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THE SERVICES OF LEONARD BACON

TO AFRICAN COLONIZATION

BY

LEONARD WOOLSEY BACON (1830-1907)

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THE SERVICES OF LEONARD BACON TO AFRICAN COLONIZATION.

It is only by a studious effort of the imagination that a reader of the present day is able to conceive of the fervor of that spirit of charitable enterprise in which Leonard Bacon was immersed from his childhood up. Born in Detroit in 1802, his infancy was passed amid the perils and privations of a missionary's life among savages, and his early childhood in the cabin of a pioneer pastor on the Western Reserve. A schoolboy at Hartford, he listened to the saintly Obookiah pleading the needs of his native Hawaiian islands, and was presented to him by his own missionary father as one consecrated to the work of Christ. In his senior year at Yale, a boy of seventeen, he witnessed the farewell to the first company of missionaries to the Sandwich islands, and could with difficulty be withheld by his duty to his widowed mother and her fatherless little children from joining himself to the mission company. Whether he ever saw Samuel John Mills, I do not know; but when, at the age of eighteen, he became a member of Andover Seminary he found himself in an atmosphere redolent of the fragrance of that holy memory. At the end of the Seminary course, being appointed, though youngest of all, to pronounce the valedictory address, he uttered, among other memorable words, the following:

"A young minister of the gospel once said to an intimate friend, 'My brother, you and I are little men, but before we die our influence must be felt on the other side of the world.' Not many years after a ship returning from a distant quarter of the globe paused on her passage across the deep. There stood on her deck a man of God, who wept over the dead body of his friend. He prayed, and the sailors wept with him. And they consigned that body to the ocean. It was the body of the man who, in the ardor of youthful benevolence, had aspired to extend

his influence through the world. He died in youth, but he had redeemed his pledge, and at this hour his influence is felt in Asia, in Africa, in the islands of the sea, and in every corner of his native country. This man was Samuel John Mills, and all that know his history will say that I have exaggerated neither the grandeur of his aspirations nor the result of his efforts. He traversed our land like a ministering spirit, silently and yet effectually, from the hill country of the Pilgrims to the valley of the Missouri. He wandered on his errands of benevolence from village to village and from city to city, pleading now with the patriot for a country growing up to an immensity of power, and now with the Christian for a world lying in wickedness. He explored in person the desolations of the West, and in person he stirred up to enterprise and effort the churches of the East. He lived for India and Owhyhee (Hawaii), and died in the service of Africa. He went to heaven in his youth, but his works do follow him, like a long train of glory that still widens and brightens and will widen and brighten forever. Who can measure the influence of one such minister of the gospel?"

It was not strange that the project of the colonization of Africa, in the promotion of which Mills had laid down his young life, should engage the attention of the young men then occupying the places of Mills and his fellow-students. Mr. Bacon's middle year (1821–'22) coincided with that vigorous reaction and revival of anti-slavery feeling and action, both at the South and at the North, which succeeded to the temporary despondency produced by the success of "the Missouri Compromise." Notwithstanding the studious efforts to represent this and the following years as a period of apathy on the subject of slavery, they were really a time of the most earnest and practical activity. In the volume of the "Transactions of the Andover Society of Inquiry Concerning Missions" for this time, out of six elaborate dissertations, not less than four are devoted to this subject. At the instance of a student from Kentucky, a committee was appointed to consider what could be done for the elevation of the Negro race, and the writing of its report was assigned to Mr. Bacon. Writing his recollections of this time more than a half-century later, he said:

"We were to view the black population of our country as a definite portion of the human race—were to consider how it might be elevated from a degraded position to the dignity and privileges of Christian civilization. I read what I could find on the subject, but nothing was more helpful to me than a series of

articles from the pen of Jeremiah Evarts in the "Panoplist" for 1820. Two of these articles were published while the Missouri question was pending; the third and fourth, 'On the Condition of the Blacks in this Country,' were intended to show that the defeat on the Missouri question was no reason for despair; that the condition of the blacks was still a legitimate subject of discussion, and that the improvement of their condition was still a legitimate object of effort on the part of patriotic and Christian men. * * * Another help I had in the sermon of the younger Edwards on 'The Injustice and Impolicy of the Slave Trade and of the Slavery of the Africans,' an eighteenth-century pamphlet which Ralph Randolph Gurley, then and thenceforward the enthusiastic servant of the American Colonization Society, had caused to be republished in Boston, hoping to give it circulation in the Southern States. In the simplicity of his heart he thought, and he always continued to think, that he was working for the universal extinction of slavery. Having mentioned his name, I must not be denied the privilege of paying here my tribute to his memory. I knew him well; and a man more worthy to be loved, more earnestly devoted to the service of God in doing good, and more self-forgetting and self-sacrificing I have not known."

The "Life of Mills" was at that time a fresh book. It was matter, of course, that the subject of his latest hopes and prayers, "the idea of a colony in Africa which should become the fulcrum of effort for the elevation of the African race in America," should be included in the studies of the committee.

