

Emigration to Liberia. Report of the Standing committee on emigration of the Board of directors of the American colonization society, unanimously adopted January 20, 1885.

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The times are changed! Wondrous events combine to turn the world's thought at this moment to the "Dark Continent." The Congo is drawing to itself the activities of nations as never before since the pyramids were built.

As a spider builds his web, beginning with a single thread here and there, attaching the ends to various objects, so does a power in mankind's history weave the texture of human vicissitude. It is a marvelous chapter in this human story which has been written in America. Slaves torn from home and kindred were forced into this country by cruel European greed. From these slaves, then, the most miserable, have sprung nearly seven millions of the colored race, long held here in bondage, but at the same time brought into contact with Christian civilization, finally emancipated, enfranchised, and beginning to be educated. This is one thread.

About seventy years ago a few philanthropists, with far-seeing vision, organized for the purpose of creating a home on the Western coast of Africa for such of these people as could and would return to the Fatherland. The Republic of Liberia has been the result. There is now a focus of light from which the rays may spread across the whole breadth of that long darkness. This is another thread.

England, the same Power that so long winked at "the middle passage" while the forefathers were dragged across the seas and bound in chains in her colonies here, is to-day hovering on the northwestern borders of the infant nation, having within two years past torn from its grasp a large territory, and, if all signs do not fail, is preparing to repeat the act on the southeast borders. Here is a strip of country ready for occupation, and inviting immigrants to come and possess the virgin soil, with all the richness of its productions. This is another thread.

Social and political equality, however fair in name and theory, is difficult in practice as between races so distinct as African and Caucasian. Twenty years of trial here has been sufficient to convince large numbers of the colored people who at first spurned the idea of going to Africa that their proper home is there, and there the fitting field for working out their destiny. This is another thread.

And so the loom of Providence weaves on! Amazing threads they all are, but the pattern is from an Omnipotent hand!

Here stands the old Colonization Society alive to-day, while many thought it dead, and as yet about the only ear to listen at the telephone call and gather up the cry which comes from all parts of the land where these African people dwell; and the cry is louder and more intense and multitudinous month by month. Consider the appeals which roll in upon the Society almost every day in proof of the singular truth. The last month illustrates what has been going on for some time past, but now apparently there earnestly than ever:

December 1st, 1884, Landsford, S. C., one of them writes: Tell us how to get to Liberia—to Africa; our people are sick and tired of this country, and want to go home; 500 men and women of whom I am the teacher are ready to go at once.

December 8th, 1884, Denison, Texas, another writes: I wrote you about seven years ago, and received a few papers. The mass of our people are poorer than they were eight years ago. We want now to go to Africa. What is the latest news? Can you tell us all about it? What can you do for sending us? How and when can we get there, and what are the conditions? All early answer will confer a favor “on a great crowd of us.”

We do not give the exact language, but the substance.

December 12th, 1884, from the same place, another writes: A great many of us are making preparations to go to Liberia, and we want direct information in regard to the whole affair. He asks these questions:

1st. How many families must we collect before we can be sent?

2d. Can we go on shipboard at Galveston?

3d. Do we send any money, and to whom?

The same day, Darlington, S. C., J. P. Brockenton, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, of more than 1,000 members, 48 years old, with wife and children, writes, applying for passage to Liberia. From his own accounts he must be an important man. He is President of the South Carolina State Baptist Convention, Moderator of the District Association, Trustee of the free School Board of Darlington County, and Life Director of the Home Mission Society. He wants to go to Africa, he says—

1st. Because I want to continue my good work for the Master.

2d. Because I think my Christian influence is more needed there than here.

3d. Because the harvest in Africa is great, but the laborers are few.

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4th. Because my children are trained teachers or mechanics, and as such can assist in building up our Fatherland.

5th. Because my condition as a *man* will be better established and my work as a *minister* better appreciated.

Pretty sound and sensible reasons. He says he is poor, and if the Society can aid him he will be thankful.

