

The Republic of Liberia

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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HON. JOSEPH J. ROBERTS, President of Liberia College and the first President of the Republic of Liberia, 1847–1855, AT THE FIFTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE American Colonization Society, HELD IN Washington, D. C., January 19, 1869.

WASHINGTON, D. C. COLONIZATION SOCIETY BUILDING, CORNER PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE AND FOUR-AND-A-HALF STREET.

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Resolution of the Board of Directors of the American Colonization Society, January 20, 1869.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be given to Ex-President Roberts for his very interesting and valuable address last evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

ADDRESS OF HON. JOSEPH J. ROBERTS, EX-PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA.

Mr. President: An annual meeting of the American Colonization Society can never fail, I presume, to be an occasion of deep interest to the friends of an enterprise so eminently philanthropic in all its purposes, and particularly grand in its design to introduce the blessings of civilization and Christianity into the waste places of long-neglected and deeply-degraded Africa. On these

occasions, while the attention of the managers of the affairs of the Society is specially drawn to a review of the labors and results of the year immediately preceding, and to the adoption of additional measures deemed desirable or necessary to the further prosecution of the undertaking, the minds of its patrons instinctively revert to the great objects originally contemplated by the enterprise, and a review of the progress that has been made in their definite accomplishment. And in turning their thoughts to these on the present occasion, I think there can be no question that, notwithstanding the stern opposition encountered from certain quarters, in consequence of a total misapprehension of the true policy and objects of the Christian promoters of African Colonization, and the embarrassments and discouragements which have occasionally arisen from other causes during the progress of the enterprise, the friends of the cause have great reason to-day for congratulation and thankfulness at the wonderful success which has so far attended their efforts—a success, I dare say, far beyond the most sanguine expectation of those distinguished philanthropists who first gave form and impulse to a scheme which, though surrounded by many difficulties and 4 apprehensions, they hoped and believed would, under Divine Providence, eventuate in good and great results to a people they earnestly desired to benefit.

The scheme of African Colonization is the offspring of a great Christian idea, which more than half a century ago fixed itself in the minds of Drs. Finley and Thornton, Gen. Charles Fenton Mercer, Elias B. Caldwell, Francis S. Key, and other kindred spirits, who deeply deplored the oppression to which the people of color were subjected in this country, and feeling profoundly impressed with the importance of devising some plan by which the condition of a part of this people might be immediately and radically changed, and in such a way as to create a reflex influence which would produce a salutary effect upon—as then existed—the abominable institution of American slavery. Hence the organization of the American Colonization Society, which you, Mr. President, and the Board of Directors here present to-day, represent. Those pure and disinterested men, with a wise forethought which penetrated far into the future, contemplated with earnest solicitude the accomplishment of designs in respect to Africa, no less gigantic in their proportions than important in their results; and it is not surprising that irresolute minds questioned the ability of any mere private association to fulfill so great an undertaking.

The programme of the founders of the American Colonization Society, as I have always understood it, and which, as far as I know, has not been departed from, was: 1st. To establish on the shores of Africa an asylum where such of her scattered children, as might choose to avail themselves of it, would find a free and happy home; and in this connection they would fairly test the capacity of the African for self-government and the maintenance of free political institutions. 2d. That through the instrumentality of a colony thus established, composed of men who had themselves been the victims of cruel servitude, additional facilities would be afforded for the extirpation of the slave

trade, then rampant, with all its attendant horrors, at nearly every prominent point along that Western Coast. 3d. By means of Christian settlements, in the midst of that barbarous people, to introduce the blessings of civilization and Christianity among the heathen tribes of that degraded land.

