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LETTER FROM AFRICA.

To the Corresponding Secretary of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

MONROVIA, WEST AFRICA, Jan. 1, 1838.

Rev. and Dear Sir:—It would be an act of injustice to you, and doing violence to my own feelings, to neglect the present very favourable opportunity of giving you a brief account of myself and this part of Africa since my arrival here. It cannot be presuming too much to say, that no other individual who has ever visited Liberia has had greater reason to return thanks to the all-wise Disposer of events, for life, and health, and temporal blessings, than myself: in truth, language is alike inadequate to express the many favours and mercies which I have been the daily recipient of, or the overflowing emotions of my heart in thankfulness when I attempt to recount them.

It is now better than five months since my arrival in Africa, and to the present I have not been prevented by sickness a single day from attending to the calls of my profession; one chill and three light paroxysms of intermitting fever have constituted the amount of my sufferings by the much-dreaded African fever.

The oldest inhabitants of this place, and many captains who have been for years trading along this coast, say that the degree of health which I have enjoyed stands unparalleled in the histories of all the white men who have taken up a residence in Africa. Surely I have been permitted to dwell in safety where many have fallen, and to abide securely under the great shadow of the Almighty's wings, for which I desire to laud and magnify his high and holy name.

My duties have necessarily been somewhat arduous, owing to the fact that for the last four months the colonial physician, Dr. Bacon, has been, and is still, absent on a tour along the coast. To those of the colonists who are able to pay, I make a reasonable charge, but by far the greatest portion are destitute of means to render any compensation whatever; to such I have been administering the medicines which belong to our missionary society, and giving my services, day and night, without fee or reward. The governor requested me to open an account with the board of managers of the American Colonization Society, and he would pass and present the bill; but as that society has one in its employ, and in regular pay, to attend the poor, I have concluded to make no charges against it, as some might imagine that by such proceedings the Methodist Missionary Society's physician is remunerated for his services to the mission.

The time to me glides onward with a rapidity that I have never before experienced; I am much more pleasantly situated than I expected to be. I board at the mission house with the Rev. John Seys. We are a family bound together by the ties of christian fellowship and brotherly love, all striving anxiously to advance the common cause for which we have been sent; and in endeavouring to do so we daily realize, while attending to our several departments, that we are labouring in an interesting and highly responsible part of the great moral vineyard.

Life in Africa is fraught with the most interesting combination of changes and events that the human mind is capable of enduring. It is one continued scene of grand experiments and phenomena presented to the view by each succeeding day, as the result of the one which preceded it; the mind is kept constantly occupied in contemplating the peculiarities of the climate, soil, productions, manners and habits of its rude uncultivated inhabitants. Residing as we do among the colonists, and witnessing their praiseworthy efforts to establish themselves in the land of their ancestry, we cannot but throw our minds back to the period when Africa stood pre-eminently high among the nations of the earth; and leaving that time we pass down through the centuries and changes which caused her high places to be broken down under the heavy pressure of idolatry and Mohammedanism, until we come at the last few centuries, when we find a new series of barbarities and Vandalic cruelty instituted against this poor devoted country. We find her compelled to yield her life's blood from every pore to enhance other nations, while she becomes desolate and waste. If the people of the United States could only have the sights presented to their view which we are compelled to witness daily, if they could see the number of slave ships which are continually hovering around this coast, in order to carry on the unhalloved traffic, I am sure their feelings would be elicited in the behalf of her whose breath is as pure, whose climate as congenial, soil as productive, and water as refreshing as any other country under the heavens, but whose moral condition and intellectual faculties are shrouded in darkness by the influence of the gloomy raven of superstition which has been permitted to brood over this land for so many hundred years, that it now presents to the mind's view nothing save a gloomy wilderness of dying thoughts. Dwelling as we do where we every day witness the conflict which is carried on between christianity and heathenism, and the ascendancy of the former over the latter, we cannot but perceive the advantages accruing in a double point of view from the colonization system, and in uniting with them in offering up our most sincere prayers to Him who rules in the councils of men, that he will grant success to the benevolent enterprise, and make it a means by which the knowledge of the true God may be made known to this benighted people.

