

THE
Three Needs of Liberia.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED AT LOWER BUCHANAN,
GRAND BASSA COUNTY, LIBERIA.
JANUARY 26, 1908.

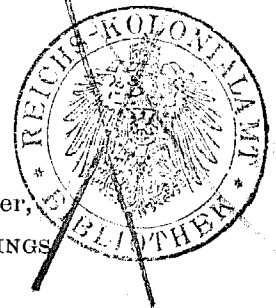
BY

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Race," "From West Africa to Palestine," "West
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London:

C. M. PHILLIPS, Printer,
23, SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS
1908.



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CORRESPONDENCE.

MAYORALTY,

BUCHANAN,

4th March, 1908.

DEAR DR. BLYDEN,

I take great pleasure in handing you the amount subscribed at the meeting held in the A.M.E. Church on the 26th ultimo to listen to your instructive and valuable Lecture on "The Three Needs of Liberia" according to the votes thanking you for its delivery and requesting its publication, unanimously tendered.

With the greatest respect,

Your obedient servant,

S. G. HARMON,

Mayor of the City and Chairman of
the Meeting.

Hon. Edward W. Blyden, LL.D.,

Grand Bassa.

FAIR HILL,

LOWER BUCHANAN,

March 4th, 1908.

MY DEAR HARMON,

I am in receipt of your note of to-day's date with amount enclosed. I need not say that I am deeply grateful for the compliment which you and

your fellow citizens have paid me in the courteous expression of appreciation conveyed by their generous vote on the occasion of the delivery of my Lecture; and I feel that I am but voicing their sentiments when I ask you to allow me to dedicate to you this my second Lecture in the County of Grand Bassa, after an interval of seventeen years, as an indication of the very sincere regard which I entertain for the high qualities of the new Senator of the Republic of Liberia and Mayor of the new City of Lower Buchanan, whose career I have watched from his earliest years with increasing admiration,

Believe me, my dear Harmon, with the best wishes,

Yours faithfully,

EDWD. W. BLYDEN.

Hon. S. G. Harmon,

Mayor, &c.,

Lower Buchanan,

Liberia.

THE THREE NEEDS OF LIBERIA.

THIS year we celebrate the eighty-sixth anniversary of the founding of the city of Monrovia by the Negro settlers from America. The colony is nearly ninety years old. The Republic has just celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. Still Liberia is called by foreigners an experiment. It is indeed an experiment, an unprecedented experiment. Nothing of the kind has ever happened before in the world's history. A group of returned exiles—refugees from the house of bondage—settled along a few hundred miles of the coast of their Fatherland, attempting to rule millions of people, their own kith and kin, on a foreign system in which they themselves have been imperfectly trained, while knowing very little of the facts of the history of the people they assume to rule, either social, economic or religious, and taking for granted that the religious and social theories they have brought from across the sea must be adapted to all the needs of their unexpatriated brethren.

Liberia is a little bit of South Carolina, of Georgia, of Virginia—that is to say—of the ostracised, suppressed, depressed elements of those States—tacked on to West Africa—a most incongruous combination, with no reasonable prospect of success; and further complicated by additions from

other sources. We take a little bit from England, a little bit from France, a little bit from Germany, and try to compromise with all. We have no definite plan, no dominating race conception, with really nothing to help us from behind—the scene whence we came—and nothing to guide us from before the goal to which we are tending or should tend. We resemble those plants which we call “Life everlasting”—I do not know the botanical name—whose leaves severed from the stem, appear to survive apart from the whole plant, with no connection with root or branch. They can be pinned up against a wall or anywhere and yet appear to be green. But we know that this condition is not permanent. Liberia is like that plant; and it is a wonder to many that it has appeared to live so long. We are severed from the parent stock—the aborigines—who are the root, branch, and flower of Africa and of any Negro State in Africa.

Away from them we are cut off from the evolutionary process by which men and nations normally grow. And as evolution is the law of life, we can have neither real permanent life nor vigorous or continuous growth. Without the aborigines in our domestic, social, religious, and political life, there is nothing before this State but death. If you doubt this I will give you an illustration, which is before you every day. Take away the aborigines from our *industrial* life, where should we be? Where would be our farms? Where would be the tillers of our soil, our instruments of movement, of travel, of commercial enterprise? Who would work our canoes, our boats, carry our hammocks, load our ships and land our cargoes from abroad? No people can take root in any country where they cannot do

these things for themselves. You see at once where we should be without the help and co-operation of the natives in the directions I have indicated. This is exactly where we are in our social, political, and religious life—*paralysed*. A few among us see it, but the generality do not. After you had triumphantly carried last year the amendments to the Constitution, one of your most thoughtful and practical statesmen wrote to me: “We could not have succeeded without the aborigines.” This was true. So in all the great changes and reforms to which the few leading men now look forward, there is no hope without the aborigines. We can take our proper place in Africa and in the world only by obeying the laws of the Fatherland. Our progress will come by connection with the parent stock. The question, therefore, which we should try to study and answer is, What are the underlying principles of African life—not American life—but *African* life? Every nation and every tribe has a right to demand freedom of life and abundance of life, because it has a contribution to make peculiar to itself towards the ultimate welfare of the world. But no nation can have this freedom of life, and make this contribution, which no other nation can make, without connection with its past, of which it must carefully preserve the traditions, if it is to understand the present and have an intelligent and inspiring hope of the future.

