

MARYLAND COLONIZATION JOURNAL.

“Roberts, in his mission to England, met with great success, having treated with Lord Palmerston, receiving many government favors at his hands. In France he met with a like success, with marks of distinction and attention due his rank. Many of the foreign ministers of different courts, much interested themselves in behalf of president Roberts, promising to do all they could with their governments to facilitate the objects of his mission.

Though up to this time, Roberts had been ignorant of the importance of his position and the destiny of his people—though for years he may have existed merely by sufferance, as the servile minion of the misanthropic Colonizationists of the South, and pro-slavery Colonizationists of the North, now that a new arena had been opened to his vision, a new field of action presented itself—an interest of sea and land, having called him into active service, where he stood unfettered and disenthralled, having cast off the menial garb of a slave, posted with the dignity of true manhood, clothed in the paraphernalia of a nation's representative, and armed with the proud panoply of a freeman's rights—these, the new scenes around him, this, his new and elevated position in the world, were, had he been susceptible of it, sufficient in themselves to make him sensible of the respect due to his people, if not his own importance as an equal.

But instead of that manly, dignified, statesmanlike course, such as became a Minister of State, his very first act after the marked distinction and distinguished favors received at the hands of governments and statesmen, is an act of the most pitiable degradation, the most blasting reproach and civil outrage upon his people, that was ever perpetrated by a mendicant.

Like the slave, “cap in hand, obedient to the commands of the dons who employ them,” bidden on an errand of his master, President Roberts no sooner concludes the business of his mission, a knowledge and official account of which was alone due to his own government, but he writes to A. G. Phelps, a Colonizationist of the United States, giving him an official report of his proceedings as the Minister of Liberia, an independent nation! If ever the curse of slavery were manifest in the character of man, it has fully exhibited itself in this man Roberts.

The degradation to himself might readily be extenuated, the act being strictly in character with the man; but the insult and disgrace meted to his people should not find palliation in his plea of ignorance. Not content with the stigma thrown into the face of the Liberians by his first report to Phelps, but adding aggravation to insult, promises that so soon as he arrives home to give him “a full and elaborate report” of all his doings.

Here, faithful to the trust reposed in him by his American white masters, this man Roberts discards the people whom he feigns to represent, considering it a condescension so to do, spurns at the idea of reporting to them the result of his mission, but as a serf to his lord, considers it an honor and special privilege to submit his doings first to a white man; hence, that malignant libeller of our race, A. G. Phelps, was selected and reported to over the heads of his country and people.

The acts and conduct of Roberts have a bearing not only upon the Liberians as a nation, but upon the whole colored race in America, since having descended from the American colored race, whatever marks the course of progress in his present position, will be seized hold of by the slaveholders and their abettors, as true evidence of the American colored man's character and susceptibility. Hence, we protest against his whole course in regard to his agency and intercourse, either directly or indirectly, with the Colonizationists, especially this crowning act of baseness and servility, in reporting his official doings to A. G. Phelps, a private white man in the U. States, instead of his country; averring, that do his government or the national council not impeach him for this act, they are unworthy of freedom, and only fit to be slaves.”—M. R. D.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

II. Correspondence Received
A. Letter Books

10. 1847--1848--1849

1849