Previous to my leaving America I made use of every possible effort to obtain a correct knowledge of Liberia and the colonists, by diligently studying the different colonization publications, and the various accounts which have been written by individuals who have resided here; yet I must confess that upon many subjects I was sceptical, because I was where the public ear was daily filled with the soundings of long and eloquent addresses from a class of men whom I considered too conscientious to make misstatements, and too well informed to be ignorant of the true condition of the coloured race who come here as colonists.

It was altogether impossible for me not to give credence to any of the descriptions and accounts of Liberia given by abolition gentlemen in their enthusiastic and spirited speeches, where they would allude so frequently to the ignorance, the vices, profaneness, debauchery, drunkenness, and miserably wretched and famishing state of the colony. It must be admitted that I had been taught to place some confidence in the very eloquent speeches and harangues of these men, because I could not bring myself to believe that intelligent and philanthropic gentlemen would willingly assert for fact what is wholly false and without foundation.

It will not be denied that in public addresses and private circles they represent the emigrants who have been sent here, as being cast ashore to wander up and down a barren coast, in an unprotected state, having neither houses nor food, but left in that destitute condition, exhibiting the lowest extreme of degradation and misery, until sickness approaches and death ensues, which they welcome with joy, as the end of their troubles; that they are ignorant, indolent, and much given to the use and abuse of alcoholic liquors; that, as I have heard them assert, the streets of Monrovia are paved with whiskey barrels, and the side walks lined with drunken men!—that Monrovia is located on a marshy flat, surrounded by mangrove swamps, the miasmatic vapors of which are so very deleterious that life cannot be supported but for a short time, and that in a most sickly and enervated state, &c. &c. From all the information I have been able to collect, by observation and otherwise, I feel no hesitancy in pronouncing all such accounts and descriptions of Liberia and its inhabitants, to be utterly without the shadow of foundation or truth, and flagitious misrepresentations.

That you may know I am fully able to substantiate what I say, a few statistics shall be subjoined.—The town of Monrovia contains about twelve hundred inhabitants. It is situated on a cape that extends into the Atlantic, and is elevated at least seventy-five feet above the level of the ocean and rivers. The town occupies a plot of ground nearly two miles in length and one in breadth, the whole of which, about a foot below the earth's surface, presents one solid mass of iron ore, and other rocks in large quantities. There are no mangroves nearer than the opposite side of the Montserrat river—none on the cape or main land to which it is attached. The town is fanned the half of each twenty-four hours by a strong sea breeze, which sweeps across it, purifies, and renders its air salubrious. The most of the houses are well constructed and comfortable—decidedly more so than any person who has not visited them can imagine. The gardens abound in orange, lemon, tamarind, coffee, and other fruit trees. There is as great a number of valuable books and well-selected libraries in Monrovia as in any of the most enlightened villages or towns of the same size in the States.

With regard to the morals of the place, it would be gross injustice to bear any other testimony than that they are highly flattering and exemplary.

We have three large and commodious houses for public worship, built of brick and stone, (that would do credit to the appearance of a much larger town,) the tolling of whose bells for Sabbath school and divine worship, give the place quite an American air.

I have seen only one man intoxicated, and heard but one make use of profane language since I landed in Africa!

I watched them narrowly fall during the three days' election for a lieutenant governor, counsellors, and other officers, and though party spirit ran high, each having its favourite candidates, yet there was no liquor to be seen, no swearing, no fighting, nor any of the many unpleasant circumstances which I have known to take place on like occasions, and where there were a less number of qualified voters. The business of the colony is transacted according to due form of law, and it is not one of my least sources of enjoyment to visit the courts and observe the dignified manner in which they are conducted—the judge, jury, attorneys, &c. &c. of course all colonists.