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These were grand conceptions, embracing nothing less than the founding of an empire with negro nationality, and the redemption of a continent from pagan superstition and idolatry. Of course, a work of such magnitude required large material resources and suitable men as emigrants, to conduct it in a manner promising successful results. We can, therefore, readily imagine the serious misgivings which must have weighed heavily on the minds of those good men, when they engaged in an enterprise necessarily involving, in all its details, so many apprehensions as to the future. But they were men of great faith and energy, fully imbued with the spirit of their mission in behalf of humanity and religion, and therefore hesitated not to commit the success of their undertaking to the direction and support of an all-wise Providence.

But it is not my purpose on this occasion to trace the history of the American Colonization Society, either in regard to the opposition it has encountered, or the sympathy and care by which it has been fostered and sustained during its long years of agency in promoting the civil, social, and religious interests of Africa. The work of colonizing a people, under the most favorable auspices, has always been attended with many difficulties and discouragements; and in the case of this Society, dependent entirely upon voluntary, individual contributions for the means of prosecuting its enterprise, and also considering the remoteness of the country to which its efforts were directed, it could not be otherwise than that its progress in colonizing would be slow and peculiarly difficult. Nevertheless, with unfaltering perseverance, the Society has pursued its course, and has already effected an amount of good that entitles it to the confidence and generous support of the Christian public. And yet, even now it is sometimes asked: What has African Colonization accomplished? Have the labors, the sacrifices, and the means which have been expended produced such results as should satisfy the public mind of its practical utility and probable ultimate success? These questions, to be sure, may not be regarded as impertinent on the part of those who are really ignorant of the history of African Colonization, and of what has actually been accomplished under the auspices of the American Colonization Society. And as these questions 6 have been put to me more than once during my present visit to the United States, I don't know that I can do better than to avail myself of this occasion to present a brief statement of the rise and progress of Liberia under the auspices of this Society, and then I shall be content to allow those, who seem to be in doubt as to the utility of African Colonization, to settle the question in their own minds as to whether the Colonization enterprise is entitled to their confidence and support or not.

As soon as practicable after the formal organization of the American Colonization Society, and the necessary preliminary arrangements towards planting a Colony in Western Africa had been concluded, steps were taken for sending forward the first company of emigrants to organize a new civil society on that distant, barbarous coast. Therefore, early in the year 1820, eighty-six persons, from the States of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and New York, assembled in the city of New York for the purpose of embarking upon this new and perilous enterprise. It was a profoundly anxious time, no less with the patrons of the Society than with the emigrants. The friends of the Society were deeply concerned in regard to the suitability of the men about to be employed in so great an undertaking, and where so much depended upon the adaptability of the materials thus engaged for the foundation of a new civil and political superstructure. Doubtless their hopes and their fears were about equally balanced. On the part of the emigrants, as often related to me by Rev. Elijah Johnson, the most prominent individual of the company, their feelings were greatly excited by conflicting emotions, which swayed to and fro between the present and the future. They were about severing all the ties of early associations, and many of them leaving comfortable homes for a far-off land, wholly unbroken by civilization and presenting but few attractions—other than liberty dwelt there. They, therefore, resolved to free a country which repudiated their manhood and closed against them every avenue to political preferment, and with their lives in their hands they determined to brave not only the perils of the sea, but every other danger and inconvenience consequent upon settling in a new and heathen country, where they might establish for themselves and their children, and peradventure for future generations, a home, under governmental institutions, free from all the trammels of unequal law and unholy prejudices. These were true men, stout of heart and firm of purpose, and in the sequel proved themselves equal to the responsibilities they had assumed, and fulfilled the most sanguine expectations of their patrons and friends.