But we have no past across the sea of which we can be proud or to which we can look for inspiration. America to which our fathers were carried by violence, where we lived and still live by sufferance as unwelcome strangers, is not the rock whence we were hewn. Our residence there was and is transitional, like that of the Hebrews in Egypt, or Babylon,

looking to an exodus. That exodus may never come for all ; but the feeling and aspiration on the part of the exile must ever be towards the Fatherland, as the Jew, wherever he is, looks to Palestine, and in the depths of his soul continually exclaims, "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning." For Liberians the residence in America was an intermediate past—a past of which the elements were chains, whips, the auction block. There is nothing in that past to which we can look back with pride and satisfaction. We were victims, and we are still victims of that past—a past blurred, blotted, bloodstained. We cannot forget it. It is not given to us to follow the optimistic admonition of the poet :—

"Let the dead Past bury its dead."

No : for us the past has left its dead to be daily confronted by us. There are moments when feeling the contaminating atmosphere and oppressive drawbacks of this corpse we exclaim from the depths of our souls, "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death ?" The "White Man's Burden" is with us. We are obsessed by the literature and prejudices of the age. We are continually reminded of past days. Every time we read our Declaration of Independence, many of whose phrases are out of date and should be eliminated, depressing and misleading reminiscences are brought before us, and following their inept suggestions we fancy that we are here to heal up an old sore, instead of developing a new bud in the garden of the nations. We find here in the kingdom of nature a different flora and fauna from what we left in America. We cannot introduce American natural conditions here, neither can we introduce its religious, social or economic conditions.

Now, what do we need for our relief, our deliverance, our growth and permanent success ? This brings me to the topic which it is my purpose briefly to discuss to-day, viz. :—

THE THREE NEEDS OF LIBERIA.

They are 1st, EMANCIPATION. 2nd, ILLUMINATION. 3rd, HARMONIZATION.

First, then, we need Emancipation. When the first Negro emigrants for Liberia left the United States in the good ship *Elizabeth* in 1820, they escaped *physical* bondage. And when Abraham Lincoln in 1863, proclaimed freedom for the Negroes throughout the United States, he delivered them from material shackles which hampered and degraded the body. The body was set free, but the soul remained in bondage. Therefore, the intellectual, social and religious freedom of the American ex-slave has yet to be achieved. When our fathers came across the Atlantic they brought with them the social, industrial, and religious trammels that bound them to the intellectual and material "flesh-pots" of America. Those trammels they transmitted to us. They could not help themselves. The mere passage across the sea did not change their mental condition :—

"Coelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt."

And now, we, their descendants, call ourselves Americo-Liberians or Afro-Americans, that is to say, Africans with the prejudices and predilections—the bias and aspirations—of white men : with "ideals," as Sir Harry Johnston has told us in his extraordinary "History of Liberia," "pitifully Anglo-Saxon ;" and these "ideals," altogether unattainable,

are nevertheless, the burden, the stumbling block and the opprobrium of this nation. They beguile us into efforts to introduce a condition of things under which Europe and America are helplessly staggering, and compel us to take upon ourselves and labour to solve the problems of a foreign climate and of an alien race, which of course takes away from us the desire, the disposition and the ability to study our own problems and their solution. We are beating the air, the objects of the sympathy or the laughing stock of foreigners, and, more serious than that, we are rapidly dying out, and sad to say, with the feeling on the part of some of us that this mortality is the regular order of human beings under the influence of civilization and religion. As Christians, we are told, if the body dies the soul is saved—a miserable philosophy; for true Godliness has the promise of both worlds—of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Where the blessings of one or the other are lacking, we may be sure that we have not Godliness. We may adopt it as a safe rule that whenever we find that our physical, intellectual, or religious progress is hindered and our life destroyed by what we have been told is the teaching of Christ, we may, I say (and we have the authority of Christ Himself for this) take it as a safe rule that we are *not* following Christ but the tradition of men, which makes the commandment of God *for us* of none effect, and rendering vain all our worship, whatever its elaborate or expensive accompaniments. There are numerous and melancholy illustrations of this all along the line of Christianizing effort in West Africa for the last hundred years—NOTHING BUT LEAVES.

For this state of things among us there is not the

excuse there was for our fathers. *We* were born under natural conditions, with the book of Nature open wide before us and written in characters so legible that he who runs may read. But Europe and America baffle us and shut out from us the pages we ought to read and study. By their literature, their books, their newspapers and the teachings of their philanthropists they are trying to introduce into Africa systems entirely incompatible with the racial and climatic conditions and necessities. Owing to the social, industrial and economic order of Europe and America, dislocations have been introduced which are the source of constant unrest in the countries whence they came; and the guardians of public order are at their wits end with the problems of labour, pauperism, lunacy and profligacy. The essential elements of European civilization to-day are pauperism, crime, lunacy, growing out of their social and economic order as naturally as showers from the clouds of summer. General Booth and his work are the creation of this abnormal state of things,—the submerged tenth and the classes immediately above that. Socialism increasing in England is intended to remedy this state of things, but I fear its efforts are not hopeful. Under their domestic system thousands of women are thrown out of house and home, so that in London alone, the great centre of European civilisation, there are eighty-six thousand unsheltered women, not only without homes, but distributors of disease and death; and as we are told, on so good an authority, as notices placarded in public vehicles, there are in the capital of Great Britain “seventy-five thousand thieves known to the police.”

Africa, away from foreign interference, has no such problems. Thieves do not arise, for there is no land or water so sacred that any woman or child can occupy it or any place near it and starve. Every man has enough or the means of getting enough for food, clothing and shelter. There are no spinsters, or professional outcasts, every woman being sheltered and protected, enjoying the privilege and sacred right of motherhood. No ecclesiastical law or foreign prejudice interferes with this right.

