

THE

African Repository.

Vol. XLV.]

WASHINGTON, APRIL, 1869.

[No. 4.

ADDRESS OF REV. S. IRENÆUS PRIME, D. D.*

. EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK OBSERVER.

It occurs to me, in approaching this great subject, that we are enlarging the area of freedom on the plan that infinite wisdom put into operation in early ages and has employed even down to our times for the advancement of the human race and populating of the globe. When the dispersion of Babel builders scattered colonies abroad, it was but repeating on a broader platform the separation of those who survived the deluge and became colonists of Asia, Europe, and Africa. History, poetry, and fiction, even heathen mythology and vague traditions, have chronicled the planting of colonies on inhospitable shores, the struggles of infant settlements, long years of hardships, when tempests and cold and heat and famine and pestilence and war, discouragements, disasters, treason, desertion, death, all evils dire have rocked in the storm the cradle of infant nations—nations that in the future of their manhood became rivals and foes and perished by each other's hands. The Great Sea separated Carthage and Rome, but they were both colonies, frowning their hate across the waters and thirsting for each other's blood. Rome sent her colonies, like the light of the sun, into all the world, and her people unto the ends of the earth. Her ruins, dug from the soil of every country in Europe, are the dumb but eloquent witnesses of the civilization she carried into Gaul and Britain and through them to the spot where now a new world gathers her sons in the capitol that bears a name more illustrious than Hannibal or Cæsar. Roman law—the science of jurisprudence—by Roman progress round the earth, has made itself a living part of the government of every civilized race of men.

And when God left men in England and on the Continent to become the oppressors of their kind, so as to drive the colonists from Britain and Holland and France to Jamestown and Plymouth and Manhattan, He, the Infinite and Eternal, with

* Delivered at the Fifty-Second Anniversary of the American Colonization Society, held at Washington, D. C., January 19, 1869.

whom a thousand years are but as one day, was only sowing the seed of that glorious harvest which now waves in beauty and abundance from the rock-bound coast of New England to the golden gates of the setting sun.

Colonization was the germ; emigration has fructified and brought it onward. It has been born and nurtured and has grown to be a power in the earth; it reaches across a continent; it opens its arms to the old world, from which it came, and asks the people of all lands to come and find a home.

Where, do you ask, are the tribes who once peopled the forests and the plains now covered with cities and vexed with railways and ploughs? Gone! and another, a better, happier, more useful race dwells on the graves of a departed people.

Such is the order of Providence and nature both, and, perhaps, it will be the order of things in the revolution of cycles that mark the roll of the earth through succeeding ages of time. The population of the globe has steadily advanced in numbers, and will, while barbarism disappears before the advance of civilization. The races that reject God and debase humanity perish upon the approach of the higher order and type of men as the darkness of midnight flies at dawn. Thus the aggregate of human happiness grows on earth. If he who makes two blades of corn grow where one only grew before is a public benefactor, how much higher the benediction conferred by him who makes a mighty nation of intelligent, useful, Christian, happy people live and thrive and rejoice where savage barbarity, misery and sin for untold ages of wretchedness have had their dark and horrid reign.

We plant Christian missions in the islands of the sea, and they cast away their idols to the moles and the bats; but the converted natives, the regenerated people, do not multiply and grow. They are dying out: the murmur of the ocean on their coral shores is the nation's dirge. But another race is coming—is there—is planting and sowing and buying and selling and building, worshipping God, marrying and multiplying, and the islands of the sea are rejoicing in God's law, His law of production, of civilization, of propagating nations.

This process is very simple—silent, indeed, like all the great forces of nature, but like them, also, resistless and inevitable. He who taketh up the isles as a very little thing, who guides the destinies of nations and individuals, and sees the end from the beginning, manages the course of empire with infinite skill and works stupendous results.

There lies, a few days' sail to the east of us, a land in the shadow of death. Centuries of darkness and despair have brooded over its inhabitants, who have obeyed the law of depraved humanity in going onward and downward in misery

and sin, without the restraining influence of education or religion. The sun shines there as on us, but there is no healing in his beams. The moon and stars look as lovingly on the mountains and rivers

"Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sands;"

but moon and starlight is cold and brings no life to souls that are dead in sin. There man has gone down in the scale of being toward brutes that devour each other, till human life has ceased to be worth a straw and blood is cheaper than water. The mind staggers under the thought that there is a land, a continent, where the death of a chieftain is the signal for the sacrifice of scores of his fellow-men on his sepulchre! that there is a spot on this planet of ours where a woman is slaughtered more frequently than a calf, and so utterly extinct is the love of life and the principle of hope in the human breast, that the victim bleeds without a sigh and lies down to die as cheerfully as to a night's repose.

