[As this admirable address, we learn, is to be printed in pamphlet form, we confine ourselves to a few extracts showing the force and justness of the sentiments, the beauty of the illustrations, and the eloquence of the language used by the esteemed author:]

ADDRESS BY REV. E. W. BLYDEN.

To-day we celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of the Independence of Liberia. We are entering upon the nineteenth year of our national career. Amid various […gements] and difficulties, joys and sorrows—in sunshine and shadow—we have held on our way. We are laying the foundations of empire on this coast. We are inaugurating what others must take up and continue. With all our failings and deficiencies, we are obviously the agents in the hands of the Great Ruler in doing an important work.

The foundation of Liberia was laid under circumstances peculiar in the history of the world. The immigrants were urged to these shores by motives far different from those which led to the forming of other colonies. They were not a restless people, who, finding their advancement to wealth and honors in their native country too slow for their ambitions and enterprising minds, resolved to accelerate their dilatory fortunes beneath a foreign sky. They were not persons who had once been in a condition of opulence and splendor, and who, having fallen by luxury and extravagance into penury and disrepute, sought new scenes to repair their shattered fortunes. They were not politicians adhering to some new principle in politics deemed by them all important, and seeking some new field for its untrammeled exercise and fair development. They were not the victims of religious persecution fleeing from the horrors of an enthralled conscience. No. Had they belonged t any of these classes they might, perhaps, have contented themselves with cultivating small farms and reaping slow gains; they might have taken fresh courage, and by patient industry, restored measurably their dilapidated fortunes; they might have changed their political or theological views, rather than brave the dangers and undergo the privations of founding a home, and residing in a country proverbial for its unhealthy and dangerous climate. But they belonged to none of these classes. They were a peculiar people.

They were those who themselves or whose ancestors had been, in the Providence of God, suffered to be carried away from heathenism into slavery, among a civilized and christian people; and who, from the degradation necessarily attached in all countries to those in any way related to slaves,

could not rise. The force of circumstances over which they had no control kept them down—hopelessly down. They felt the depression; they saw its causes. They felt the deteriorating effects of these causes upon their minds and the minds of their children; and they found that it was useless to contend against these unfavorable influences. They saw clearly that to remain in that land and contend against what they could have no reasonable hope of overcoming, would be no more than "beating the air." They, therefore, concluded that it would be wisdom in them, if they desired to possess a home for themselves and their children, where they might enjoy those rights and immunities which their neighbors enjoyed, to direct their attention to some other scene. Earnestly did they look abroad for some "Asylum from the deep degradation." At length the west coast of Africa was fixed upon as offering the greatest inducements for the settlement of Africans. They left the land of their birth—forsook the scenes and associations of their childhood, and came, with hearts heavy and distressed, to this far off and barbarous shore—*forced*, by irresistible circumstances, from their native country in their poverty and ignorance, to seek a home where to be of African descent would involve no disgrace.

They came having *seen* their operations, but never having studied or learned the moral and political principles which prevailed in their native land. They came then to found a home with nothing more to depend upon than the capabilities of memory to recall what they had seen and heard. They came to imitate words and actions, for they could not practice and inculcate principles. Their knowledge, such as it was, consisted of vague generalities.