Africa, therefore, has a right to demand of Europe, in reply to its indiscriminate appeals for the demolition among us of immemorial customs, an answer to the following question: "If we abolished customs known and tried and helpful to us, and adopted yours, what shall we do with our submerged tenth, our thieves, and prostitutes?" But, alas, this is a question which Europe and America are trying in vain to answer for themselves. Then Africa must say to our would-be benefactors on these subjects:

"Great and good friends, *you* grapple with *your* domestic and social problems and leave us to grapple with *ours*. In political, military, material and financial problems we need and solicit your guidance and help, but as to the subtle problems which involve the physical, physiological and spiritual or psychological well-being of the people, we deprecate your benevolent but dislocating interference. As to your marriage laws, we beseech you to believe that for Africa you are mistaken—fatally mistaken—and inasmuch as you admit that there is no Divine command in the matter (See debate in Parliament on Marriage

with a deceased wife's sister, 1907) we entreat you, whether as religious or political legislators, to withdraw your heavy hand and recognize that the laws of Nature, which are the laws of God, are wiser and stronger than all your theories."

Some of our foreign friends complain that every where their education of the Negro has been abortive or has produced very little satisfactory results. The London *Spectator* said sometime ago:—

"You may educate your Negro, as you educate your Hindoo, till he can pass every examination that a European passes, but in educating his intellect you have not perceptibly educated his character. Acquisitions of the intellect are won by the individual; acquisitions of character, the slow outcome of heredity, are the gradual gain of a race. And consequently your Negro will never be fit for institutions that are not in some way a direct outcome of the Negro character."

Exactly. But our Anglo-Saxon friends who write thus do not seem to take into consideration that, as a rule, they rashly interfere with the natural and regular action of heredity in the Negro by setting aside, whenever they can, an institution which is the outcome of his racial and climatic conditions, thus undermining, shocking and impairing his fundamental characteristics, emasculating him at the outset, cutting off both hands and feet, and then saying to him "Walk, walk!" and when he cannot they exclaim, "character is wanting—character." Does not this show a lack of scientific appreciation of conditions—a lack of imagination and imaginative sympathy? They despise the marriage laws of the African as being so different from theirs, involving,

as they allege, the absence of the higher qualities of manhood; yet if they would only study the world's history of the last twenty years, they would see that in conflicts where both high physical and moral endowments are indispensable, the polygamic races, given the same military equipment and discipline, have shown themselves superior to their monogamic antagonists. I need only mention Turkey and Greece, Abyssinia and Italy, Japan and Russia. After the Ashanti War of 1873, Sir Garnet now Lord Wolseley, stated in his official Report, that it would have been utterly impossible to overcome the virile and energetic race, whose country he invaded, if they had been armed with guns of precision. In modern warfare the arms are the first consideration, not the men behind the arms.

“Arma virumque cano.”

are the first words now of the great world's epics, as they were of the great epic of Rome's Imperial poet.

But in her dealings with Africa now—in her attempts at successful exploitation—at peaceful penetration—Europe is happily finding out that she must go back to the natural order, she must consider the *man* not the *arms* for she has deprived the man of arms: so her most enterprising explorers and administrators are studying the man unarmed, even free from the mental and moral armour with which some European teachers have invested him. They prefer to deal with him free from the habiliments and accoutrements of European manipulation, which they find hamper and debilitate him. I remember some time ago, while Government Director of Mohammedan Education at Sierra

Leone, a distinguished British Official in another part of His Majesty's West African Empire, sent one of his officers to ask me to procure for him if possible, a few suitable natives to assist in administrative work, “but,” added the messenger, himself a most capable administrator, “we want no natives that *we* have trained.”

Now the French in their settlements in the Western Soudan, do not allow interference with the customs and institutions of the Natives, and they always want for their administrative work only Natives that they have trained. Even if the African is wanted as a physical drudge, it is a mistake to deprive him of his native customs and institutions; and for higher work it is worse than a mistake; it is a crime. Nowhere in West Africa, as we see in Liberia, is the laborious work of the farm, of the streets, of the sea, done by so-called civilized Natives. Bishop Johnson, that eminent Native Prelate of Western Equatorial Africa, has recently told us that in Southern Nigeria the Europeanized African is at a discount even for subordinate posts in the trading world.

The Liberians, however, in spite of their bitter antecedents in the house of bondage, are, as a community in some respects, superior to their brethren in the British colonies. They have a priceless jewel, an inestimable spoil—which they borrowed from the Egyptians and brought to Africa, and that is the *English language*. They have it not as a foreign tongue but as vernacular, as their mother tongue. A knowledge of the English language has become a part of themselves. If they only knew the value of this great possession and its

infinite possibilities, and would use it in the proper direction with its innumerable and incomparable avenues of information, and of external influence and touch with the foreign world, their usefulness to Africa and the African race would be multiplied beyond calculation.

Now I will give you some examples of the lessons from Europe and America by which we have been and are being misguided. Dr. G. W. Gibson, as a liberian statesman, has always been strong in his desire, and explicit in his utterances as to the importance of having text books adapted to the needs and work of the Republic. Our statesmen generally have never been blind to this subject; but our education having as a rule been paid for from abroad, (a mistake and a misfortune which it is hoped since the new financial departure will now be avoided) we have been obliged to submit to the incompatible teachings which this pecuniary obligation has involved. Take as an example. Some African children have been taught to sing the following verses, which have no application whatever to the conditions :—

“ Whene’er I take my walks abroad
How many poor I see ;
What shall I render to my God
For all His gifts to me.

Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more :
For I have food while others starve
Or beg from door to door.

How many children in the street
Half naked I behold,
While I am clothed from head to feet
And covered from the cold,

While some poor wretches scarce can tell
Where they may lay their head,
I have a home within to dwell
And rest upon my bed.”