December 21st, 1884, Waco, Texas, a correspondent, who is a superintendent, writes: We have organized a Bureau of Home and Foreign Missions in our Baptist State Convention. [The Baptists appear to be plentiful.] They are collecting money to send two messengers to Liberia to obtain information. He is now making up a colony to leave for Liberia in 1886. It will be from 1,500 to 2,000 strong. If they can get sufficient information from the American Colonization Society they will not send the two messengers. He says we may see what they are doing in the South to get to the Fatherland. He wants all kinds of information about the matter. He says they are raising about \$500 per month; that it costs the Society \$100 per head to take them out and support them for six months. "I mean business. If we come to you 2,000 strong, can't you make it less than that? Help us all you can, and let me know at once how many can go in one ship at a time."

December 24th, 1884, one writes again from Denison, Texas: There are 62 already in our company. What are your lowest terms? We have 35 farmers, 4 school-teachers, 1 cabinet-maker, 6 ministers, 4 hotel and steamboat cooks, 2 brick-makers, 4 blacksmiths, 4 carpenters, 2 well-diggers, and a good many laborers. Please don't get impatient at our asking questions, for we want to be all right when we get to the ship.

December 27th, 1884, Homer, Louisiana, another writes, saying he seeks a home for a poor black man; he wants to know all about Liberia; he wants to get where he can be free; says he is not free here by a long ways. What will it take to put me and my wife over?

December 31st, 1884, from Darlington, S. C., again from our friend Brockenton, who now signs himself Secretary of the Club. He acknowledges receipt of books, papers, &c. Says he can't be ready to go till October; that a colony will go with him. He gives quite a description of the *personnel* of his colony; says they expect to be organized into a church before sailing. He predicts great good from this company. They are in all 43 persons, with more to be added.

The same day, from Lynchburg, S. C., a bright man writes of the progress the colored people are making there and elsewhere in the South for emigration. He says there is the greatest unrest among them ever known. Large numbers are going to the West, but the best portion are preparing to make their way to Liberia. The Clarendon 4 Club wants information, and he writes at their request. He says they will plant large crops of cotton, so as to raise money in the fall. He is Secretary of the Clarendon and Williamsburg Clubs. He is without means to travel as he wishes, to stimulate the people; and in view of this, wants circulars and documents from us to spread ABROAD.

The same day, from Waco, Texas, another writes that the people of his county wish to send him to Liberia to bring back a report of the land. He wants to know if he can go. He says the condition of his people is deplorable; that he learns that a whole county of them are going to Kansas; that hundreds are coming from North Carolina to Arkansas—out of the pan, into the fire. What do horses and cows cost in Liberia? Could you send over my piano? My house is worth \$1,000; I was offered \$600 for it. He wants to sell and get away; says himself and wife are at our service if we can make any use of them.

January 1st, 1885, Chambersburg, Pa., a colored woman writes: We are now really preparing to leave this country. She has lost a former letter, and wants to hear again; says there are eight of them ready to go in May. "Will they be crowded out?" "We have been a long time getting ready, but the Spirit says, Go! and we must abide God's will." Several other families wish to go, especially one that comes from Alabama, where times are hard for colored people.

January 3d, 1885, Kansas City, Mo., a prudent man writes: Would I be safe to start for Liberia with \$100 and five children? A great many people here would be glad to go, but they have no information. I am a kalsominer by trade. Would I be of any use when I get there?

The same day, from Denison, Texas, a sharp man writes, asking for full information about emigration to Liberia. He and several others wish to go there. He says they "are very well equipped, with wealth and literature enough to get there and straighten up and straighten out. Write soon, and let us know."

January 7th, 1885, Forestville, N. C., another writes that he is making preparation to go to Liberia. He sees so many colored people awaking to the project of going, because of their oppressions in this country. "We want to reach Africa, the home of the free. Is there any chance for me?"