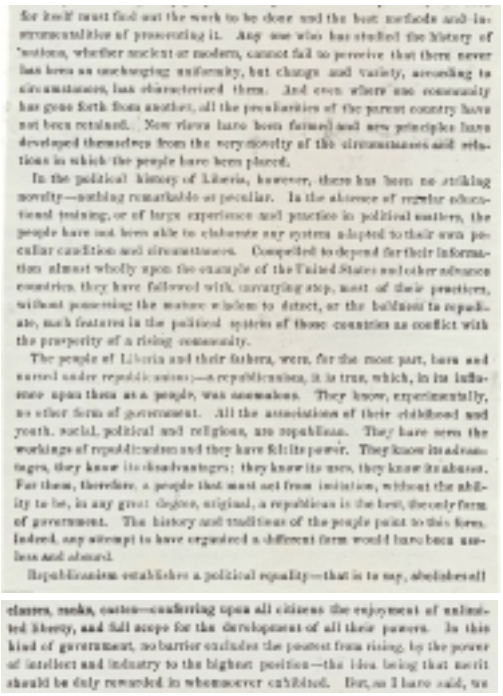
And then they had no brilliant ancestry from whose magnificent achievements they could gather inspiration. All the past was dark to them. No sacred bard sung to them of the exploits of their fathers. There may have been great men in their ancestral land to which, as perfect strangers, they were now returning; illustrious deeds may have been performed; but, alas! no poet had recorded them,—*Vivere fortes ante Agamemnona, &c.* *****

> "In vain the chief's, the sage's pride;
> They had no poet, and they died;
> In vain they plann'd, in vain they bled;
> They had no poet, and are dead." †

Such were the people who came to establish Liberia; such the circumstances under which Liberia was founded.

Every nation and every people has its peculiar work to perform, and each

for itself must find out the work to be done and the best methods and instrumentalities of prosecuting it. Any one who has studied the history of nations, whether ancient or modern, cannot fail to perceive that there never has been an unchanging uniformity, but change and variety, according to circumstances, has characterized them. And even where one community has gone forth from another, all the peculiarities of the parent country have not been retained. New views have been formed and new principles have developed themselves from the very novelty of the circumstances and relationsin which the people have been placed.



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In the political history of Liberia, however, three has been no striking novelty—nothing remarkable or peculiar. In the absence of regular educational training, or of large experience and practice in political matters, the people have not been able to elaborate any system adapted to their own peculiar condition and circumstances. Compelled to depend for their information almost wholly upon the example of the United States and other advance countries, they have followed with unvarying step, most of their practices, without possessing the mature wisdom of those countries as conflict with the prosperity of a rising community.

The people of Liberia and their fathers, were, for the most part, born and nursed under republicanism;—a republicanism, it is true, which, in its influence upon them as a people, was anomalous. They know, experimentally, no other form of government. All the associations of their childhood and youth, social, political and religious, are republican. They have seen the workings of republicanism and they have felt its power. They know its advantages, they know its disadvantages; they know its uses, they know its abuses. For them, therefore, a people that must act from imitation, without the ability to be, in any great degree, original, a republican is the best, the only form of government. The history and traditions of the people point to this form. Indeed, any attempt to have organized a different form would have been useless and absurd.

classes, ranks, castes—conferring upon all citizens the enjoyment of unlimited liberty, and full scope for the development of all their powers. In this kind of government, no barrier excludes the poorest from rising, by the power of intellect and industry to the highest position—the idea being that merit should be duly rewarded in whomsoever exhibited. But, as I have said, we

Republicanism establishes a political equality—that is to say, abolishes all classes, ranks, castes—conferring upon all citizens the enjoyment of unlimited liberty, and full scope for the development of all their powers. In this kind of government, no barrier excludes the poorest from rising, by the power of intellect and industry to the highest position—the idea being that merit should be duly rewarded in whomsoever exhibited. But, as I have said, we

