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Oration on the Duty of a Rising Christian State.

The Duty of a rising Christian State
To contribute to the world's well being and civilization, and the means by which it may perform the same: The Annual Oration, delivered before the Common Council and citizens of Monrovia, July 26, 1853—being the day of National Independence. By the Rev. Alex. Crummell, B. A., Queen's College, Cambridge.

In a note to an edition of this discourse printed in Boston, it is stated that "the author is, so far as we know, a person of unmixed African blood, well known to the colored people of New York and Boston. He first visited England, to obtain the means of erecting a house of worship for a Protestant Episcopal congregation of colored people in New York, of which he had the pastoral care. Having accomplished this, he accepted the offer of a University education in England, at the expense of English friends. In England he became acquainted with President Roberts and others, from whom he obtained such information of Liberia as determined him to make that country his permanent residence. After graduating, therefore, he accepted an appointment as a missionary of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, and repaired directly from England to his station at Monrovia, where he has since resided."

This production is one of real and great merit, and admirably adapted to awaken the minds of the Liberians to a sense of their high responsibilities. He first shows in chaste but eloquent language, "the obligation of nations to contribute to the world's well being; and that, as an humble member of the great sisterhood of nations, this obligation rests upon Liberia;" and then proceeds to show how the people of that young state shall answer the call of this duty. Of mental cultivation, Mr. Crummell says:

"But in exhibiting the main modes and measures whereby we may fulfill our national obligation to the human race, I would urge and insist, primarily, and as of the highest importance, that we must cultivate to the highest bent, to the noblest coloring of honor,—we must cultivate men! This mode of expression may, perchance, appear singular; but there is, in reality, nothing extravagant in it. 'Cultivate men!' It is a correct expression, and a fact. Men cultivate fields; they cultivate cattle, and trees, and birds, and fish; so, too, they can cultivate men.

"The old Romans understood something about this; with an iron hand the Spartans tried their skill at it; so, too, with more and more wisely, the English in modern times, and some few other nationalities. But as for the world's history in general, alas! how few know anything about it! But we are training and fashioning men! Among the vast millions of human beings on earth, and of all its diverse nations, what a minimum of men! Vast horde of mere inhabitants there are, in this country and in that; but that largeness of soul that quick, glad recognition of noble principles—that love and reverence of fixed and eternal truth—that eager desire for the work of life, which marks and characterizes men—true men; do you many of the human frame and form, in any land, can you discover them?"

"And what a word of depth, of power, of vast import, of broad significance, of profoundest meaning, and of far reaching influence, is this!—a word which enters into the training of little children, the formation of men's characters, the development of women's virtue and moral beauty, the determining the power of laws, and the founding of states and empires!" And if the word has such deep and mighty import, so likewise the work which it implies and places before us; a work which requires all sorts of instruments and all kinds of agencies. For to cultivate men and manhood is no easy task, and can be done by no simple, trivial means, nor yet by any special order or peculiar class in the state. Men look here to the preacher, the missionary, the school teacher, to cultivate and train up the future manhood of the country; and great, I know, is the responsibility which rests upon them. But the cultivation of the manhood of a nation comes from all

""Our land is rough and poor," said a New Englander; "we can raise but little produce, and so we build school-houses and churches, and raise men.""
sources in the commonwealth, and flows in upon the soul of its citizens from all its streams of influence—from the Executive, the prime head of authority, repressing passion, giving its wonted authority to cool, calm reason, illustrating in his life the quietness, the order the patriotism, and the character, which it is his duty to promote; from the Judges on the bench; forgetful of persons and passing, transitory circumstance, remembering the awful idea of justice above, preserving their ermine unsullied from the stains of spite and prejudice, of pettiness and partizanship; from the Merchant, who, by strict integrity, high honor, business capacity, courtesy, and promptness, incarnates the character of his country in the eyes of the foreigner, and gives pride and hope to his fellow citizens; from the plodding, enterprising Farmer, married to the soil, and like a faithful spouse rejoicing in its fruitfulness; from the Mechanic and the Artisan, types of honest, patient in industry, exhibiting daily thrift, skill and ingenuity, the honest pride of manly energy and the dignity of service; from the Sailor and the Trader—the latter penetrating the wilderness, and the former ploughing the main, yet both exhibiting that boldness, endurance, daring, and courage which serve to fill up the hardy element of a people's character and to prompt its youth to ambition and adventure; from the Teacher and the Clergymen, the representatives of manners and refinement, of culture and enlightenment, of high morals and pure speech; holding the tender hearts of little children in their hands, and training the young, the mature, and the aged, in those lofty truths and those Divine principles which sanctify life in all its phases, and which tell upon eternity!

"These are some of the sources whence proceed the cultivation of the man and manhood of a nation. I give but an epitome, for the full detail would be tiresome.