Such is the burden of the cry from all quarters of the land. What does it mean? Our Society has absolutely done nothing to awaken this intense longing for Africa among the colored people. No means have been employed by us to stir up so deep and general a feeling, unless our circulars and documents for the spread of information may have contributed to it; otherwise, not a whisper from us has been heard. The cry is spontaneous. One of the correspondents above 5 cited seems to have expressed the secret—"The Spirit says, Go!" What other conclusion can we reach? God's hand is in it, weaving the web of His Providence for Africa.

But we would not just now encourage a wholesale exodus. The vast preparation must no doubt be gradual, as all great things are. In the ancient exodus *from* Africa the people were held for forty years in the wilderness prior to their possession of the Promised Land. The first emigrants to Liberia were sent by this Society in 1820, and we have not failed to send some each year since. The last company of forty-seven was sent last October—in all nearly 16,000 persons, exclusive of 5,722 recaptured Africans—at the cost of \$3,000,000—the munificent gift of American Christian philanthropy. At the present time there are on the soil of Liberia about 25,000 souls, comprising the American immigrants and their children, with the recaptured Africans who have settled there, and one million of the native population, enjoying the advantages of the Republic and amenable to its laws, while remoter tribes are pressing down towards the infant Republic as to a centre of brighter hope. There is a coast-line of 500 miles—extending indefinitely inland. This was recently diminished 40 miles by the arbitrary power of England; and about the same extent is coming into dispute on the southeast. It is believed that Liberia could now absorb and assimilate 10,000 persons, especially immigrants from the mother Republic versed in the customs, manners, and laws of a Republican Christian Government. If this population could be transferred to Liberia in the next two years it would probably settle the boundary question now in dispute, besides being of incalculable advantage in many other ways.

They would hardly be missed among us out of a colored population rapidly multiplying, and which by natural increase has nearly doubled during the last score of years, but immense good might flow through them to Liberia and the whole continent.

That many are waking up to this idea, and are ready to leave this country for the land of their forefathers, is evinced, as we have seen, from the constantly-increasing applications for aid to this end. These come in upon us from all quarters and through all channels—through the

correspondence of private individuals, members and officers of churches, clubs, and various organizations, and even through Government Departments and through the Christian agencies of our great commercial cities.

The one fact we would emphasize is this: The only hope of lifting Africa up to continental equality and prominence lies not merely in National diplomacy and the jealousy of States, nor in the greed of misers, nor in the craft of unprincipled traders and sharpers who pour out upon the soil, which their touch pollutes, all the vices and wrongs and refuse of modern civilization, but it is mainly in the Christian colony, which is in some sense a Christian mission among stranger tribes of men. This is the voice of history—certainly of modern history. America was redeemed at last by the Christian pilgrims of Europe, who imbued its growing life with the spirit of Christian civilization, and stamped upon its institutions the impress of morality and of Christian faith. Such a power as this is alone adequate to build another Republic like our own from the Atlantic to the Indian Oceans.

It is a marvelous fact that now, simultaneously with the opening of that Continent, such a general desire among our colored people to go to it should spring up so intensely. What a wonderful thread this is in the stupendous web of Providence! And into our hands the grand mission of opening Africa to the splendid realizations of the future is in a very special sense committed, since we are the only Nation on the face of the earth outside of Africa herself that has the fitting material in our colored population; and all signs point to our duty in this respect. The times are ripe for a powerful onward movement in this direction. The two thrilling reports rendered by the Committee on Emigration—one of a year ago and one of the year preceding—were as a bugle blast, calling mankind to action. No form of words could be more eloquent or piercing than the language of those reports. They state the case to the American people with all the cogency of logic, the fire of poetry, and the pathos almost of inspiration. They have been widely circulated; and this seed, so scattered, may yield—Heaven grant it—a rich and plentiful harvest.

But at the opening of another year in the history of this Society we stand confronted with one great necessity, one specific work, which ought to be immediately taken up and accomplished; this is, to put 10,000 of our choicest colored population into Liberia as soon as it is found to be practicable. It will cost a million dollars!