Now the state of things described in this hymn does not exist in Africa. It is impossible under the social order and is incomprehensible to the simple African child. But the singing of such sentiments inflicts upon the child the idea that it is a natural and proper order of things, from which if it happens to be exempt it is because it is a favourite child of Providence. But under the African system no child “has food while others starve.” The fruits of the soil are as free to everybody as they are to the birds of the air. There are no “poor wretches who scarce can tell where they may lay their head.” If the children are “half naked,” it is because the climate requires it, not because they can get no clothing. It is not necessary that they should be “clad from head to feet” to be “covered from the cold.” You see, then, that in the matter of common daily life African children are misled by such teaching, and conceive ideals which are “pitifully Anglo-Saxon.”

The state of things described in the hymn is, as I have said, impossible under the African system. In Europe and America it grows out of the disarrangement in the land tenure. Political and social reformers in these countries contend that all the economic and social difficulties grow out of the private ownership of land, which, it is said, enriches the few and impoverishes the masses. Mr. Birrell said the other day, speaking of the state of things in Ireland, “If it were not for the land question Ireland would be the most crimeless coun-

try in the world." The object of the great social movement in England is to abolish private ownership and nationalize the land, so that by this collective ownership all the means of production and livelihood shall be under the control of the people. Here in Africa where the system of collective ownership is an immemorial custom, we are trying to introduce private ownership. I say we are trying to introduce it, because we have not succeeded and cannot succeed. The stars in their courses are fighting against us. Private owners pass away, as a rule without heirs, owing to the abnormal domestic conditions, and the lands escheat to the Government. In Monrovia alone the number of lots which have reverted to the Government, which means back to the people, according to African law, is astounding, as anyone may see who will examine the subject. Nature cannot be thrust out with a pitchfork; and we have been fighting to do this for three generations. The unequal contest has left us prostrate; yet we cannot or will not see.

Owing to our false training we have been legislating as Americans in America for Americans. We have been disposing of the lands of the country and are still disposing of them on the foreign system we have been taught. But everywhere amongst us this system has failed. We have been perpetrating the absurdity of measuring out and partitioning lands to the natives, who are the lords of the soil. In many places they laugh at us because they know that in the order of Nature these lines of demarcation must disappear. By the system we are trying to introduce we always in the long run create wildernesses instead of farms and cities. Let us then study African conditions and legislate according to the Constitution

made and provided by the Divine law-giver. Read "The manuscripts of God" and copy from them. Our laws will then stand permanent and unrepeatable. All others will repeal themselves, whoever makes them.

Daniel Webster, the distinguished expounder of the American Constitution, once speaking against the abolition theory and insisting on the natural place of the Negro in American civilization and the waste of time involved in making laws to fix that place, said, "It is useless to re-enact a law of Nature;" Frederick Douglass, the great Negro leader, replied, "It is useless to enact any other."

The way of the transgressor is hard. Liberia has experienced the truth of this for years and is still experiencing it, yet she continues in every department of her life to transgress the laws of nature, because we think we are supported by precedents laid down by the white man. We make what we call a law and quote Blackstone, Chitty, Kent, &c., to support it, and we go to sleep, not dreaming that in most cases the Acts of the Legislature remain only Acts, and never become laws. We build and plant and we have not even the consolation of feeling that others whom we know and love will enter into our labours, or that any body at all will reap where we have sown. The generation that follows us often looks upon the wilderness which we had uprooted returning often in greater vigor and luxuriance than when we first attacked and thought we had permanently overcome it. And the Native whom we had dispossessed on a wrong and iniquitous theory enters again upon his hereditary rights. Every word I have just uttered receives

ample illustration in the whole of Liberian history. We do not advance permanently in any department of our life because we have no settled creed as to what African life should be and no fixed hopes of the future. And we have not this creed nor these hopes because we are building upon the sand of exploded theories in Europe instead of upon the rock of indigenous knowledge and experience.

I will give you another example of inapplicable and incongruous teaching. You know that in Europe and some parts of America there are seasons of the year when the earth produces nothing. In some places for six months the ground is as hard as the nether millstone. If seed is not planted and crops are not reaped during the spring, summer and autumn when the sun is pouring its light and heat upon the earth, then the people must starve during the winter. All men and beasts and birds must conform to this law: and provide for this state of things. There is no Statute or Act of the Legislature enjoining it. It is the law, the inexorable law of Nature, which all must obey or perish. From this condition of things European poets have drawn lessons for the youth of the land which they teach in songs adapted to their climatic exigencies. But European teachers bring these songs to Africa, and we have brought them to Liberia, and teach them to African children for whom they are neither true to nature nor necessary for the work of the African. Here is one of these songs, beginning,

“How doth the little busy bee,
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower.”

This is intended to teach thrift and activity from the example of the bee. But this energetic insect of ceaseless alertness and activity does not exist in Africa. Our bee is prodigal. It always has plenty of time and opportunity. It has no need to “improve each shining hour.” Every hour is shining and all the year round. It is not compelled to “gather honey all the day from every opening flower.” There are always open flowers, year in and year out; and the bee can take her time and make her opportunity.

No; from the African bee the Native gathers the idea of leisurely activity and only at certain times of the day. His day is “the morning and the evening.” Midday is *dies non*, and, like all other living creatures, he seeks shade and rest at that hour.