"But besides these agencies, we must also consider the cultivation itself: what it is in quality, nature, character, and purpose. This is too large a theme for one day's discussion, but some few simple things I may say. In this cultivation of manhood in the nation, boys and girls are to be our main material to act upon. And I would say that they should have every item of culture, every element of instruction, all the treasures of science and learning which we can possibly command."

Having insisted upon a proper physical as well as intellectual education, and justly rebuked all delicacy and femininity which would refuse to handle the hoe or the axe, or if summoned to missionary duties would hesitate to build a hut or to cook a meal of victuals, he proceeds to vindicate scholarship from the reproach of indolence and inefficiency.

"For never, in all the world's broad history, has such ill desert fallen upon learning through the character of those who, in very deed, were true scholars, whether from the schools or self-made men. For all the great generals, the founders of states, the rulers of immortal fame, the men who have inaugurated letters, and learning, and science in commonwealths and empires, the great authors, renowned teachers and philosophers, and immortal philanthropists; yea, all the names of might and power in history, with the rarest, rarest exceptions, have been ranker in the lofty scroll of scholars. For," says Lord Bacon, "for the conceit that learning should dispose men to leisure and privateness, and make men slothful, it were a strange thing if that which accustomed the mind to perpetual motion and agitation should induce slothfulness, whereas, contrariwise, it may be truly affirmed, that no kind of men love business for itself but those that are learned; for other persons love it for profit, as a hireling that loves work for the wages or for honor, * * or because it puts them in mind of their fortune, &c. &c. Only learned men love business as an action according to nature, as agreeable to health of mind as exercise is to health of body, taking pleasure in the action itself and not in the purchase; so that of all men they are the most indefatigable, if it be towards any business which can hold or detain their mind."*

We present one other passage from this excellent discourse:

"To the query put, 'How can we as a nation bless mankind, and contribute to their well being and civilization?' I answer, that our farmers, by their toil and energy, can 'essen the needs of men, break down the barbarism of quoted toil, and give cheer, by the Induction to foreign lands."

"The annual demand for coffee, for cotton, has never yet met in any of their great markets, in a few recent years, the

* Lord Bacon: "Advancement of Learning," b. i.
Algiers, Egypt, and the Fantees, below us on this coast, have been increasing the quantity of cotton sent to England, while there has been no sensible diminution of the large masses shipped from America; and yet to the Board of Commerce in Manchester there are few, if any, questions more puzzling than this—that is, "Where can they secure new and larger supplies?"

"It is the same with sugar: Cuba, India, Singapore, do not furnish a sufficient supply, and Louisiana is falling off. And you all know that there is a market everywhere for our coffee so soon as we are ready to meet the demand. And thus we see the ability God has given us to serve men in the broad field of the civilized world before us, and we should meet that duty at the earliest day that thrift and enterprise will enable us.

"Another duty germane to this devolves upon us. There are plants, banks, dyes, and wood, all around us, and still more in the interior, which the commercial and scientific world needs and asks for. The further we push into the interior the more abundant and the more valuable do these gifts of nature become. Moreover, the learned and the Christian world want wood, at once, if God so permits it, the solution of the great inner mysteries of this continent. To this end expeditions on all sides are investing the continent. Now we hear of one in the east, on the White Nile; then of another, through Nubia, across the desert, to Lake Tschaal. Now they run up the Quorra, or some other branch of the Niger; and again we hear of one from the Cape, by land, across to Zanzibar.

"Are we to have nothing to do in this great scrutiny? Look at the map of Africa! See how all along the coast, from the Ganges downwards, travelers have furnished the geographical world with such an amount of information that it has been enabled to dot the map of Africa with the towns, and villages, and rivers, and marked localities of neighborhoods some hundreds of miles interiorwards; but take our vicinage, with Monrovia for a centre, and you can make a semi-circle, its back our conference the Kong Mountains, its ends touching the coast, of nearly all which the scientific world knows nothing!"

"I am aware of our slender resources and our thinly-scattered population, and no wise man expects an infant to do a giant's work. But we can do something. Let us systematically, year by year, push more and more into the country, if it be but ten, or even five miles a year; open gradually a highway into the interior; look out the goodly land beyond us, its well watered everywhere as the garden of the Lord; and appropriate it; press onward a highway for the tribes far back, nigh the mountains, to come unmolested hitherward by open roads; and so by and by we may get large herds of cattle from the interior, and instead of sending some sixty thousand or one hundred thousand dollars out of the Republic for the single article of coffee, we may have 'our oxen around us strong to labor,' and 'our sheep may bring forth thousands and tens of thousands in our streets.'"

