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Speech of the Hon. William H. Tuck,
Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Maryland State
Colonization Society.

MR. PRESIDENT:—I will not destroy the effect which the very able remarks of the gentleman (Mr. Thomas) who has preceded me, ought to have upon the minds of all here present, by attempting a further illustration of the purposes and plans of the Maryland Colonization Society. It will better suit my object to submit a few observations upon the relative influences of colonization and abolition upon each other, with the hope of exciting public attention to these antagonist schemes.

I am daily more and more convinced of the interest which the people of the whole South, and particularly of our own state, should feel in this important subject. I had always entertained some general, undefined ideas of the principal design of this institution, but I had never become so far interested as to investigate the details of any of the plans in operation, or the means by which they were to be carried out, until my official relations to the last legislature rendered it obligatory upon me to devote considerable time to their consideration. It was then, and is now, a source of regret that my attention had not been before directed towards it. And it may not be too much to say, that many in this assembly may find themselves in the same situation. Let us hope, however, that any such exhibition of public indifference, was only the suspension of energies, now to be exerted in one decided, and concurrent effort in behalf of a great humane and national object; so that the labours of such institutions, as yours, having in view the interests of an unfortunate portion of our population, and the advancement of the political prosperity, and individual happiness of the American people, shall not fail to find friends at their every step towards a successful consummation.

I cannot omit the expression of my approbation at your Society's holding its anniversaries at the seat of government. Although conducted and managed by persons in private life, and maintained in some degree by their own resources, and at an expense of time and labour that can receive no reward, but an approving conscience; yet we may regard this society as a state institution. Maryland has lent her aid to this private enterprise by incorporating its members, and advancing a portion of her means for its support. Its chief object is the promotion of the interests of her people. She exercises a superintending control over your operations, and deriving your existence from her, you very naturally solicit and expect her parental care and protection. True, your members mostly reside in another place, presenting a more appropriate and extensive field, and possessing greater facilities for official operations. But if you, renouncing the liberty thus afforded of conducting your affairs behind the screen of official immunity, present yourselves here for the public inspection of your demeanor in the discharge of this important trust, surely the legislature will not close their eyes to the lights which you voluntarily offer to guide them on the path of public duty. It is here before the assembled wisdom of the state, speaking the voice, and acting out the wishes of their constituents, that you should meet, to demonstrate to them that their predecessors did not legislate in vain when they pledged the state to the support of this scheme; and that you yourselves have not been injudiciously selected as the instrument by which Maryland hopes to advance its success.

Mr. President, the mad designs of the northern abolitionists have annexed to the colonization measures of the South, a degree of importance, that they had not before possessed in public estimation, and which perhaps they would never have otherwise acquired. So long as colonization was regarded as one of the many philanthropic systems which are daily springing up among us, and for which this nation is remarkable over all others, it was permitted to exist, without attracting the particular notice of that very numerous portion of mankind, who are unwilling to retard charities, which they can see no good reason for promoting. While it was ascribed only to the humane design of modifying the inconveniences of the free negroes among us, by removing them away, and furnishing them with laws and a government on the soil of their progenitors, more suited to their character, than they were capable of enjoying here, we lost sight of, or failed to detect, the immense power it was destined to wield in resisting attacks upon our domestic institutions. It has now become a part of our political system which we should not reverence the less because of its original intent, for as humanity and charity commend themselves at all times,—no matter how their offices may be exhibited,—so great national purposes are doubly commendable, when these christian duties are the hand-maids to their fulfilment.

The public mind has not been sufficiently sensitive on this subject. We have been too long idle, if not disinterested spectators of proceedings in other states, when the first mention of the total and immediate abolition of slavery should have created alarm. I intend not to define the extent to which we might have interfered with the citizens of our sister states in expressing their opinions of slavery in the abstract, without in some degree contradicting southern doctrines or infringing the rights of others. But when we saw that this subject was growing in importance among those who had no interest in its advancement, beyond a sense of supposed religious obligations, and that they were continually introducing its discussion in public assemblies, in such a manner as to inflame the human passions, and excite a degree of unnatural dislike towards those sections of the country, where this institution was permitted, we should not have remained indifferent to such repeated and zealous attempts to disturb the harmony of this union. Murmurs of dissatisfaction have passed us unheeded, to be succeeded by more loud and distinct tones of complaint, until now every voice from the North bears to us some new evidence of a whole people arraying themselves against what they are pleased to term the barbarous customs of the South. Nothing short of the removal of the cause could prevent the

complaint. This could not be done. Slavery could not be abolished. And yet we have done little or nothing for its protection. We did not even remonstrate until all remonstrance was inadequate to the object in view. And now that they have proceeded so far in their actual attacks upon our institutions, we are found without the means of countervailing their efforts, or of preventing the inevitable consequences of our own neglect. We have never regarded the subject in its true aspect. The question has become political in its character, and if there were no other inducements, this consideration alone should urge us all to co-operate in the completion of its designs. The fate of the Union is thought to depend upon the issue, because it embodies the seeds of discord and strife, that may some day spring up in all the vigor of open hostilities among the American people, which must end in the destruction of civil, political, and domestic happiness.