Now the European comes with his habit of incessant work, the result of a rigorous and exacting climate bringing his bee with him and holds it up as an example to the happy African—the “careless Ethiopian”—to whom one day is exactly like another. And wherever the European establishes himself he teaches to the contented and effeminate African by precept and by example the rush and hurry, incessant stress and strain, the push and hustling to which he is accustomed under the bracing, invigorating and exigent climate of his own country and creates conditions which force both himself and the Native to unremitting toil, hastening all to untimely graves. He then blames the climate and invents measures to neutralize or prevent the consequences of his violation of law. He establishes Schools of Tropical Medicine, (which of course,

under the artificial conditions are a real blessing). But what is needed are Schools for teaching the law of Africa and obedience to it—Schools of Tropical Recreation, of Tropical Diet, of Tropical Abstinence and the law will be found not only entirely innocuous but indispensably helpful. The penalty of no law is made for the righteous man—that is, the man who conforms his life to it. Every resident in inter-tropical Africa should obey the law of rest. He should suspend work, whether mental or physical, between the hours of eleven and two, especially in the dry season, and seek repose. He would then have from six or seven in the morning, and from two to five in the afternoon,—seven or eight hours of work,—sufficient for man or woman or beast in this exhausting climate. But the exigencies of the civilization brought to us prevent this rational and healthy arrangement, and introduces a slavery which leads to death. All the methods and instruments of civilization, by the way, tend to slavery. Hence it is that some European thinkers believe that the noblest civilization will be developed in the tropics, Europe contributing to it by its material discoveries and inventions. The European bee, then, is not a happy example for the man of Africa.

The proper model and guide for us is that to which Solomon points, "Go to the ant thou slug-gard; consider her ways and be wise." I would invite you to study the habits and methods of our bug-a-bug or termite, whose wonderful structures, regarded as sacred by the Natives, we see on every hand. From them the Natives have learned the co-operative method of labour; from them too they have got the idea of organization and subordination.

In Liberia we have failed in Agriculture, as a

permanent and successful feature in our industrial system, and shall always fail because we are trying to work the land on the gang system, which we learned in America. That is not the African system. It is not the natural system. It has been introduced into Europe and America and has led to the inequalities which are producing the unrest in those countries. In England farming is complicated by three distinct interests. First, there is the owner of the land; then there is the tenant or hirer of the land; then the labourer on the land. In Africa there is only one interest and that is the people's interest. Farming is communistic, allied to and guided by a patriarchal head. The land is owned by everybody. The men, women and children all work, engage in labor as a duty they owe to themselves and to each other, and all reap equal rewards. That is unto each according to his several ability. Under the African system there can be no absolutely rich man and no absolutely poor man.

Now in coming from America with foreign ideas in our head, we have tried to reverse all this, and create the distinctions which exist in Europe and America, but we have nowhere succeeded. We have been striving to produce the independently rich man, with its opposite, the abjectly poor, but we have everywhere egregiously failed. There is not a man reputedly rich fifty years ago, who has left a single trace of his position. Not a single farmer who, thirty years ago, was at the height of prosperity, exists to-day. The fault is not in the climate but in those who persist in breaking its laws. White men tell us of the necessity and the importance of there being class distinctions—rich men and poor men—princes and beggars—in every commu-

nity, but this was not Christ's idea, and it is not the African idea. The African idea is the idea of the first Christian church—"One for all and all for one." In the Acts of the Apostles we read the following :

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need."

Now this model is in entire agreement with African instincts. Our mind runs in an entirely different channel from that of the white man. We occupy an entirely different standpoint. We cannot judge by his standard or feel with his feelings. Yet from sheer necessity we have in our Schools and Colleges been using his text-books on moral, social and religious subjects; but as we learn more and more of African customs and study more and more the kingdom of God within us, we shall find that the political economy of the white man is not our political economy, his moral philosophy is not our moral philosophy, and far less is his theology our theology; and wherever he has been successful in forcing these upon us there has been atrophy and death.

This brings us to the subject of Religion—the most important of all subjects. The Bible is the

word of God or rather, to use the modern phrase, *contains* the word of God. But its teachings have been largely diluted by those in Europe who received it from the East and attempt to teach it to us. They have organized what they call a church or churches for which there is no authority anywhere in the Bible. And they bring these churches to us and we have brought them from America and attempt by means of them to build up our spiritual life in this country, with what success let the history of Liberia past and present answer.

When Jesus Christ appeared in the world, He identified Himself with the despised and oppressed. Not in the palace of Cæsar or in the court of the High Priest was He born, but with the beast of the field, in a manger, according to the Gospel narrative. The Koran, in an idyllic passage, more picturesquely states that He was born in the wilderness at the trunk of a Palm Tree, where His mother, journeying alone, was compelled to sit owing to the pains of travail coming upon her. He was born, according to this version, as many an African child is now born. But the point is, whether as presented by the Koran or the Évangelist, that He was born in a state of humiliation; and in His life, being found in fashion as a man, He took upon Himself the form of a slave, and went about ministering to others. "I came not" He said, "to be ministered unto but to minister." To His disciples He also said, "I am among you as he that serveth." He identified Himself with Ham not with Japheth. He is emphatically the Saviour of the African, and in the house of his bondage Jesus was the comforter and the example to whom he strove to cling. He was willing, and often in the hymns which with tears

and groans he improvised, he rejoiced to go down into the valley with Jesus. He delighted in the humility and simplicity of Christ and would have followed His simple teaching had not the white man interfered and mislead him by the creation of elaborate organizations, after the Imperial idea, called churches. The word church, in the sense in which it is now understood, nowhere occurs in the Bible. Then what the European is pleased to call the Church of Christ is cut up into so many branches, each claiming to represent the Christ idea, as to prevent unity or even co-operation, entailing discord, weakness, inefficiency. How different would our spiritual and even material condition be in Liberia to-day, if Christ's method had been followed. But the imperial instinct—the instinct of rule—the *divide et impera*—has willed it otherwise. They have taken the garments of Jesus and parted them among themselves and have induced us to imitate them. His seamless robe has been rent into a thousand pieces. And then in the campaign which they are attempting to carry into the Soudan they raise the war cry, "Christ or Mohammed." But it is not Christ or Mohammed; it is the white man or Mohammed; and in such a contest Mohammed will be victor every time. His methods are so different. He is an Oriental and can obey literally the command to go without purse or script. The Arab and the indigenous missionary in the heart of Africa confront the European missionary empty handed, and success is not with the man armed and equipped. His *impedimenta* are a burden as well as an obstruction. His individualistic methods make him inaccessible to the masses. If they would come to Christ they must go upstairs.