Now, the point we make is just here and this, that such a land is over against us and at our doors. Go down to the sea-coast at summer time and listen to the sighing and mourning of the ocean as it breaks at your feet; you call it, and, perhaps, it is, the murmur of the sea; but it is more—those waves are freighted with the groans of a wretched race of your fellow-men, writhing and shrieking under the agonies of despair.

Why is not our land to-day like that? Our colonists were not Christians, all of them nor most of them. They were, in no sense, missionaries of the Gospel. They came to buy and sell and get gain, to find gold, to better their temporal state. The law that brought them here was the same that sends our colored friends to Africa; they could do better here than in Europe; our friends can do better there than here, and they go for themselves to have a fair chance, to be men, equal and noble, erect in the majesty of manhood, with the destinies of a Republic and a continent in their hands; its honorable responsibilities on their shoulders; its future to make and its rewards to win and wear.

Going there they carry with them the principles and the example of Christian civilization. They are a light and power on the margin of a continent that is now the habitation of cruelty. We need not send statesmen, or philosophers, or preachers. We need not send civilized men and women of good moral character, and plant them there, and they are the germ of the seed that is to spring up into a tree, whose leaves are to heal the wounds of bleeding Africa and whose branches are to be the sheltering arms of a redeemed and blessed race. This was the result of colonization in Greece, in Italy, in England, in

America. It will be in Africa; and the day of her redemption, thank God, is drawing nigh.

But this is only an incidental result of your mighty scheme. I think angels would like to have a hand even in this. Our work is with the people of color here, to give them a settlement there, for their own good, *if they want to go!* That is the idea: "with their own consent;" there is no compulsion about it; they can stay here if they like it better; there is no pressure, no constraint, not so much as there was on the sailor who was asked if they were really compelled to go to prayers on the Cunard steamer on Sunday: "Why, no," he said, "not exactly *compelled*; but if we don't go they stop our grog." No; there is not so much as this; for their grog is more likely to be stopped if they go to Africa. But if they want to go, here we are to help them with a God bless you, and a free passage, and six months' support, and a farm of their own, and a chance to be men of substance and influence and usefulness and honor, and to have a hand in the salvation of fatherland from pagan abomination and its exaltation to its place among the civilized races of the world.

And I ask, in the name of liberty—that dear, old, glorious, and greatly abused word—I ask, in the name of liberty and humanity and of God, the Father of us all, if an American-born citizen, whose liberty was just now bought for him, at the cost of half a million of white men's lives and a debt of \$3,000,000,000, has not the right of going where he pleases and staying there? We have settled that principle with Britain and Germany. Have we not, also, settled it for ourselves? If the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, may he not, at least, change his spots? If he does not like one spot, may he not go to another? And rights and duties are reciprocal, never conflicting. If it is his right and privilege to go, it is our duty and privilege to help him. There was no lack of Emigrant Aid Societies to help men to go to bleeding Kansas when she stretched forth her hands for aid. I found Emigrant Aid Societies in Germany and Switzerland and Ireland. It is the noblest philanthropy that helps those who help themselves. And when the fire from Heaven has entered into the soul of an African in any part of the world, and he is longing to return to the land of his sires to kindle the flame of pure worship on altars long since cold and fallen, there is the man whom I would take by the hand and lead him to the ship and say: "This is the way to save thyself and thy fatherland; go, and the Lord be with thee!"

Coming home from Egypt some years ago across the Mediterranean sea, I was on shipboard with a hundred negro boys, who had been bought in the interior of Africa and brought

down the Nile to Cairo and Alexandria, and were now being taken to Italy by their purchasers. Who and for what? They were bought by Roman Catholic missionaries, who were taking them to Italy to teach them the Christian religion, that they might return to Africa and convert their countrymen. A mistaken charity, perhaps; not the wisest way to do good, but well meant and noble in its purpose. It is a better way this of ours, that takes these men and women, whose fathers and mothers were torn from Africa, and sends them back with knowledge of the arts of civilized life, and the way of higher life through Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life Himself. These are the instruments by which other lands have been enlightened; they may be the salvation of Africa.