The objects of colonization and abolition are sufficiently indicated by their names. The former seeks to remove our free black population to the land of their fathers. The latter attempts the entire and immediate emancipation of our slave population, without any reference to their state or condition when free. The former proposes to rid us of the worst possible species of beings with which a civilized nation can be troubled—the latter proposes to increase to an immeasurable extent the very class which we are so anxious to remove from among us. I need not say one word upon the relative merits of these schemes. They are known to you all. But of this part of the subject I will say—if these be their principal designs, and any man desires to see all the evils which we are now suffering from a worthless, immoral, and burdensome population, more than an hundred-fold increased to himself, and entailed upon millions yet unborn, let him come out an enemy to colonization, and a friend to abolition. But if on the other hand he desires to see the efforts of these fanatics to destroy our peace, defeated; the number of our free negroes diminished; and the corrupting influences of their association upon his own slaves, and thus indirectly upon his own family, for the present abated, and ere long entirely destroyed, or prevented, I call upon him to advocate the measures of your society, and declare himself the uncompromising foe of any and every thing that favours the immediate emancipation of our slaves.

These schemes are as widely separated as the poles; they are antagonist, the one to the other. If we can succeed in promoting the plans of African colonization, at the same rate of progress made by the abolitionists, we shall be able to counteract their efforts so far as to render them almost entirely harmless to us. But if we relax our energies, so as to enable them to maintain their present advantages over us, we shall soon be too far behind them, ever to prevent the disastrous consequences which may be apprehended for our supineness—they are of the same opinion themselves, as may be shewn by the proceedings of their meetings, and the expressions of opinion every where to be found in their productions. Let us notice the progress and means at command of these institutions, and their effect upon each other.

No one who has considered this subject can have failed to discover that the principles and doctrines of abolition have taken deep root, and been most alarmingly propagated throughout this country, within the short period of its existence; and that the means employed by its friends are much more efficient than the efforts of the advocates of colonization. If positive proof were wanting, the fact might be inferred from the rapid progress of the former, compared with the limited results of the latter. There can be no question that these rival schemes have not advanced with an equal pace, when we consider their respective ages.

The plan of African colonization was projected at an early period of our national existence. The founders of this government foresaw, that slavery of an entire and distinct race of human beings, could not exist among a free people without endangering the safety of their institutions, unless it should be established upon a uniform basis throughout the states, and affecting them all alike. This knowledge resulted from the difficulties presented at the very formation of the constitution. The north, where slavery had not existed, denounced it then, as they do now, as a lasting reproach upon the country, while the south firmly insisted upon a recognition of their right of property in their slaves. The feelings of these extremes of the Union have not been mitigated by the lapse of half a century. Although a compromise was then effected without yielding the principles involved, yet the contest still is carried on, with a zeal that has grown with the growth of the nation; and all experience now teaches that the best mode of preventing the evils which threaten the country is to remove their cause. The original friends of colonization calculated that this end could be accomplished within a period of time, that in the life of a nation may be considered short. But their estimates were predicated in part upon a general adoption of the same or similar plans by all the states, and if this co-operation had been extended to them, all complaint and dissension would have been suppressed in the prospect of an early consummation of their hopes. It has always been supported by the most distinguished among the sons of America—men who appreciated the interests of the nation, and knew the best means of subserving them. They provided a remedy, as they supposed, fully equal to the disease. They knew that this could not be the work of a life-time, much less of a few years. They were content to witness the gradual operation of their schemes, leaving to posterity the unspeakable pleasure of realizing their final success. Although years and years were to roll on before the emancipation and removal of our coloured population, could be achieved, they did not despair of its full accomplishment. They did not foresee that an adverse measure would be projected in a quarter from which it was least to be expected, for the avowed purpose of defeating the design of their own institution. They could not penetrate the dark veil of futurity, and discover that a difference in sentiment and action would lead to the establishment of other associations, in disregard of the rights of slaveholders, and seek-

ing to entail upon the country, the very evils which all seemed so anxious to avert. The most flattering hopes were always entertained that generations to come would award them the merit of patriotism and devotion to the interests of the nation which they had aided in bringing into existence.