The only impression made upon the nobler spirits by this display of material superiority and the condescending patronage it suggests is that stated by Dante, that no food is so bitter as the bread of dependence and no ascent so painful as the staircase of a patron, and they shrink from the proffered coddling.

"Tu proverai si come sa di sale
Lo pane altrui, e com'è duro calle
Lo scendere e 'l salir per l'altrui scale."

—*Paradiso* Canto xvii.

"Thou shalt have proof how savourest of salt
The bread of others, and how hard a road,
The going down and up another's stairs."

On the contrary, Christ ordered His apostles to abide in the houses of the people whom they desired to evangelize and eat *their* bread.

But it is gratifying to know that there are many in Europe to-day, earnest Christians, who repudiate the methods of the would-be propagators of the religion of Jesus, among alien and backward races. Rev. Henry Scott Holland, Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, tells us that Count Tolstoy, the Russian philosopher and prophet, "stands quite alone as the only man at the present moment to whose voice all Europe is listening." Some people, of course, even among those who profess to be devoted followers of Christ, call him "a visionary;" but they would so describe Christ Himself if He were among us now. Now listen to what the Russian Seer says: "Every church as a church, has always been, and always must be, an institution not only foreign to but absolutely hostile to the doctrine of Christ. Either the Sermon on the Mount or the Creed must go; no man

“can believe in both.” Again: “If a man seriously believes the Sermon on the Mount, the Nicene Creed must inevitably lose all meaning for him.” This feeling is increasing in Europe. The cry from many earnest souls is, “Go back to Jesus;” and this should be the cry of the Christians of Liberia and in all West Africa. They should labour to emancipate themselves from the spiritual trammels which have been imposed upon them. They should study the Bible for themselves and learn from it how they may be Christians and yet escape from the yoke of a church conceived on Roman, Teutonic, and Anglo-Saxon lines. They should follow the exhortation of the Apostle: “Wherefore laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking (away) unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the Throne of God.”

Among the swallows of the approaching Spring in ecclesiastical matters—the forerunners of The Coming Day—stands prominently Rev. R. J. Campbell of the London City Temple. He has recently published a remarkable book entitled “Christianity and the Social Order,” which he opens with the following striking challenge to Christendom and warning to the non-Christian world:—

“We are to-day confronted by the startling fact that in practically every part of Christendom the *overwhelming majority* of the population is alienated from Christianity as represented by the churches. In our own country nearly seventy-five per cent. of

the adult population remains permanently out of touch with organized religion. Broadly speaking, it is true that only a section of the middle class ever attends church at all; the workers, in a body, absent themselves; the professional and upper classes do the same. Not so very long ago, attendance at church was held to be a social necessity, a sort of hall mark of respectability; it is not so now. A professional or business man can be just as sure of success without church-going, as he can with it; no stigma attaches to abstention. . . . As soon as the children in our Sunday Schools reach adolescence they become lost to religious influences, or, at any rate, the male portion of them drift away.”

Here is a lesson for the Native Christians of West Africa to ponder, in view of the unrest which everywhere prevails among them. I would earnestly recommend the careful study of Mr. Campbell's book to every thinking citizen of Liberia, that they may see the dreadful pass, especially as unfolded in his chapters on Socialism, to which we are unwittingly trying to force Africa by the indiscriminate introduction into the country of the social and religious theories of Anglo-Saxondom. If I could I would put a copy of this book into the hands of every member of the Legislature of Liberia.

You will see, then, that for life and effective work in this country, the Liberians need to be *emancipated* from the social, industrial and religious theories which they have brought with them from America. When they have been emancipated they will

“—————discern, unseen before,
The path to higher destinies.”

They will then feel the necessity of ILLUMINATION—enlightenment as to the laws governing the true life of the African in Africa. Our people know very little of the laws which regulate and fix the course and destiny of this life.

The first Pilgrim fathers, before they left America, organized a Baptist Church, in Richmond, Virginia, went on board the "Elizabeth," as a Church, landed at Monrovia thus organized and founded the Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia. There were a few individuals of other denominations among the first immigrants but they were not organized. The Baptist Church then was the first institution of the kind in Liberia—and the only institution of any kind, which has maintained unbroken continuity for eighty-six years. This church then has a right and a claim, which it ought at once to assert, to form itself into an organization to develop the true African Religion begotten by the teachings and nourished by the pure and sincere milk of the words of Christ.

Perhaps it cannot do this now ; it cannot see the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—because the sound of the Egyptian chariots is yet in its ears ; and the marks on its body of the lash of the Egyptian task-masters are yet unobiterated. But the time will come—and is perhaps nearer than we think—when without effort, without struggle, the morning star on the Baptist banner will fade into the brilliant light of the Sun of Righteousness. President Barclay, in his admirable State Paper delivered to the Legislature the other day, told us that the stoppage of immigration from America has given to the Liberians the opportunity or forced

upon them the necessity of studying the aborigines—the life and back bone of the country.

Our white friends in America do not now take the same interest in the emigration of the Negroes to Africa that they did forty or fifty years ago. Then the politicians wished to get rid of the surplus Negro population as a burden and a menace, and the philanthropists wanted to found a nation on the American model of repatriated Africans in Africa ; while the Christians wanted to establish a centre in West Africa for the evangelisation of the continent. But time has changed all that. The politicians now want the blacks to remain in America to plant cotton ; the philanthropists do not see why they should not be happy in the South, especially in the Black Belt, where if they do not now they will soon outnumber the whites ; while the Christians are not enthusiastic over the results of their two generations of expenditure of life and treasure upon what experience and science are now telling them is a hopeless task. They now feel that the work of evangelisation had better be left to the Africans themselves. The white Presbyterian and white Baptists have retired from the scene.