It has frequently been said that the colonists and natives are not on terms of amity, and do not traffic with each other, than which nothing can be farther from the true state of the case. The fact is, our town is continually overflowing with them. They come in companies of fifties from the interior to sell us their beehives and other cattle, rice, camwood, and ivory, and to get in return articles of civilization, such as cloth, hollow wares, wash bowls, &c. &c. The citizens are all turning their attention to the cultivation of rice, sweet potatoes, corn, casava, sugar-cane, and coffee. The village of New Georgia, three miles up the Sacton creek, contains about three hundred inhabitants. Caldwell, six miles up the St. Paul's river, three hundred. Millsburg, twenty miles up the same river, two hundred inhabitants, all flourishing and thriving agricultural places.

I wish to remove, if possible, an erroneous opinion which exists in regard to the healthfulness of Monrovia. I am aware that it suffers greatly in America in comparison with Millsburg, the Pennsylvania settlement at Bassa Cove, and the Maryland colony at Cape Palmas. It is my impression that if we take into consideration the greater number of persons who have been sent and landed here, than at the other places, we will have discovered one of the reasons of the greater number of deaths. Again, it is here, that the experiment was first commenced. In Monrovia they had to bear the heat and burden of the day. They were ignorant of the climate and its influences, and alike destitute of a knowledge of the manner of subsisting and maintaining themselves. They were compelled to suffer in order to learn the ways of the country. Such has not been the necessity of any other settlement. They have had the advantages of this information without enduring a long course of hardships. They could come here and be informed how to commence the operations and carry them on successfully. Nay, more; in every instance they have employed the Monrovia men to be their pioneers, and to prepare the place for them. If we even take a bird's-eye view of the first settling of Bassa Cove, Cape Pal-

mas, and the Mississippi location, at Sinoa, we should find that they have been indebted to Monrovia for the men who first cleared the ground and secured a foothold; that this place has furnished the mechanics to erect their dwellings, and supplied their head-men in every department to rule and govern their operations.

The Maryland colony was first settled by twenty or more of our most worthy and best acclimated men, with Dr. Hall at their head, as the first governor of Cape Palmas, the doctor having previously resided in Monrovia as assistant colonial physician; and it would be no difficult task to prove, that not only the pioneers and first officers of Palmas were from Monrovia, but that from its earliest organization down to this time it has continued to draw its principal men and mechanics from us. Its present governor, lieutenant-governor, and other chief men are individuals who have been acclimated here, and for a number of years filled many of the most responsible public offices in this town.

The Pennsylvania and New-York settlement, at Bassa Cove, has always derived its most active and enterprising citizens from Monrovia, and has ever been dependent upon this place for its architects, mechanics, and physicians, and part of the time for its governor. Not only so, but it actually owes its present existence to the timely relief sent from this place, and to the succour afforded by the Monrovia troops, who fled to its rescue after the infant Bassa had been surprised and taken by the strong arm of the natives; and when, regardless of its puerile efforts or feeble strugglings, they were about to seize and dash it from its cradle, and mingle with its dying agonies the horrid triumphant rejoicings and acclamations of a cannibal festivity.

Sinoa, the Mississippi colony, (more properly the Monrovia colony,) is entirely made up of intrepid and adventurous spirits from this town: its first and only expedition was fitted out from this place, with Mr. Johnson, an old and veteran Monrovia, for governor: nor does it now possess a single colonist, from Gov. Finley to its most humble citizen, who has not passed through the acclimating African fever in Monrovia.

You will readily perceive that this place has raised up children, who, in view of self-aggrandizement, and to represent themselves in a prosperous and flourishing condition, some have even attempted to detract from the well-known popularity and justly merited pre-eminence of this place, and decry the location as sickly and ungenial, its natural advantages but few, and the character of the place unworthy of farther patronage.