Our Christian pioneers—like the Pilgrim Fathers just two hundred years before, when about to embark from Delft Haven in search of a more desirable home in the new world—by solemn and appropriate religious services, committed themselves and their cause to the protecting care of Almighty God; and, having completed all their arrangements for the voyage, sailed from New York on board the good ship “Elizabeth,” on the 6th day of February, 1820, and in due time were landed on the coast of Africa at the British colony of Sierra Leone. For obvious reasons, it was not contemplated to incorporate these emigrants with the inhabitants of this British colony; and, therefore, early measures were taken to remove them to Sherbro Island, about one hundred and twenty miles south of Sierra Leone, where it was proposed to purchase lands from the native chiefs and organize a settlement, with the view of carrying out the original plans of the Society. This location, however, proved to be exceedingly insalubrious, and in a short time many of the settlers were prostrated by disease. Having encountered here many difficulties and hardships, and finding their numbers greatly reduced by death, the place was abandoned and the survivors removed to Fourah Bay, within

the precincts of Sierra Leone. This first attempt was, of course, discouraging, but the emigrants faltered not in their purpose; and being joined at Fourah Bay, in March, 1822, by another company of pioneers, a second effort was determined upon at Cape Mesurado, which had, in the meantime, been selected and purchased by Captain Stockton and Doctor Ayres—a location much more commanding and eligible than the first, and I have often thought the very place of all others on that coast designed by Providence as the starting point of our settlers. And in January, 1822, the colonists landed and occupied a little island, comprising about three acres of land, near the entrance of the Mesurado river. This island, during its occupancy by 8 the colonists, was the scene of many stirring incidents, and several, as appeared to the colonists, providential deliverances; wherefore, in commemoration of these, it bears the name of “Providence Island.”

They had been but a short time on this island, when the foreign slave dealers, who were then conducting a large business in slaves at the Cape, became convinced of the danger to which their trade was exposed through the influence of the colonists, incited the natives to hostilities against the new comers; and, without any previous intimation, they found themselves cut off from all communication with the main land, whence they drew their only supply of fresh water. In this emergency they were providentially relieved by the kindness of a friendly chief, who conveyed to them stealthily at night a sufficient quantity of water to supply their pressing demands; and this he continued for several weeks. At this critical juncture their public warehouse, with nearly all their stores of provisions and merchandise, was consumed by fire, and their utter ruin seemed now inevitable. But a remarkable incident, occurring a few days after, greatly contributed to their relief, and, possibly, saved the little settlement from total destruction. A Spanish slave schooner, in charge of an English prize crew, bound to Sierra Leone, was unaccountably stranded in the harbor but a short distance from the island; and the commanding officer, having saved a large portion of the ship's stores, readily supplied the colonists with several articles pressingly needed to replenish their almost exhausted means of subsistence.

After a while, through the intervention of a friendly chief, a partial reconciliation with the natives was effected, and the colonists availed themselves of the opportunity, April 25th, to gain a lodgment on Cape Mesurado, where they placed themselves as speedily as possible in the best state of defence that their means would allow. The natives, however, urged on by the slavers, appeared still threatening in their demeanor. The Society's agents, under the conflicting aspect of things, became hopelessly discouraged, and proposed the abandonment of the enterprise, and the return of the emigrants to the United States. But our old hero, Elijah Johnson, was not so moved, and, remembering something of the history of the difficulties and hardships of the early settlers of Plymouth and Jamestown, and feeling that by perseverance and patient endurance they also might succeed, answered: “No; I have been two years searching for a home in Africa, and I have found it,

and I shall stay here." In this determination the whole company, as though moved by some divine impulse, heartily concurred. Nevertheless, their situation was extremely perilous, the natives had again suspended all intercourse with them; leaving them in a painful state of apprehension and suspense. They knew, however, in whom they trusted, and upon whose strength they might rely. The arrival in the harbor, pending this uncertainty, of a British man-of-war was particularly opportune, and doubtless delayed an attack upon the settlement which, as was afterwards learned, had been concerted. The commander had an interview with the chiefs, and strongly remonstrated against their course towards the settlers. They listened sullenly, and replied evasively. The commander then tendered to the colonists a small force of marines to aid in their defence in case of need, and at the same time suggested the cession of a few feet of ground on which to erect a British flag during his sojourn; but this, Elijah Johnson, then in charge of the colony, declined for the reason, as he stated, "that it might cost more to pull down that flag than to whip the natives." However, the services of the marines were not brought into requisition. Thus matters continued, when, on the 9th of August, the hearts of the settlers were cheered by the arrival of another small company of emigrants with the intrepid and self-sacrificing Jehudi Ashmun, who entered immediately on the duties of his office as agent of the American Colonization Society. Mr. Ashmun, having carefully surveyed the situation, pushed forward with great energy the defences of the settlement, and, in the meantime, exerted every possible effort to reconcile the natives. The slavers, however, becoming more intent upon the purpose of ridding themselves of neighbors so inimical to their traffic, assembled a council of chiefs, and, by most inhuman artifices, so excited their cupidity as to induce King George, chief king of the Dey tribe, to declare his intention of sacking and burning the settlement.