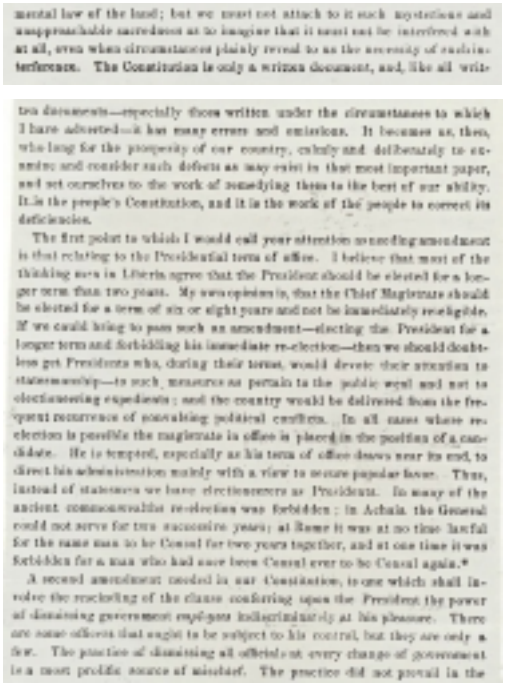
have reversed the principle. We have put "*Because* in the place of *Although*." We seem to hold that men should occupy high and responsible places *because* they are poor and in humble circumstances. With us the argument seems to be that the Abraham Lincoln's and Andrew Johnson's should be raised to the highest authority *because* they are rail-splitters and tailors. But that is not the idea. The idea in which we should glory is not that men are made rulers and exalted to the highest dignity *because* they belong to the humbler classes; but, rather that, *although* belonging to the humbler classes, they *may* be elevated if they manifest talent and prove meritorious.

A correct republicanism does not claim that all men are intellectually and morally equal; on the contrary, it teaches that only men of merit should be elevated, and in proportion to their merit. But all men have not merit; nor do those who have, possess it in the same degree, hence inequality; and a true republicanism is discriminating. The journeymen who worked in the shop with Andrew Johnson have not been heard of—and why not, if Johnson was raised *because* he was a *tailor*? They were tailors as well as he; but it happened that they were tailors and *nothing more*.

To talk of all men being in every respect equal is simply to indulge in an idle dream. But, despite all theory and speculation, Nature will have its way. We must be content for those to rise whom Nature has gifted. Envy and jealousy are foolish things. A man will go to the place for which his natural force fits him. Because I or my relative cannot achieve what another can, must I, therefore, envy that other man and try to pull him down? If Lord Derby's language be correct, such a course is "worse than a crime—a blunder." Would it not be wiser in me to endeavor to discharge faithfully my own duty in the sphere to which is has pleased God to call me? God calls men to their ability and station in life. No man can determine his own force of mind. He may by industry and perseverance greatly improve its scope and capacity; but he can no more determine its original, native bent than he can determine his own stature. It is a "gross blunder," then, to fret and worry about another's gifts and talents, and fail to improve our own. This is very important for us to bear in mind in Liberia; for we are all sons of Zebedee, all anxious to sit, some on the right, and others on the left, of majesty.

Our Constitution needs various amendments. It is of very great importance that the utmost care should be exercised in interfering with the funda-

mental law of the land; but we must not attach to it such mysterious and unapproachable sacredness as to imagine that it must not be interfered with at all, even when circumstances plainly reveal to us the necessity of such interference. The Constitution is only a written document, and, like all written documents—especially those written under the circumstances to which I have adverted—it has many errors and omissions. It becomes us, then, who long for the prosperity of our country, calmly and deliberately to examine and consider such defects as may exist in that most important paper, and set ourselves to the work of remedying them to the best of our ability. It is the people's Constitution, and it is the work of the people to correct its deficiencies.



The first point to which I would call your attention as needing amendment is that relating to the Presidential term of office. I believe that most of the thinking men in Liberia agree that the President should be elected for a longer term than two years. My own opinion is, that the Chief Magistrate should be elected for a term of six or eight years and not be immediately re-eligible. If we could bring to pass such an amendment—electing the President for a longer term and forbidding his immediate re-election—then we should doubtless get Presidents who, during their terms, wold devote their attention to statesmanship—to such measures as pertain to the public weal and not to electioneering expedients; and the country would be delivered from the frequent recurrence of convulsing political conflicts. In all cases where re-election is possible the magistrate in office is placed in the position of a candidate. He is tempted, especially as his term of office draws near its end, to direct his administration mainly with a view to secure popular favor. Thus, instead of statesmen we have electioneers as Presidents. In many of the ancient commonwealths re-election was forbidden; in Achaia the General could not serve for two successive years; at Rome it was at no time lawful for the same man to be Consul for two years together, and at one time it was forbidden for a man who had once been Consul ever to be Consul again.*