Why this town should be held up to the American public as 'the grave-yard of Liberia,' I am at a loss to determine. There are no just reasons why she should be cited as the 'Golgotha of Africa;' for in reality she is the *alma mater* of all the American settlements, and continues to shed a fostering influence over the dozens of towns and settlements of Liberia, and is looked up to by each of them as a strong tower and sure defence in times of peril.

In points of enterprise Monrovia does not come in with the other settlements for a share—she deserves all; her citizens are the governors, counsellors, captains, mechanics, and main support of all the other Liberia colonies and towns. There has never been a boat or vessel launched at any of the other settlements of a size sufficient to carry a hoghead of molasses, nor do they possess any; while at this place upward of a dozen have been built, capable of carrying from five to forty tons.

The citizens of this town have suffered severely by having their vessels wrecked, between eight and twelve, whose tonnage was from one hundred tons downward, have been lost; yet they continue to buy and build others to enable them to keep up their profitable coast trade, and to carry goods for the other colonies from this place to the different Liberian, and other settlements.

Monrovia is the present depot for Liberia. Our harbour is continually visited by trading vessels of every class from all quarters of the globe. I have sometimes counted as many as ten lying at anchor in the harbour at one time—brigs, schooners, ships, &c. &c.

The river for several hundred yards fronting the town is substantially wharfed by a stone wall, and laid out in piers, to admit the lighters' approach to the warehouses, of which there are six or eight large and commodious buildings, constructed of stone, and occupied by commission merchants. The staple articles of export are ivory, camwood, rice, hides, goats, palm oil, and tropical fruits.

I have not drawn the line of demarcation so closely between this and the other settlements because I wish to exalt Monrovia at their expense, but simply to prove to you, that a place which can give the materials, and supply the men to commence and successfully establish so many flourishing communities, and at the same time increase its own population and national prosperity, cannot possibly be the most unhealthy of all locations, and possessed of no natural advantages whatever. Besides I wish to assist in rescuing from obloquy the memories of those who selected the site for this town, by showing that they were not mistaken when they made choice of this iron cape as the most eligible foundation for the metropolis of Liberia.

The great elevation of the town from the water, the large and safe harbour, and anchorage, the smooth bar at the mouth of the rivers, the union of the Montserrat and St. Paul's rivers, by the Stockton creek, all large and navigable streams, and the rich and fertile lands which extend along the borders, are natural advantages which are not equalled in Liberia, and which give to Monrovia the decided superiority as a situation combining commercial and agricultural facilities, whereby its inhabitants may speedily grow independently rich, and dwell secure from foreign invasions. The suburbs of the town, the rivers and harbour, can all be commanded by the guns of the fort, which stands in the centre of the town.

The vessel which brought myself and the two missionary ladies to Monrovia, carried Gov. Matthias, Mrs. Matthias, Dr. Johnson, and Miss Annesley, to Bassa Cove. The governor and Dr. Johnson have both been so low with the fever as

to give but faint hopes of their recovery. Mrs. Matthias and Miss Annesley, I am sorry to say, were carried off a few months after their arrival.

Mrs. Beers, who remained in Monrovia, was not taken with her first attack till more than three months after our arrival: it only lasted a week, and was not at all a serious one; she has had several trifling attacks since, but none of any consequence.

Mrs. Wilkins was taken down with fever six weeks after she landed, (caused by imprudently exposing herself to the heat of the sun and rain,) and was confined three weeks, but at no time alarmingly ill: she has had several slight attacks since. Both at this time enjoy good health, and are able to attend to their schools.

I would advise all missionaries and others coming here to make their arrangements so as to arrive in July or August, and also to bring with them the same kinds of clothing that are worn, and adapted to the different seasons of the year, in the States. They should also be well provided with furniture, goods, provisions, and money, but no tobacco, or whiskey—we are a temperate people.

The rains commence the latter part of April and continue till July, through which month and a part of August there is a trifling remission, at which they again set in and do not pass off till November.