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Intelligence of this declaration, and of the preparations being made for carrying it into effect, reached the settlers through a friendly native, who, at great personal hazard, found the means of advising them from time to time of what was going on. Our brave pioneers, with breathless anxiety, awaited the impending struggle, when, at early dawn, on the morning of the 11th of November, about eight hundred warriors, with deafening whoops, fell upon them with great fury. They were met, however, with steady firmness, and repulsed with considerable loss. The colonists again breathed freely in the hope that their most serious troubles were now fully ended. But not so. King George, with great secrecy, collected another and greatly augmented force, intending to surprise the settlement on all sides, and thus make the settlers an easy prey. Happily for them, their good fortune in this extremity failed them not. Bob Grey, an influential chief of Grand Bassa, whom King George had attempted to enlist in his second attack, and who knew all his plans, conveyed to Mr. Ashmun timely information of all George's arrangements, and even named the day on which the attack would likely be made. Now, another very serious embarrassment presented itself. In the last fight the settlers had expended a large portion of their ammunition, especially powder; and

how and where to obtain an additional supply of this needed article were questions of the deepest concern. No trading vessel had visited the harbor for some time; and despair began to dispel hope, when relief came in a very remarkable manner. During night, while an English trading vessel was passing the Cape, the attention of the master was attracted by frequent reports of musketry on shore, which seemed to him singular at so late an hour, and wishing to learn the cause, turned and entered the harbor; and in the morning ascertained that the natives had been indulging through the night a grand war dance—usual on occasions when preparing for war. Unobserved by the natives, a sufficient supply of powder was obtained from this vessel.

The dreaded time, as advised by Bob Grey, having arrived, sure enough, during the night of the 1st of December, 1822, the native troops occupied positions on three sides of the settlement, as they supposed, unobserved; and in the gray of morning 11 rushed, like so many demons, upon the almost defenceless stockade. But the colonists, with unflinching courage, notwithstanding the fearful odds against them, defended themselves bravely; and after a desperate conflict of several hours, found themselves again wonderfully preserved. I say wonderfully, because on this occasion the colonists seem to have exerted superhuman strength and powers of endurance, for there were only thirtyfive effective men opposed to a host of not less than fifteen hundred native troops. Some of the soul-stirring incidents and acts of real heroism on that memorable day would, I presume, if mentioned here, scarcely be credited.

A day of thanksgiving was proclaimed, which the colonists strictly observed in prayer and praise to Almighty God for His wonderful deliverance.

But King George and his slave-trading prompters were not yet satisfied. He again consulted his “gree-grees,” and being reassured of success, he determined on another attempt; and to place success this time beyond peradventure, he would employ a force sufficiently large to overwhelm and destroy the colony, without the possibility of escape. With this view, he sought to engage the services of King Boatswain, of Boporo, the most powerful and dreaded chieftain in all that region. At his invitation, King Boatswain, with a large retinue of warriors, made a visit to King George, which was protracted several days, causing the colonists extreme anxiety. King George, however, could present no just grounds of complaint against the colonists; therefore Boatswain not only condemned his unprovoked enmity towards them, but, in very decided terms, announced his determination to protect them in their new home. King Boatswain then called on Mr. Ashmun, informed him of the result of his interview with King George, and assured him of his friendship.