We have lived to see these hopes sadly disappointed. A spirit of fanaticism is pervading the land. A new sense of religious duty is urging men with the most appalling speed upon the path that leads to the destruction of all that is dear to us as a people. The total and immediate abolition of slavery is demanded, and the free negroes are to remain among their late task-masters, with their feelings embittered by hatred and a spirit of revenge, for supposed wrongs, to be aroused to open outrages whenever a proper occasion may serve for a general rebellion. While colonization is slowly moving onward in its course another rival institution has suddenly sprung up among us and threatens to outstrip its competitors in this great contest between real, substantial, and ideal, mistaken liberty.

The rise and progress of abolition in this country has never been equalled by the success of any other American institution. A few years ago this exciting topic was a stranger in this land, or if known at all, had been entertained in a very limited circle at the north. But we ought not to be greatly surprised at its success, when we consider the character of the people who originated the measure, and the means by which it is intended to have effect. It is difficult for men who have never lived where the relation of master and servant has obtained, to become reconciled to the theory of bondage under any circumstances. If the people at the north knew any thing of this policy as it exists at the south—if they comprehended our interests, as understood among us, and would permit their minds to be disabused of erroneous impressions in reference to this subject, we should have nothing to apprehend. If they would accept our invitation to come amongst us and witness this institution in its practical results, and judge us by this knowledge, they would abandon their mad efforts to unsettle the friendly relations that should always exist among these states. But they act upon the principle that all men are equal, and possess the same rights, and hence they seek to remove all the lines of separation between the white and black population. They forget or will not remember, that this principle relates only to political rights—that as citizens our negroes have no existence at all, and that even in most of those very states where this equality is asserted, they are denied the privilege of exercising political franchises. And yet they affirm the inconsistency and absurdity of civil subjection in a land of political liberty. We, however, know that these conditions are not inconsistent, that on the contrary, in releasing a slave from subjection, you make him a slave to the indulgence of brutal passions; with us it is a choice of evils, and as well for the master as the servant, it is much the most suitable state of existence for the blacks. This state of feeling must continue among those who favour abolition, so long as they refuse to become acquainted with us and our negroes; while they are ignorant of the true state of things with us, and continue to reason and declaim about abstract notions of freedom and equality, we cannot expect them to forbear their efforts in maintaining their schemes; as long as they make it a question of power exerted towards the weak in oppressing and restraining them in their natural enjoyments, they will declare for the injured party, without knowing or seeming to care for the consequences. They no longer obey the dictates of reason; passion influences all their actions on this subject. A usurper sits upon the throne of their judgment; and regardless of all restraint, they follow wherever prejudice or ignorance may lead the way. This feeling possesses all men, in all places, and they endeavour to make every thing else subserve its gratification.

Among the most alarming symptoms of this moral disorder, may be mentioned the fact, that nearly all the christian churches have made this principle a test of membership. I am informed of not more than two at this time into which this brand of discord has not been cast. We find that separations of whole congregations in some have taken place already, by a vote of the majority; while other sects are only waiting a fair opportunity of doing the same service to some of their offending brothers. Indeed it has been proclaimed from the high places of abolition, that the christian church must take a stand on this question, and that a final, and incurable breach must take place, as to those which will not subscribe the emancipation doctrines to the fullest extent.

We all know what a powerful engine any opinion becomes, as soon as it forms a part of our religion. Indeed mankind have always seemed to delight in the commission of evil whenever it could be accomplished under the cloak of religious sanctions. The page of history is replete with proofs of this truth—that more injustice and crime have been openly perpetrated from misguided zeal, and mistaken motives of religious obligation, than from any other cause. The feeling is the same in all ages and countries, and wherever it operates upon minds imbued with a prejudice on any particular subject, it is impossible to arrest its success in making proselytes to its doctrines. And this scheme of abolition has so entirely absorbed the attention of its votaries, as to make them conspicuous proofs of the maxim 'that in some cases when men are most thoroughly convinced of the absurdity of their doctrines, they are the more confirmed in their faith.'