A second amendment needed in our Constitution, is one which shall involve the rescinding of the clause conferring upon the President the power of dismissing government *employees* indiscriminately at his pleasure. There are some officers that ought to be subject to his control, but they are only a few. The practice of dismissing all officials at every change of government is a most prolific source of mischief. The practice did not prevail in the

United States government when it was as youthful as we are. "Up to the time of General Jackson, in 1829, all the government *employees*, civil and military, with a very few specified exceptions, held office, as in England, during life and good behaviour, were never removed for their political opinions, and never changed with any change of administration. By the Constitution the control over all these offices, as well as the appointment to them, was vested in the Chief Executive, the sanction of the Senate being required in only a few cases; but it is worthy of remark that this absolute power over the government *employees* was only conferred upon the President after long discussion and by a very narrow majority. The clause affirming it only passed the Senate by the casting vote of the Vice President, and in the long debates that it gave rise to, the idea that any chief of the State could so far disgrace himself and damage the community as to abuse the power conferred for personal or electioneering purposes was scouted as an insult and a chimera. Nor was it abused until the advent of General Jackson, who brooked the doctrine "that to the victors belong the spoils." During Washington's eight years of administration, he only removed *nine* persons from office,—one a foreign minister, at the instance of the French Directory; the other eight for cause assigned. Politics had nothing to do with any of the cases. Adams also removed *nine* subordinate officers, but none for political reasons. Jefferson removed *thirty-nine*, but, as he solemnly declared, and was ready to prove, not one of them because their political opinions differed from his own. Madison made *five* removals; Monroe *nine*; John Quincy Adams only *two*.

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Another mistake in our Constitution and laws is the arrangement which causes several months to elapse between the election of the President and his inauguration—from *May* to *January*— which gives his predecessor, if he be of an opposing party, a long time during which to carry out his party views. Our arrangement is alarmingly defective, for instead of four months, as in the United States, we allow fully eight months to the dissentient minority to carry out their purposes. This is a defect that calls loudly for immediate remedy.

These changes, as I have said, depend upon the will of the people; but we must remember that the people cannot be brow-beaten into them. They have to be reasoned with and convinced by patient and persevering argument. The enterprise of persuading and convincing them deserves the utmost exertion of true patriots. The reward with which such efforts will be crowned

is no less than the emancipation of the body politic from fatally injurious influences and the introduction among us of salutary conditions of national existence, under which we may go on prospering and to prosper.

If any man who has lived in Liberia two years cannot come to believe in the ability of the negro race, under favorable circumstances, to maintain an organized, regular and adequate government, that man has mistaken his country—he should at once pack up bag and baggage and transfer his residence to a more congenial clime. And I go further, and say if any man at all acquainted with the history of this country does not see the hand of God plainly guiding and directing our affairs, in all the past, that man would not have seen the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night before the Israelites.

It is provoking to hear men sometimes going around and despising themselves and disparaging the opportunities for usefulness in the country; indulging in the most doleful prophecies of the future. Such a disposition is the very kind to kill all enterprise and to extinguish every noble aspiration. These persons have no confidence in Liberia's stability. For them the future is nothing. They are ever looking backward to the past. They pray daily and nightly for the restoration of things as they were. For them the sun must always stand still, and Jordan always flow backward. These men would glory in a resuscitation of the dark ages. But those days can never return. The school-master is abroad. Light and knowledge are multiplying. The future is upon us, however we may depreciate it. We cannot prevent its advent. "The only way," says Victor Hugo, "to refuse *to-morrow* is to die." Oh, let us bestir ourselves. Let us come to the conclusion that we will do all we can to secure for Liberia a future—a glorious future. To live without such a prospect is to be dead.