Neither Mr. Ashmun nor King George mistrusted King Boatswain's sincerity, and very soon a good understanding was established with all the surrounding tribes. Now was settled definitely the question of a permanent asylum. Liberia was established. Emigration increased; intercourse and

trade with the natives also increased; new settlements were formed; and in a few years the colony assumed an importance which secured to it several important immunities.

Yet many hardships and serious embarrassments had to be encountered. The unhealthiness of the climate was a formidable enemy; and the slave-traders along the coast ceased not their tamperings with the native chiefs to incite them to acts of hostility against the colony.

But the time arrived when the colonists found themselves in a situation sufficiently advanced, not only to frustrate the machinations of these fiendish plotters, but to put in execution also their own long-cherished purpose of doing all in their power to extirpate a traffic which, aside from the extreme cruelties of the middle passage, had, for many, many years afflicted Africa with all the attendant consequences of war, rapine, and murder. On the execution of this purpose the colonists entered with a hearty good will; and, besides, efficient service rendered from time to time to foreign cruisers then employed in suppressing the slave trade on that coast, the slave barracoons at Mamma Town, Little Cape Mount, Little Bassa, New Cesters, and Trade Town were demolished, and thousands of slaves liberated, solely by the power of the little Commonwealth; and there was no relaxation of this purpose until every slaver had been expelled from the whole line of coast now comprehended within the territorial jurisdiction of Liberia.

During these years, all that related to the public welfare and general progress of the colony received proper attention. The Society's agents devoted themselves assiduously to the Governmental interests of the colony, and the colonists to their respective industrial pursuits, with a zeal and activity truly commendable.

As immigration increased, new points of the coast were selected and occupied. Settlements were formed at Junk river, Grand Bassa, Sinoe, and Cape Palmas; and soon a lucrative legitimate trade began to develop itself between the colonists and the natives.

In the meantime, the religious and educational interests of the people were not only not neglected, but every possible means were employed to extend and improve these; and it is with feelings of profound gratitude I allude to the fact that Liberia is to-day greatly indebted to the several Missionary Societies of the United States for the timely and efficient efforts made in behalf of colonists and natives to advance these essential interests; and I shall hope that these Societies will continue their Christian efforts until Africa, poor degraded Africa, shall be wholly redeemed from her present state of cruel barbarism.

Under the fostering care and political guidance of the American Colonization Society, Liberia continued to advance in all her important interests. Her territorial limits increased by purchases

from native chiefs, who were glad to place themselves and their people under the protection of the Colonial Government. A profitable trade, in African products, along the Liberian coast, soon attracted the attention of enterprising merchants in Europe and in the United States; foreign vessels made frequent visits to Liberian ports; and for many years this commercial intercourse was reciprocally remunerative and harmonious. But the time came when certain British traders repudiated the right of the Colonial Government to require of them the payment of custom duties on merchandize landed at points where, for centuries, they alleged, British merchants had been accustomed to trade; and also claimed to have purchased from the natives, with the perpetual right of free trade, certain tracts of land, for trading purposes, before the territories embracing said tracts were purchased and brought within the jurisdiction of Liberia. The Government of course declined to recognize these demands as paramount to its political authority, and therefore continued to enforce its revenue laws. These traders invoked the interference of British naval officers serving on the coast; these officers, after unavailing remonstrances, submitted the question to the British Government; that Government demanded a full concession of the immunities claimed by British subjects. A long and perplexing correspondence ensued between British naval officers, acting under special instructions from their Government, and the Colonial authorities. Her Majesty's Government maintained that, as the American Colonization Society, composed of mere private individuals, possessed no political power, and of consequence could delegate no such power to others; and as the levying of imposts is the prerogative of a sovereign power only, and as Liberia had no 14 recognized national existence, she must, therefore, desist from all interruptions to the free intercourse of British commerce. And the Liberian authorities were given distinctly to understand that this decision would be enforced by the British navy.