Not satisfied with attacking our institutions at a distance, by bringing into their service the controlling force of the public press, they have sent their agents among us, to tamper with our servants, and entice them from their allegiance. They bring with them the most inflammatory and incendiary productions for distribution among those upon whom their arts and devices can have any effect. They have prints and cuts expressive of the severe punishments said to be inflicted by us on this species of property, and by this means they hope to affect those whose minds cannot receive any impressions through the medium of letters. They know nothing of the condition of things that these paintings are intended to repre-

sent, and yet they persist in this base and contemptible mode of inflaming the passions of the ignorant. We continually proclaim that they are libels upon our domestic policy, and invite them to test the truth of our assertions by personal examination; yet they cease not in the use of these means. These emissaries have been taken in the act of distributing these papers, and punished, and yet we find them still moving among us engaged in this nefarious work, under the malign influence of wicked hearts bent to more wicked purposes. Can any one mistake their object? We need no such modes of information to tell us how our slaves are treated—even if they did not contain the most grossly exaggerated statements; they are designed for effect principally upon the negroes themselves. To inform them through the eyes, that their fellow men are labouring under hardships and oppressions which they cannot bear, and the imploring countenance which the punished slave is made to assume, is but another appeal to the whole negro population to rise en masse, and vindicate the rights, and redress the grievances of their injured race. Their passions excited, and a spirit of insubordination being abroad in the land, they are to become ready and efficient instruments in the work of destruction which it may be necessary to commence, before their total emancipation can be effected. The fields of these states are to run with native blood; the outrages of St. Domingo are to be re-enacted in this happy land, and we are to be actors in that drama. None can tell upon whom the heaviest disaster may fall; certain it is, that few will escape.

Besides this, they attempt the establishment of a press among a peaceful, quiet people, who they know to be opposed to their schemes. They are warned of the consequences of that attempt beforehand; yet they persist in exhibiting their fanatic devotion in a land consecrated to peace, regardless of all remonstrances against disturbing that community; and when an indignant people assemble and attempt to arrest their career, resistance ensues—the first assault is made by the invading party, and human blood becomes a libation to the god of their idolatry. Are they admonished? No. Immediately volunteers are found seeking the honour of proceeding to the same place, to erect upon the very scene of the 'sainted Lovejoy's death, another press, as a lasting monument of his martyrdom.'

In addition to these means, they have invoked the aid of a power which they must know cannot be exerted in this behalf without infringing the letter and spirit of our national constitution. Our ancestors have declared domestic slavery to be an institution with which the states only could interfere for themselves—that all approaches from other quarters would be violations of that charter. It was supposed that this question was put to rest forever, by the mutual surrender of prejudice and predilection, on which the compromise was made. This early period in our history demonstrates the vanity of that hope. State wars against state, and congress is invited to become the umpire, and take the decision into its own hands: 'Petition upon petition—yea, more than upon all other subjects—are daily poured into that body, agitating this question before a tribunal whose duty it is to consult the peace of the country and promote a general welfare, and not to pander to the unholy designs of political agitators. The voice of warning and expostulation was heard against the introduction of this subject. Its friends were exhorted by all the considerations of public good, and plighted faith, not to enter upon this, as a debatable ground. When mildness ceased of its effect, when it appeared evident that any exhibition of unwillingness to agitate the question, would be construed into a consciousness of weakness, and want of right, and that the contest would be forced upon us, then went forth the louder thunder of honest indignation, and the defiance was hurled back, with a determination to risk every thing in defending rights, which our forefathers had pledged their lives, and fortunes, and sacred honour to assert and maintain. But these means also failed. The number of petitions has increased more than an hundred fold. The abolitionists will not, cannot be restrained. Our reliance is upon congress, and its devotion to the principles of the sacred instrument which they are sworn to support. When they shall have yielded one step towards the gratification of these petitions, we may say of this happy country 'the beginning of the end is come.'

But, Mr. President, there is another influence at work against us, which cannot be easily resisted. This delusion has not confined itself to the men of the North; their wives and daughters have become contaminated by the impure atmosphere by which they are surrounded; and are among the most ardent advocates of this measure. American women have always held an elevated rank among the philanthropists of the world, a reputation to which they are entitled, no less by the general correctness of the objects to which their kind offices are directed, than by the zeal and self-denial with which they are promoted. And if any portion of the country were to be selected for the location of a greater share of this praise, all would recognize the claim of the northern and eastern states. I intend not to detract from the merit to which they are entitled. I impute to them no improper motives, for I am quite sure, that they are altogether above their influence; but I think that from a mistaken sense of duty, they are misdirecting their energies when they should be applied to more useful employments; and that all alike, are intermeddling with interests that do not concern them. I mention their interference only to show how this fanaticism has affected that whole people. Let them still exert themselves in the extension of charities, and the promotion of all that is virtuous, moral and beneficent; and let them yet command the applause of mankind for the performance of these duties. But they need not lay aside the diffidence and modest reserve which so much become their sex, and by which their character is so much enhanced. The time was, when they sought not the busy scenes of crowded assemblies, nor participated in public discussions—casting around them the seeds of discord and strife. They more correctly appreciated their relation to the world, and were content to display their noble