well.
This blew too fierce. The bruised reed
Lay broken where it fell.

3

Tornado passed. Enough to know
That Visitor is gone;
Nor dare to call him robber, though
He went not out alone!

4

Take up the little he has left.
It *looks* like kindred clay.
They say that this is Death. The dead
Must needs be put away.

5

It is *not* death. *We* do not die.
Dust does. So, tenderly,
We'll bear this precious dust to lie
Where others' grave-mounds be.



A Cemetery.

'Tis chosen well, that little yard
Of missionary graves,
Just near the house they liked on earth,
And by the ocean's waves.



BENITA CEMETERY.

2

The forest trees are undisturbed
 By axe or Art's curt style,
 Save where a winding path pursues
 Nature's own wooded aisle.

3

The vines may clamber unrestrained,
 And light fall cheerily
 O'er grass and bush, where birds untamed
 Still twitter merrily.

4

But Art its added hand has set
 (Not taken aught away)
 Where Love has sought, on marble fair,
 To save from Time's decay
 Dear names whose lives and mem'ries rare
 We can not willingly forget.

5

There Infancy was laid to rest,
 And ⁽¹⁾ Manhood in his strength,
 And patient ⁽²⁾ Womanhood. How blest,
 To reach their home at length!

6

On a mound where a beautiful ⁽³⁾ infant's
 form sleeps,
 Recumbent, a lamb fit companionship keeps,
 With a name and with dates; but the stone's
 mute lips tell
 No tale save the legend that says, "It is
 well."

NOTE.—(1) Rev. S. Reutlinger.
 (2) Mrs. Menaul.
 (3) George Paull Nassau.

Yet, though those lips so silent are,
 Another's record's cherished there,
 Whose vivid life-work there was found,
 Whose grave is on Corisco's ground.
 Mound, stone, and name, remind to all
 Benita's pioneer, ⁽¹⁾ George Paull.

There too, beneath the fervid sky,
 Where sunbeams blaze by day;
 Or, when the moon has mounted high,
 Cool mystic shadows play;
 Where stars so silently look down,
 Through vistas of the night,
 From Southern Cross and Southern Crown,
 On marble cold and white,
 The light of sun and moon and star
 On tablet-sculptured Cross rests calm,
 Benita's brave-borne cross of ⁽²⁾ her
 Who wears Benita's Crown and Palm.

NOTE.—(1) Rev. George Paull.
 (2) Mrs. Mary C. Nassau

EPILOGUE.

1

Light for the Future! By river, o'er hill,
The promise of good each year shall fulfill,
"We stretch out the hand!" shall Africa sing,
Salvation to crave, and tribute to bring.

2

(¹) "Spero meliora!" hear Commerce proclaim.
We "better things" trust through a Crucified
Name,
When nevermore purchased thy children
shall be,
And thy harvests respond to the toil of the
free.

3

Free! from the chains superstition has
bound!
Free! from the stains which thy Vices have
found!
Free! from the guilt of the innocent blood!
Free! from the rags thou hast worshiped
as God!

4

Light for the Future! o'er mountain and dale!
Light for the Future! by forge and by rail!
Light for the Future! through Church and
through State!
Light for the Future! where ransomed ones
wait!

NOTE.—(1) Motto of the British-African Steam Navigation Co.

L'ENVOI.

Night's lamps burn low. My task is writ.

There's ashes on the hearth.

Accept the song, and reckon it

Just at its slightest worth.

As guests of mine, some day retrace

The Ocean path I've come,

A stranger here. You'll find a place

In Africa, my home.

MARCH 1872.