Under this emphatic announcement but one alternative remained open to the colonists, and this involved questions of the gravest importance, which awakened in Liberia, as well as on the part of its friends in this country, most serious reflections. For two years or more the subject was under constant and earnest consideration; when, in January, 1846, the American Colonization Society, by a formal vote, recommended that the colonists "take into their own hands the whole work of self-government, and publish to the world a declaration of their true character as a sovereign, independent State." The following October, the colonists also voted to dissolve their political connection with the Society, and to assume the entire responsibility of Government with independent, sovereign power. A Constitution, adapted to the new order of things, having been adopted by delegates assembled in Convention for the purpose, July 26, 1847, and duly ratified by the people the following September, the Government was thus reorganized, and entered, with some misgivings to be sure, upon its new career and increased responsibilities.

Its recognition by other Powers now claimed the earliest attention, and without delay measures were taken to this end by soliciting of foreign Governments an interchange of friendly national relations. And, within a year after the new organization, England, France, Prussia, and Belgium had acknowledged the independence of the new Republic; and shortly afterwards treaties of friendship, amity, and commerce were concluded with the two former.

In the meantime the domestic affairs of the country had progressed as satisfactorily as might reasonably be expected. Several matters of dispute between native chiefs were adjusted and settled; public improvements were extended; agriculture and commerce increased; and the people had steadily advanced in all the essentials of civilized life.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this evident progress, many difficulties and embarrassments had to be met and overcome. 15 Occasional predatory incursions of the natives had to be checked and sometimes severely punished by the military power of the Government; and foreign traders also, particularly British, caused the Government much trouble and annoyance. But, in the order of a beneficent Providence, all were successfully accomplished, and the majesty of the laws eventually maintained.

From the beginning, the people of Liberia, with a commendable zeal and firmness, pursued a steady purpose towards the fulfillment of the great objects of their mission to Africa. They have established on her shores an asylum free from political oppression, and from all the disabilities of an unholy prejudice; they have aided essentially in extirpating the slave-trade from the whole line of her Western Coast; they have introduced the blessings of civilization and Christianity among her heathen population; and I may also assume that by their entire freedom from all insubordination or disregard of lawful authority, and by their successful diplomacy with England, France, and Spain, on matters involving very perplexing international questions, they have indicated some ability, at least, for self-government and the management of their own public affairs. And just here—as I find that exceptions are pretty generally taken in this country to the exclusion of whites from all participation in the Government of Liberia—I may remark that this provision in the organic law of the Republic was not prompted by any feelings of prejudice against white men, but was desirable more especially for the reason that the colonists would retain in their own hands the whole control of the Government until they should fully demonstrate the problem as to their ability to conduct the affairs of a State. And, Mr. President, this, I suppose, may now be accounted as settled. The Republic of Liberia is now a fixed fact, with all the elements of free institutions and self-government; embracing within her territorial limits, at the present time, about six hundred miles of sea coast, and an interior over which she may readily acquire an almost unlimited jurisdiction whenever she shall be prepared to occupy it. Within her political jurisdiction is a population of not less than six hundred

thousand souls. Of this number about fifteen thousand emigrated from 16 the United States and other civilized countries; about four thousand recaptured Africans, and the remainder aboriginal inhabitants; and of these, hundreds have been hopefully Christianized, and many have become, in their civilized habits, so assimilated to the Americo-Liberians that a stranger would not readily on the streets discriminate between them.

In the four counties of the Republic are thirteen flourishing civilized towns and villages, with their churches, schoolhouses, and comfortable dwellings; many of these constructed of stone and brick, and not only imposing in their external structure, but actually possessing all the necessary comforts and many of the conveniences of modern times; and reflect much credit upon the industry and enterprise of their occupants.