In the rainy season the thermometer rarely descends below 72 deg. of Fahrenheit, or rises higher than 84 deg. The average temperature is about 78 deg. In December, January, and February, our summer months, it sometimes rises as high as 74 deg., and the average is about 86 deg. To-day, while you doubtless are calling in the aid of stone coal and patent heaters to keep up the body's temperature above the freezing point, I have my office windows open to admit the free circulation of the air, the heat of which, as indicated by the thermometer, is 88 degrees above zero.

Notwithstanding a variety of interesting subjects still continue to present themselves to my mind, yet, in order not to weary you, I must conclude. And in conclusion, permit me to inform you, that I have never regretted my coming to Africa. I am amply compensated for any trifling sacrifices which I have made, and shall never lament the months, the years, or life spent in trying to ameliorate the condition of this community.

With feelings of the most sincere regard, I remain very respectfully yours, &c.

S. M. E. GOHEEN.

(From the New York Observer.)

New York Colonization Society.

The Colonization Society of the city of New York held its annual meeting on Wednesday evening, May 9th, in the Middle Dutch Church. That spacious edifice, the largest of our old churches, was crowded in every part with a highly respectable audience. The Rev. Dr. Milnor presided, and the exercises commenced with reading the 72d Psalm by Mr. N. S. Hill, vice-president of the Young Men's Colonization Society of Union College, and prayer by the Rev. Dr. Church, of New Hampshire. After reading a letter from the Hon. Henry Clay, expressing his warm interest in the cause, and regretting his inability to be present on the occasion, Dr. D. M. Reese, the corresponding secretary, presented an abstract of the annual report, exhibiting the flourishing state of our colony in Liberia. The speakers were the Rev. Dr. Fisk, of the Wesleyan University in Middletown, Conn.; Professor Proudfit, of the New York City University; the Hon. B. F. Butler, late Attorney general of the United States; Rev. Dr. Cone, of this city; Rev. Mr. Bethune, of Philadelphia; and Mr. Buchanan, the British consul. We regret that we have not time or room even for a full sketch of the very impressive and interesting views which they presented of that great philanthropic enterprise—the establishment of colonies of christian coloured men in Africa.

The Rev. Dr. Fisk, in moving the acceptance of the report, commenced with an allusion to the great variety of plans recently projected for the amelioration of the condition of man, some of which he regarded as wise, and some as unwise; but amid all that was doubtful, one thing he was accustomed to look upon as certain, and that is, that Africa will be redeemed. For this we had the promise of God, and there were abundant indications in recent and wide-spread movements of the christian world, that the time is rapidly approaching. Even abolition, wild as it is, is the offspring of the general feeling, and affords proof that the sympathy for Africa is deep and pervading. Dr. F. then proceeded to show that the establishment of colonies of christian coloured men was the true plan for redeeming Africa, and striking at the root of slavery, and all the other evils which spring out of the degradation of the people of that continent. The population of Africa he estimated at 100,000,000; and the great majority of these were slaves; not slaves under the comparatively mild system which exists in this country, but slaves under a system of unmitigated and horrible atrocity. Africa for ages had been an unnatural mother, and it was her cruelty to her own children that had invited the aggressions of Europeans. But colonization was a broad remedy, and applied itself to the whole mischief. It did not confine its regards to the two or three millions of our country, but aimed at the elevation of the entire coloured race in both continents, and by the only practicable agency, the agency of coloured christians.

In proof of the high religious character of the colonists of Liberia, and the fidelity of the religious teachers sent out for their instruction, Dr. Fisk stated, that in the churches of the denomination to which he belonged, (Methodist,) 160 communicants had been added during the past year. This was equal to nearly one-sixteenth part of the adult population, a success unparalleled in any large district of this country. What may we not expect from colonies thus formed and thus improving, when they shall extend through a long line of coast, and spread from the coast into the interior?

With regard to our modern anti-slavery societies, Dr. F. had been anxious to learn what real good they had yet effected. They had been in