Americans generally are also beginning to recognise that the manifest destiny in their country is the blending in material political and religious work of the conglomerate forces existing in the land. So far as Liberia is concerned, the aim of its leaders is to make the Republic an essentially African State. That is what is implied in the recent amendment of the Constitution substituting the word *Negro* for *coloured*. Liberia is, then, first and foremost a Negro State. That is its basis and that must be

its superstructure. All efforts to de-Negroise it will prove abortive. To have a little bit of South Carolina, of Georgia, of Virginia as component elements of the State is not progress. We do not want the same thing in Africa we left in America. Progress is difference. The object of the Christianity we profess is that "the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed;" it is not to suppress individuality but to develop and emphasize it.

I smile when I hear some Liberians express the apprehension that if they were to conform to the laws of Africa—the constitution established by Nature—they would be internationally ostracised. Why I am sure that our national status would be immensely advanced and our international relations strengthened. England and France and Germany and the United States would be too pleased to welcome a new plant, if genuine, in the flora of the nations. At any rate, it is better to be censured or even ridiculed for being yourself than applauded for trying to be somebody else.

Tennyson, who, in some respects, may be called the Virgil of England, the greatest exponent of the Imperial idea—says:—

' The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The desire for emphatic racial distinction is a normal one—natural to men of every race and clime. Beranger, the recognised exponent of French patriotism, says:—

"J' aime qu'un Russe soit Russe
Et qu'un Anglais soit Anglais;
Si l'on est Prussien en Prusse,
En France soyons Francais."

" I like that a Russian should be a Russian,
And that an Englishman should be English;
If they are Prussians in Prussia,
In France let us be Frenchmen."

Since we are not to get emigrants from America just now and we have emphasized by Constitutional provision the aspiration of the nation for racial distinctiveness, it is wisdom to study our surroundings and get light on the subject. The race in its integrity is in the interior. There is the *Veritas interrita*, as illustrated in the heading of the *African Mail*. We are but fragments of it; and without the rock whence we were hewn we are but vanishing fragments.

The great European Powers, who, since the memorable and disreputable scramble five-and-twenty years ago, have been trying to govern the natives according to the laws of Europe, have found out their mistake, chiefly through the information imparted to them by their own travellers, who have run to and fro in Africa and have increased knowledge, Mary Kingsley being in the lead. They have now understood that Africa has a social, industrial and religious system, which has been in existence for milleniums, and they are making strenuous and praiseworthy efforts to study it. They recognise that the proper function of education is to help Nature; therefore, they want to know the direction in which Nature is going that they may assist her movements. The failure of their former

methods—the dislocations, disintegrations and exterminations resulting from them—show that they were wrong; that where they did not produce corpses they created apes and criminals.

The January (1908) number of the *Journal of the African Society* contains interesting articles on these efforts to study the Native and to codify Native laws by Germany and England. France has long since done this. “In accordance with a recent resolution of the Reichstag, a Commission has been appointed for the study of Native Law in the German Colonies.”

Liberia has not yet the illumination necessary on this subject. She has lately been giving attention (and we can hardly blame her for this, having regard to her foreign relations and responsibilities), to codifying laws made on foreign models by her legislature during the last sixty years. But recent discoveries of travel and science are revealing the fact that every race, every State, which is to lead a life of its own, has a constitution existing in the nature of things, written in “the manuscripts of God.” It cannot be read at once and adopted by sudden enactment. It comes to the knowledge of the people by slow degrees, by years and years of experiment and experience. The Constitution of England has grown and continues to grow out of circumstances.

“Broadening slowly down,
From precedent to precedent.”

Liberia, as she stands, is racially an unconstitutional State in Africa. She has made laws for her social, industrial and religious government in conflict

with the natural Constitution of the country, and she finds that in many instances her laws or so-called laws are null and void because against the established order of Nature. We need, then, you will see, *Illumination* as to the laws of African life. We must learn to occupy the standpoint of our aboriginal brother, and to believe that in his place there is no man under the sun better than or equal to him.

I have said that every race has a contribution to make towards the welfare of the whole of mankind that no other race can make. But no race can do this which does not see in itself an image of its Creator. A foreign poet has said:—

“The Ethiop’s God has Ethiop’s lips,
Black cheeks and woolly hair;
The Grecian God a Grecian face,
As keen-eyed, cold and fair.”

Voltaire, who denounced the god brought to his country, was condemned as an infidel. But he could not recognise in the Christ brought from Rome the Jesus of Nazareth, of Bethlehem, of Bethany, of the Mount of Beatitudes or the Sea of Galilee, and in the rush of patriotic impulse exclaimed, “Dieu n’est pas Français”—God is not French. Mr. Alexander G. Fraser, in the *Church Missionary Review* (February, 1908), says:—

“Keshub Chunder Sen has told us that the Christ that we to-day preach in India is an English Christ, an Englishman, with the customs and manners of an Englishman about him, and the acceptance of whose message means denationalisation, and who, therefore, must raise hostility in every true son of India.”