"Of course, we could not do such a work as this in a brief period, but we could agree upon a system and system seems the main thing in all great projects; and such a system would give our merchants plenteous hides from the interior for shipment; vast quantities of oil, which would be their own, without foreign competition, as on the coast; new discoveries of woods and dyes, and especially it would lead to the settling of civilized men in the interior, and the wide cultivation of great staples; and all the while important revelations would come through us to the world, as we pressed further into the heart of the continent, of the tribes near the mountains of the Kong, if not, indeed, of the dwellers at the sources and along the valleys of the Niger.

"And in this way we should be meeting the demands of science, aiding in the work of civilization, extending Christianity, and doing our work as a Christian State.

"But there are two great works which are our special duty and mission, and which we should never lose sight of:

"First. We should be opening a highway for the Gospel of Christ Jesus into the far interior, and thereby competing with the missionaries of England and America in the gracious rivalry as to who shall first reach the needy tribes living under the shadow of the Kong Mountains, and make more musical than ever, by the voice of salvation, the swiftly flowing streams from those mountains, which are, doubtless, the tiny sources of the Niger."

* This subject of roads is one of the most important that can be pondered and acted upon by the people of Liberia. Our independence of the foreign market, the cessation of our semi-annual and exhausting wars, the promotion of industrial habits among the natives, the opening of larger farms among ourselves, the wide promotion of civilization, and the extension of the Gospel in the interior, are all connected with road-making.
“Next, a matter of highest import: By these internal ventures we should be achieving the commercial independence of Liberia, or at least giving it mastery and might”.

“Gentlemen, we are all descendants of Africa, and hence we claim a special interest in and a peculiar right to, her fruits, her offerings, and her gifts. But after all, how very limited is our participation therein! I hear, gentlemen, of ivory, and oil, and dyes, and precious woods, and gold flowing from all parts of this western coast to foreign lands, to enrich their princely merchants, and to build up their great houses. We all see here that fine line of steamers, which, according to her wont, shows that England knows how to appropriate with skill and effect the resources of foreign lands to her own good; and we hear, likewise, of projected ‘Ebony lines,’ for the increase of foreign wealth and luxury. And to all this I have no objection whatever, because it is the legitimate and the healthful process and result of commerce.

“Gentlemen, it may be that such a one as I—a man more busied with books and papers, and sermons, than with ledgers, accounts, and prices current—should not venture to speak upon these matters. But I must say, nevertheless, that I should like to see some of these great houses here; and to recognize, as some of these princely merchants, the merchants of our own town and country, citizens of this Republic! I am not satisfied—I tell you the truth—that the wealth of this, our Africa, should make other men wealthy and not ourselves. It troubles me in the night, and in the day it vexes me, that all of the moneys poured out here for fish, and means, and shoes, and merchandize, so little stays at our own water-side.

“The policy which shall modify this state of things is not, I know, to be demanded altogether of the merchants. The whole country, by management and legislation, is to aid in bringing about this result.

“And now, before I close, allow me briefly to say, that, as a new Christian state, there is one moral good we can do the world: we can strive after a lofty style of government, and the ablation of law and order.

“I see the seeming vanity of such an aspiration. But I have neither time nor inclination to bestow thought upon what merely seems to be presumptuous, when I have a real truth and a possible reality to suggest.

“The world needs a higher type of true nationality than it now has: why should not we furnish it? I know the wont to regard precedent in fashioning and compacting the fabric of government. And it is, to a great degree, a wise tendency, for it is a perilous sea on which to embark, that of nationality; and all along its course one sees strewn, everywhere, the wrecks of nations. And, therefore, an infant state needs, and should seek light as it goesounding.

“And this light comes, to a great degree, from the past—the light of national experience. Hence we must read history, and the philosophy of history, and laws, and the genius and spirit of laws. But are we ever to be bound by these? Are they ever to hold the spirit, and the brain, and the healthful instincts of cultivated and civilized humanity, in this day of the world’s high advancement—hold them ever in check and close restraint? Must we, in order to be a nation, imitate all the crimes and blunders which statesmanship has gravely handed down in history as rule and authority? I trust not; for no thoughtful man can look into the history of states without perceiving many national forms and established customs which even now have mastery, but which are nothing more nor less than empty gewgaws.

“Why should we haste, with foolish, blind zeal, to pick up the chaff, and rust, and offal, which wise nations are throwing away? Why not seize upon their cautious, prudent eclecticism, now, in our masculine youth, instead of going the round of a state, perhaps a foul, experience? Why not make ourselves a precedent?”

Latest from Liberia.

Letters from the Rev. John Seys and others in Liberia, bearing date to the 15th of August, have been received at the office of the Society. Not one word is said of a famine, and we must therefore conclude that none exists, certainly none very severe.

Mr. Seys had been for a few weeks in Monrovia, attending to the general interests of the Society while Mr. Dennis, the agent at that place, was on a visit to Basae, Sinou, and Cape Palmas, to attend to the landing of large Receptacles and emigrants.

He says:

“I hear frequently from Mr. Paxton,