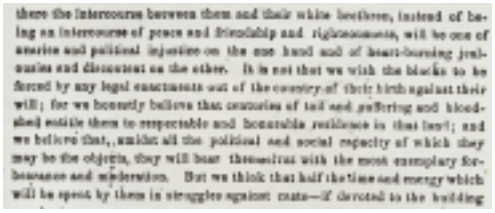
We are engaged here on this coast in a great and noble work. We cannot easily exaggerate the magnitude of the interests involved in the enterprise to which we are committed. Not only the highest welfare of the few thousands who now compose the Republic, but the character of a whole race is implicated in what we are doing. Let us then endeavor to rise up to the "height of this great argument" There are times when the most thoughtless cannot but reflect on the condition of the State. Within the last two years, the most unconcerned has been obliged to think; and we all, now and then, have misgivings as to the perpetuity of our liberties on this coast. But

"difficulty is the rude and rocking cradle of every kind of excellence." * and it is better that these seasons of misgivings should come than that there should be an easy tranquility and undisturbed complacency when there is so much still to be accomplished. Something has been done; but what is the little we have achieved compared to what has still to be done! The little of the past dwindles into insignificance before the mighty work of the future.

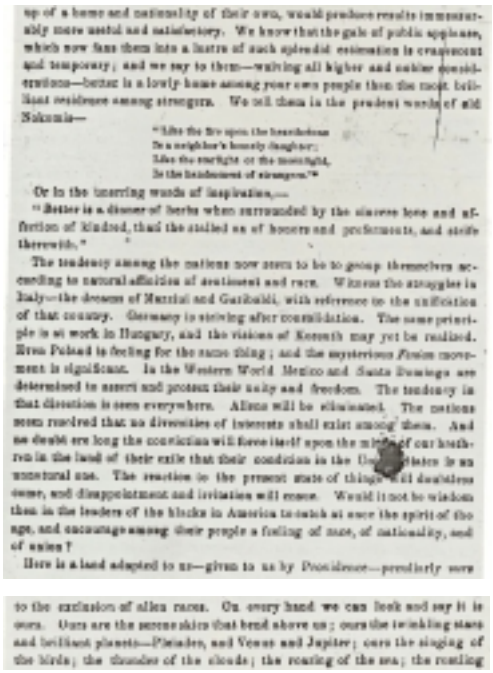
Das wenige vershwindet leicht dem Blicke
Der vorwarts sicht wie viel mockubrig bleibt. †

We are more eagerly watched than we have any idea of. The nations are looking to see whether "order and law, religion and morality, the rights of conscience, the rights of persons, and the rights of property, may all be secured" by a government controlled entirely and purely by negroes. Oh, let us not by any unwise actions compel them to decide in the negative.

The parallel has often been instituted between the case of the Jews in Egypt and that of the descendents of Africa in the United States; and we think that the comparison is correct. Indeed, God himself, by the mouth of His prophet, has suggested the comparison, and, certainly, in the wonderful preservation and multiplication of our people in the land of their bondage; in the cruel and oppressive laws made against them a little before their deliverance; in the series of astounding events attending their emancipation; in all these particulars, they resemble the Jews. But is the parallel to stop there? Are they to sojourn in the land of their bondage? Are they to find a resting place in the home of their oppressors? We at least may be permitted to doubt it. We greatly fear that should the blacks continue to dwell three the intercourse between them and their white brethren, instead of being an intercourse of peace and friendship and righteousness, will be one of avarice and political justice on the one hand and of heart-burning jealousies and discontent on the other. It is not that we wish the blacks to be forced by any legal enactments out of the country of their birth against their will; for we honestly believe that centuries of toil and suffering and bloodshed entitle them to respectable and honorable residence in that land; and we believe that, amidst all the political and social rapacity of which they may be he objects, they will bear themselves with the most exemplary forbearance and moderation. But we think that half the time and energy which will be spent by them in struggles against caste—if devoted to the building



up of a home and nationality of their own, would produce results immeasurably more useful and satisfactory. We know that the gale of public applause, which now fans them into a lustre of such splendid estimation is evanescent and temorary; and we say to them—waiving all higher and nobler considerations—better is a lowly home among your own people than the most brilliant residence among strangers. We tell them in the prudent words of old Nokomis—