The developments of agriculture and commerce are no less conspicuous. The agricultural settlements, especially along the banks of the rivers, present most encouraging prospects. Besides an increased and steadily increasing production of all minor articles, sugar and coffee (to the growth of which the climate and soil are admirably adapted) are being extensively cultivated; and large quantities of both are now annually exported to foreign markets.

Commerce has more astonishingly increased. I can remember when not more than thirty or forty tons of palm-oil, and perhaps as many tons of cam-wood, could be collected in a year, for export, along the whole line of coast now embraced in Liberia. The last year, though I have not at hand the official statistics, I may safely say, not less than six hundred tons of cam-wood, twelve hundred tons of palm-oil, and two hundred tons of palm-kernels were included in the exports of the Republic. And these articles of commercial enterprise and wealth are capable of being increased to almost any extent.

Ship building for the coast-wise trade has become quite a business in each of the counties. Last year three *Liberian* vessels, of foreign build, were despatched for Liverpool with full cargoes of palm-oil, cam-wood, and ivory.

I could heartily wish that the cause of civilization and Christianity among the aboriginal tribes of that country, had advanced with equally rapid strides as that of commerce; nevertheless, much real good has been accomplished in that direction also. 17 Devoted missionaries from the United States have labored earnestly, many of them even sacrificing their lives in efforts to promote the Christian welfare of that people, Among the Americo-Liberians their Christian civilization has always been an object of deep solicitude. And it is a source of peculiar satisfaction to know that the Christian efforts in their behalf have not been fruitless. It is no uncommon thing even now, and at all times a most pleasing spectacle, to see so many of these people, once the blind victims of heathenish superstition

and idolatry, bowing side by side with their Americo-Liberian brethren at the same Christian altar, and worshipping the only true God. Nay, even more, there are now native Christian ministers and teachers in Liberia who are laboring successfully in the cause of Christ. Most of these native ministers and teachers, members respectively of the several Christian denominations, are men of seemingly deep piety, and very respectable acquirements and talents. If time permitted, I might particularize several of these, as well as other native converts, who, as citizens of the Republic, have distinguished themselves for usefulness, not only in the ordinary walks of life, but also in official positions under the Government. I may, however, allude to a single case; that of a native gentleman, who, about twenty-five years ago, then a heathen lad, was admitted into a Methodist mission school at Monrovia, where he received the first impressions of civilization, and acquired the rudiments of an English education; and who is now an acceptable member of the Liberia Annual Conference, and an influential member of the Legislature of the Republic. And yet, Mr. President, there are those who inquire, What has African Colonization accomplished? Well, my own conviction, confirmed by many years' experience in nearly all that relates to Colonization and Liberia, is, that African Colonization has accomplished a work unparalleled, as far as my knowledge goes, by anything in the history of modern times.

I rejoice to meet here to-night so many distinguished Christian philanthropists who, for these many years, have devoted much of their time and substance to this noble enterprise; and I may be pardoned, I trust, in expressing the sincere satisfaction it affords me in seeing present at this meeting that old, devoted, and self-sacrificing friend of Africa and of African Colonization, the Rev. R. R. Gurley, who, by his burning eloquence, in the days of his early manhood, and at times when this great enterprise seemed to languish under depressing discouragements, would stir the hearts of Christians in its behalf, and kindle there a flame of generous benevolence which would give new life and energy to the great undertaking; and, still more, not content to rely wholly on the testimony of others in regard to the actual condition of the infant colony, and to satisfy himself more fully as to its future prospects, he visited Liberia several times, and on two occasions was enabled to render important service to the little Commonwealth. I am happy to say that the people of Liberia to-day entertain towards our good friend, Mr. Gurley, sentiments of the highest regard and esteem; and, I may also add, towards this Society, feelings of profound gratitude. But, Mr. President, I was about to say that these long and tried friends of African colonization entertain no doubts as to the immense benefits conferred upon Africa through the instrumentality of this Society, and who can now look back with profound satisfaction upon the cheering results of their individual efforts in the cause of God and humanity.