Similar feeling must possess us. The Christ we worship must be an African; and, as I have said above, the Christ revealed in the Bible is far more African than anything else. Hence all the pictures drawn by Europeans professing to represent Him are false for us. Another writer in the same number of the *Review* just quoted makes the following reference to Japan:—

“There is in Japan a wise commingling of what is best in their own with what is best in Western civilisation. Everything in Japan is Japanese to its very core. They speak English, but it is with a view to seeking out and adopting in Japan the best England has to offer. Their National Religion is Buddhism, but it is Japanese Buddhism, quite different from the Buddhism of India or Ceylon. Their law is based on German law, yet it is quite different from the law of Germany. Their educational system was re-organised after the American fashion; nevertheless it is quite different from the American style of education. They seem to know the art of “Japanising” everything. With such National ideas firmly rooted in their minds, it is no wonder that the Japanese rose to a man during the recent Russo-Japanese war and obtained their astonishing success.”

Japan has not only retained a peculiar devotion to Fatherland but has developed it into a religion. A Japanese Editor said not long since: “Our country is our idol and patriotism our first doctrine. From the Emperor downwards the vast majority have no other religion.” And this feeling is not peculiar to Japan. An English lord once asked what was his religion replied, “I do not know. I have not seen the last Act of Parliament.”

I cannot close this lengthy discussion without referring to a little incident. A European gentleman, who, a few days ago, saw the published notice of this Lecture, said he could guess what the three needs of Liberia were. Asked what he thought they were, he replied Population, Money, Brains.

At first blush, to one acquainted with the history of the Republic, these would be the obvious needs; but they are all embraced as results in the three needs I have had the honour to bring before you to-day. If we can supply these needs every thing else will follow. Without a correct knowledge of the path we are to pursue, population, money and brain would bring swifter destruction. Some years ago, when the Americo-Liberian population was larger, and there was an affluence of educational facilities and a good supply of brains, we got a loan from England of one hundred thousand pounds. That loan was the occasion of the death of the President and other prominent citizens. This was a melancholy result; but it belonged to the necessary elements of our education. I was personally acquainted with the President and was opposed to the loan before it was negotiated because I knew that if he could carry out the schemes he had set before himself, which the money would have enabled him to do, he would have sent foxes with firebrands attached to their tails throughout the standing corn of the Republic and produced a general conflagration. We should thank God that Liberia in her blindness has had neither the population, the money nor the brains we thought desirable. Every thing would have been established on the American model. The aborigines would have shared the fate of the North American Indians and

a caste system would have been established as oppressive as anything in the Southern States. It has been mercifully arranged by a wise and benevolent Providence in the true interests of Liberia and of Africa that we should have no millions at our disposal, for we should have endeavoured to realise the dreams and visions we brought from the house of bondage. Money, not the love of it, would have been the root of all the evils.

When we have applied ourselves to the studies I have recommended these dangers will no longer threaten us, for we shall then have the necessary *Illumination*, which will lead to the supply of the third and last need I have referred to, viz., HARMONIZATION. We shall know and understand our surroundings; we shall coalesce with the aborigines like kindred drops of water, and going in with them, incorporating and being incorporated by them, we shall form one great, strong, populous, prosperous African State under the name and style, if we prefer it, of the *Republic of Liberia*. To summarize then our needs in one sentence: they are, Emancipation from many things we have been taught; Illumination as to many things we have not been taught; Harmonization with our surroundings as a result of this Freedom and Light.

One of the most hopeful auguries for the future of Liberia is the admission into our financial and police affairs of the co-operation of England. She has often been charged by thoughtless and irresponsible politicians with the desire of swallowing up Liberia. Now I am in a position and have been in that position for many years, to state that there is not

the slightest foundation for such a suspicion. I think that the British Government are rather anxious to increase the importance and efficiency of Liberia as an independent buffer State, as a safeguard against complications than to reduce it to the political insignificance of a Colony or Protectorate.

Some pretend to think it a discredit for Liberia to seek extraneous help in her affairs, others believe such help indispensable. My own opinion on this point has been known for many years. Why should Liberians think it a discredit that they need the help of Anglo-Saxons to enable them to rule on the Anglo-Saxon lines on which their Republic has been established, especially when this assistance would enable them sooner to find out and follow the natural lines that make for their true life? The question is not one of intellectual capacity; it is one of particular adaptation for a particular kind of work. It is no disgrace to a blacksmith that he cannot build a brick house or to an engineer that he cannot navigate a ship. I believe in the good intentions of England. No one who has watched for forty years, as I have done, the course and results of British administration in West Africa, but must acknowledge that with all its drawbacks, with all its want of continuity, its often incompleted plans of magnificent purpose, its unfinished excellences, it is a real blessing to Africa and the Africans. To say this is almost an impertinent platitude. I apologise if apology is necessary. But I can assure Liberians that the present attitude of Great Britain in and towards Liberia, if intelligently and loyally appreciated, cannot fail to promote the future material welfare and moral progress not only of the Republic but of untold millions in Africa and out of it.

M. Maurice Delafosse, late Consul of France in Liberia, has written in the *Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique Française* for November, 1907, an extremely interesting and suggestive review of Sir Harry Johnstone's History of Liberia. It is impossible not to recognise and to respect the practical proof given throughout this able article of the deep and earnest interest felt in the true progress and prosperity of Liberia by not a few Europeans; and this testimony coming at this moment from a distinguished Frenchman should be particularly grateful and encouraging to Liberians. M. Delafosse says:—

“ It does not follow because the Liberia as constituted between 1822 and 1899 may have failed, that the new Liberia differently constituted should not succeed; and no one wishes more ardently than myself that the success and the future of these people, who for nearly a century have been struggling, after all courageously, and under circumstances in which certain European nations might probably have foundered. If the Liberians will only listen to their true friends, who do not on occasion spare necessary criticisms; if they will decide to cherish an African ideal and African conceptions; if they will give up before all things their puritanic fanaticism; if they will welcome loyally the idea of the co-operation of Europeans in the economic development of their country; if they will support and sustain the Barclays when they have the good fortune to find them, there cannot fail to be brilliant pages in reserve for Liberia in the history of the future of Africa.”