> "Like the fire upon the hearthstone
> Is a neighbor's homely daughter;
> Like the starlight or the moonlight,
> Is the handsomest of strangers." *

Or is the unerring words of inspiration,—

"Better is a dinner of herbs when surrounded by the sincere love and affection of kindred, than the stalled ox of honors and preferments, and strife therewith."

The tendency among the nations now seem to be to group themselves according to natural affinities of sentiment and race. Witness the struggles in Italy—the dreams of Mazziui and Garibaldi, with reference to the unification of that country. Germany is striving after consolidation. The same principle is at work in Hungary, and the visions of Kossuth may yet be realized. Even Poland is feeling for the same thing; and the mysterious *Fenian* movement is significant. In the Western World Mexico and Santo Domingo are determined to assert and protect their unity and freedom. The tendency in that direction is seen everywhere. Aliens will be eliminated. The nations seem resolved that no diversities of interests shall exist among them. And no doubt ere long the conviction will force itself upon the minds of our brethren in the land of their exile that their condition in the Uni[ted] States is an unnatural one. The reaction to the present state of things will doubtless come, and disappointment and irritation will ensue. Would it not be wisdom then in the leaders of the blacks in America to catch at once the spirit of the age, and encourage among their people a feeling of race, of nationality, and of union?

Here is a land adapted to us—given to us by Providence—peculiarly *ours* to the exclusion of alien races. On *every* hand we can look and say it is ours. Ours are the serene skies that bend above us; ours the twinkling stars and brilliant planets—Pleiades, and Venus and Jupiter; ours the singing of the birds; the thunder of the clouds; the roaring of the sea; the rustling

of the forest; the murmurs of the brooks, and the whispers of the breeze. The miry swamp sending out disease and death is also ours, and ourse the malignant fever,—all are *ours*.

"No pent up Utica contracts our powers
The whole boundless continent is ours."

And here if we would have our race honored and respected, we should try to build up a nation. "The greatest engine of moral power known to human affairs," says Edward Everett, "is an organized, prosperous State. All that man in his individual capacity can do—all that he can effect by his private fraternities, by his ingenious discoveries and wonder of art, or by his influence over others—is as nothing, compared with the collective, perpetuated influence on human affairs and human happiness of a well constituted, powerful commonwealth."

We have made a fair beginning, of such a commonwealth. Here we are, with all our unfavorable antecedents, still, after eighteen years of struggle, an independent nation. We have the germ of an African empire. Let us, fellow-citizens, guard the trust committed to our hands. The tribes in the distant interior are waiting for us. We have made some impression on the coast; and, God helping us, we shall make wider and deeper impressions, and as those regions have bloomed and blossomed as the rose, whither our influence has already extended, so the regions beyond, as our influence expands, shall receive the same blessing—the wilderness and he solitary place shall be glad for us—until the whole land becomes a garden of the Lord. The light entrusted to us will be passed from tribe to tribe until we encircle the land in a glorious blaze—realizing the beautiful prophetic vision—

"I saw the expecting regions stand,
To catch the coming flame in turn;
I saw from ready hand to hand
The bright, but struggling glory burn.

And each, as she received the flame,
Lighted her altar with its ray;
Then smiling to the next which came,
Speeded it on its sparkling way."

And let us in giving an impulse to civilization on this continent take warning from the examples of other nations, and so demean ourselves that Liberia may eventually stand among the foremost nations of the earth "free from the blood of all men," with laurels unspotted and pure, and with a prosperity untarnished by the tears and anguish and blood of weaker races.