What are our resources—what our means of doing it? The abundance of our own country, the thousands and millions of money in the hands of prosperous capitalists and churchmen, and the everplethoric Treasury of the Government itself. But how shall we open these mighty coffers? What key can unlock our way to the hoarded treasure? We have tried commissioned agents, but the effort has been practically a failure. What, then, is left us?

1. Personal appeals to well-known rich philanthropists.
2. Concise, comprehensive, pointed, specific appeals through the religious and secular press of the country.
3. The same kind of appeal to the Christian clergy, and through them to the entire membership of the churches.
4. An earnest, temperate, emphatic appeal to Congress and the Government. They have loaned a million dollars to the New Orleans 7 Exposition. Great as that is or ought to be, is it any more; on the welfare of mankind than it would be for the same sum to secure the future of the daughter Republic, and through her the Christian civilization of the entire Continent? This would indeed be a glorious consummation! Everything calls for it—everything incites to it. A million dollars in two years for the redemption of that vast territory with its hundred and fifty or two hundred millions of people—what a splendid golden thread would this be in the mighty loom of Providence; in this Divine pattern of human destiny; this august design of the Infinite Reason; this lofty work of the hands of the Eternal!

B. SUNDERLAND,

CHARLES C. NOTT,

JAMES SAUL,

Committee.

Washington, D. C., *January 20 th*, 1885.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF 1884.

The Committee on Emigration respectfully report: That the lapse of a year has made no change in the outlook of the American Colonization Society.

We face the same old responsibilities. Men are appealing to us for passage to Liberia; and every ship from Liberia brings to us the prayer, "Send out more emigrants." Why do we not heed these appeals wrung from human hearts by dire necessities too sad for words? Why? Because another cry for help is not heeded—a long, earnest, almost despairing cry—the vain cry of this Society to American Christians for their prayers and their money in this supreme hour of our need. We say to the African exiles among us: "Suppress your noble aspirations; suffer and die where you are, and transmit to your children woes that have cursed and crushed their fathers." We say to poor Liberia: "We cannot

aid you. Perish unbefriended; let the light of your civilization and your Christianity go out forever." And we are compelled to say all this because there are no hearts in Christian America to respond to our pleadings for the saddest, the most touching, and yet the most promising missionary venture of this century.

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We tell the philanthropists and Christians of this land that in our day no holier cry for help has echoed through the night of human misery than the cry of the oppressed and outraged Negro. Last year the needs of our Society were urgent. We feel that they are more urgent to-day. The rapacity of England's commercial greed is destroying the Republic of Liberia. Some forty miles of her seaboard have been taken from her, and a larger and still more valuable part is threatened with speedy seizure by the same Power. And thus all that has been done on that Continent by our benevolence will soon be swallowed up. The African Republic will be a thing of the past—will live in history only as a dark reproach to American Christianity. There must be a revival of interest in this great cause—an awakened sense of obligation to the despised and unrewarded people whose right hands have helped to rear the colossal fabric of our material prosperity. The despondent heart of Liberia must be cheered by our sympathy. She must be strengthened by our benevolence. A strong public sentiment here must protest against the encroachments of England and arouse our own Government to a more bold and imperative policy in regard to the rights of the Nation's wards on the coast of Africa.

If Christian men shall continue to regard tills cause with the old cruel indifference, it will soon be *too late* to help our African fellow-citizens to free and happy homes in their Fatherland; *too late* to discharge our solemn obligations to the people we have already sent there, and *too late* to aid the grand enterprise of love for which tills old Society has lived and worked for sixty-seven years.

Your Committee therefore renew the recommendation of the last report: "That this great cause be brought before the people and pressed upon their attention with renewed zeal by every possible agency within the reach of the Society's means."

THOMAS G. ADDISON, *Chairman*.

[???] *Contributions may be sent to Mr. William Coppinger, Secretary and Treasurer of the American Colonization Society, Washington, D. C.*