So much then for the past and the present of Liberia. So far God has graciously vouchsafed to her on occasions of threatened danger and extreme peril, deliverances which no human forethought or

mere human power could possibly have averted or rescued her from. He has wonderfully sustained and prospered all her essential interests. What, then, may we not hope and reasonably expect as to the future? My own convictions are that Heaven has great things in store for Africa, to be conferred doubtless through the instrumentality of Liberia.

While Liberia is emphatically the offspring of American benevolence and Christian philanthropy, and while the friends of African colonization have great reason to be proud of its achievements, it is no less clear in my mind that the Colonization enterprise was conceived in accordance with a Divine purpose, looking to the redemption and elevation of a people long enchained in the shackles of cruel barbarism. And, if 19 this be so, Liberia is evidently designed to a glorious future; and that it is so, her past history seems clearly to indicate, for we find there so many evidences of Divine favor we are forced to the conclusion that Providence has not done so much for nothing. And besides, in the ordinary course of human affairs, there seems to me no reason whatever why Liberia may not continue to prosper, and go on to distinguish herself in all that adorns civil society and tends to national greatness.

The country possesses certainly all the natural advantages common to most other countries, and in the means of animal subsistence, perhaps, superior to any other. I am aware that this beneficence of nature may be regarded as a very questionable advantage, as it tends greatly to promote indolent habits. But this, I may safely say, no country in the world better remunerates labor, and especially the labors of the husbandman, than Liberia.

The interior presents a country inviting in all its aspects; a fine rolling country, abounding in streams and rivulets; forests of timber in great variety, abundance, and usefulness; and I have no doubt quite salubrious, being free from the miasmatic influences of the mangrove swamps near the coast.

The commercial resources of Liberia, even at the present time, though scarcely commenced to be developed, are of sufficient importance to induce foreigners, American and European, to locate in the Republic for the purposes of trade. And I verily believe the agricultural and commercial sources of wealth in Western and Central Africa are far beyond the most carefully studied speculations of those even who are best acquainted with the nature and capacity of the country. The development of these will continue to progress, and must, in the very nature of things, secure to Liberia great commercial importance; and this will bring her citizens into such business relations with the peoples of other portions of the world as will insure to them that consideration which wealth, learning, and moral worth never fail to inspire.

With what rapidity Liberia shall progress in her future career is a question involving several considerations; and, doubtless, the most important among these is a strict adherence by her people

to the principles of true Christianity, and a 20 firm reliance on Him who disposes all things according to His own will. Of course, much also depends upon additional help from the United States to aid in advancing still more rapidly the civilizing and Christianizing her present aboriginal population, and so prepare them for greater usefulness as citizens of the Republic; and this work shall go on penetrating into the interior until other heathen tribes shall be brought within the scope of Christian civilization and incorporated in the Republic, thus forming an African nationality that will command the respect of the civilized world. All this I believe to be entirely practicable. I believe Heaven designs that Africa shall be redeemed; that the light of the Gospel of Christ shall shine there; that her great natural resources shall be developed; that she shall take rank with other States and Empires; that she shall have a literature and a history. Is there any reason why all this may not come to pass? I trow not. Liberia has already made rapid strides—now in treaty relations with thirteen foreign Powers, including the United States. Then, surely, we have every reason to hope and believe that a kind Providence will continue to watch over all her interests, and that her future career will be equally progressive.

I know, Mr. President, you believe the Divine decree, that “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God;” doubtless all Christians believe this. Would, then, that Christians throughout these United States, and, indeed, all Christendom, fully appreciated the responsibility they are under to aid in the fulfillment of this inspired prophecy; then, surely, this Society, under whose auspices so much is being done towards the furtherance of that grand event, could not fail to receive that sympathy and support necessary to the efficient prosecution of an enterprise which promises so much real good to Africa.