I would not put the pressure of a straw upon any man to change his country or his clime. I go in for the largest liberty of choice, and claim it for myself and my colored friends. They are rational and intelligent; if they are not, we do not want them for colonists; but with reason and knowledge, they are not blind to the inevitable facts of the future that stare them in the face as to the destiny of this continent of ours. It is for the Anglo-Saxon race. The Celtic, the Teutonic, the Chinese, any or all races may come here; but they come into the American crucible, melting them all into one, and the Anglo-Saxon, the dominant power in the country and the world, is to be the ruling force in the land. It requires no prejudice of color to make one believe that no such amalgam can be or should be with the African race. Its effects are too palpable in the laws of race to permit them to be ignored or despised; and it is the last and lowest prejudice that shuts the mind against the evidence, and promises to the African what he never can have in Europe or America.

Mr. President, when will philanthropy rise to the grandeur of its origin?—the divine love of man; love of the human race; love that worketh no ill to his neighbor; love that knows no bounds of continent, country, or color; love that recognizes every man as a brother, for whom every brother is bound to labor and pray. Such philanthropy, broad as the world and boundless as the sea, abjures that policy that forbids labor to go where it can do the best for itself; that would forever keep the poor poor, that the rich may be richer; that would doom a whole race of free colored people to a life of menial toil and to wasting generations of dependence, when God in his wonder-working Providence has brought them up out of the wilderness, opened the way for them through the Red Sea of blood, and shown to them, as from Pisgah's summit, the promised land, where every man may be a sovereign, an independent

freehold farmer, with competence, comfort, and usefulness which is the highest glory and the chief end of man.

I see in this assembly a venerable man, who gave the vigor of his youth and early manhood and the wisdom of his riper years to this scheme of Christian philanthropy, and whose name will be enrolled with Mills and Ashmun, as one whose life has been nobly given to African Colonization. A year ago, for the third time, he went to Liberia to see the rising fortunes of the youthful empire, planted and watered there by him and his associates in this glorious work. I hold in my hand and will read a few of the words of welcome to our illustrious Gurley by a colored colonist, speaking for himself and his colored brethren there—

“Among the early and tried friends of Liberia the name of Ralph R. Gurley stands prominent, and we, venerable and reverend sir, say, in the fullness of our hearts, we *thank you*. The palms that have sprung up in every direction and yield rivers of oil, that invite the merchant fleet of legitimate traders that you see in our harbors, *thank you*. No longer do the hell-hounds of the devil—the slave-traders—infest our coasts and strip Africa of her sons and daughters; no more do the tribes on this coast shudder to see a white man. Their smiling faces *thank you*. Slave barracoons are no more to be seen; they are numbered with the things that have passed. But churches of the living God, with their steeples pointing heavenward, houses of respectable dimensions and architectural by construction, that would not disgrace any city of christendom, rise up and *thank you*. Schools and colleges, halls of justice, and executive mansion and departments, swell the number and cry aloud *we thank you*. The influx of emigrants, who hail this as the promised land, and the Ethiopian in the far interior, as they catch the sound from us and our children, will continue to cry *we thank you*.”

That is eloquence, negro eloquence, exulting in freedom, intelligence, and power. It speaks of a rising race, with the destinies of empire in its hand!

O, sir, how bitter the selfishness that meets the African and scoffs at his aspirations for a home and name on his ancestral shores and among his fathers' sepulchres, and bids him stay here and work out his uncertain destiny, the bone of contention between the dogs of party, picked and gnawed in turns by both, and abandoned to the chances of a future always against the weak and in favor of the strong!

There is a higher, nobler, sweeter love than this. It was born of God: It made Jesus our brother, partaker of our humanity, and the redeemer of mankind, giving Himself an example and

sacrifice for the Jew and the gentile, the Asian and African, for you and me. It is radiant with light divine and warm with angelic fire. It saith to the sons and daughters of that land of palms: stay here, if you will, and work out for yourselves the old, old problem, a life-struggle for a living on the earth; but if you come with us, we will do you good; we will show you a better way; we have a land of liberty, *Liberia* is its tuneful name, your fatherland, all yours, with its schools, its college, its halls of legislation, its seats of power, its happy homes, where plenty crowns the board, and joy dwells a constant guest with peace.

This is the work of the Society we serve and celebrate tonight. It is a God-like work; it blesses two continents; it is the almoner of mercies to those who go and those to whom they go; it is pure philanthropy, blessing those who give and those who receive; it is good, only good—owned of God, with its record on earth and on high.

ADDRESS OF HON. JOSEPH J. ROBERTS,*

EX-PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC 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

* Delivered at the Fifty-Second Anniversary of the American Colonization Society, held at Washington, D. C., January 19, 1869.