"Our study and consultation resulted in convictions such as these: The colony which had been planted on Cape Montserrado might be made to grow into a free and civilized State; Christian benevolence, North and South, might unite in sustaining the colony and in securing for it not only good government, but schools and all other civilizing influences. Those of the colored people, whether bond or free, who might become inhabitants of such a colony would find their own condition greatly improved and would have the inspiration of hope for their children. The enterprise would excite neither alarm nor hostility in the slaveholding States, while it would be the means of conferring liberty on multitudes of slaves, and would rally to its support the entire Christianity of the South. * * * The civilized Negro State on the coast of Africa, with its growth in knowledge and in wealth and power, would react upon the condition of the African race in the United States and would set before them the strongest incentives to well-doing."

The young man of twenty years had small reason to complain that his labor was in vain. His report was recast into the form

of a review, and thus published in the *Christian Spectator* for September and October, 1823. A pamphlet edition of it was widely circulated by the agency of the Andover students; and it is an impressive sign of the times that then were, that this pamphlet, containing denunciations of American slavery as strong as ever were put into language, was not only published in New England, but republished at Richmond for circulation at the South.

On the invitation of the managers of the Colonization Society, a committee was appointed by the Society of Inquiry to visit Washington and attend the annual Colonization meeting at Washington. The presence of the two young men from Andover was not without weight in the councils of the Colonization Society. "At the first meeting of the board of managers," writes Mr. Solomon Peck, making report of their doings, "Mr. Bacon, in behalf of the delegation and by request of the board, suggested four topics of consideration and accompanied them by such remarks as the occasion seemed to demand. The first respected the fitting out of ships for Liberia; the second the appointment of agents and the formation of auxiliary and State societies; the third the establishment of a periodical publication; and the fourth the establishment of a seminary for blacks." The one thing which the delegates most emphasize in their report is the unvarying tone of opposition to slavery which was heard throughout the meeting from men both of the South and of the North. They say:

"In almost every conversation with the board of managers we have given a prominent place to the subject of slavery; we have been met with the utmost frankness and cordiality; we have received the most unequivocal assurances which the nature of the case permits, that the extinction of slavery is with them an object of primary importance. We had the pleasure in particular of hearing a gentleman of the South, of high standing and of extensive and increasing influence generally, as well as of weight in the board, express at one of these meetings his utter detestation of slavery. His chief motive, he said, in becoming a member of the Colonization Society was the hope that it would exterminate slavery from the land, and he should withdraw his support at once were he compelled to relinquish that expectation."

Among the near friends of Mr. Bacon at Andover was Samuel Hooker Cowles, of Farmington, whose noble "enthusiasm of

humanity" and whose early death are commemorated in the *Christian Spectator* of January, 1828. He was an anti-slavery man of the early and noble type, "willing to lend his hand to any measure which prudence and philanthropy might dictate." His favorite project was "the establishment of an African college, where youth were to be educated on a scale so liberal as to place them on a level with other men and fit them for extensive usefulness to their brethren, either in this country or in the colonies." In such plans for the elevation of the colored race the minds of these generous young men were busy. Presently there came to Mr. Bacon a noble opportunity of setting them before the public.

For several successive years a number of the Boston churches united, at the Park Street church, in a religious celebration of the Fourth of July. In the year 1824 Mr. Bacon was invited to be the orator on that occasion. It was impossible for a generous mind to join in the jubilation over the liberty and prosperity of the people at large without being reminded of the enslavement and degradation of the people of color. Not only in Boston, but elsewhere, the Christian celebration of Independence Day became an annual appeal in behalf of the still dependent, depressed, and enslaved. The title of Mr. Bacon's Boston oration was "A Plea for Africa." Exhibiting the pitiable condition of the African race, both in its native continent and elsewhere in the world, he argued that the task of raising it from its degradation, whether in Africa or in America, was one task and not two.

"If we would be successful in the pursuit of either, we must aim at the attainment of both. Cover Africa with the institutions of civilized freedom, and fill it with the light of knowledge and religion, and the whole Negro race is raised in a moment from its hopeless depth of degradation; and, on the other hand, give freedom and intelligence and all the rights and honors of humanity to the exiled descendants of Africa, and you have completely provided for the salvation of the continent from which they sprung."

Having expatiated fervidly on these two aspects of his subject, he came to the practical conclusion of his discourse. The various and diverse efforts for the good of the colored race ought to be combined in a system that should accomplish the whole work.

"Those projects of benevolence toward Africa to which the attention of the American public has already been invited do in fact constitute such a system. The means of elementary instruction and the apparatus of moral and religious culture which are employed on our colored population lie at the foundation of all African improvement. The societies for the abolition of slavery are continually urging the claims of these unfortunates with a zeal which scorns to be weary, and which gathers impulse from discouragement. The scheme of an African seminary for liberal education, which has been as yet only slightly discussed, will not be forgotten, for there are men engaged in its behalf who will never rest while God spares them to the world till the chasm which they now lament shall have been filled up and the school which they have projected shall be sending forth its pupils to become throughout the earth the noblest and most efficient benefactors of Africa. * * * And to consummate the system, the institution for which I am particularly desirous to excite your immediate interest is sending back the descendants of Africa to the land of their fathers, that they may extend over the continent which God has given them for their inheritance the light and blessedness of Christian civilization."

The spirit of this "plea for Africa" never ceased to be the spirit of Mr. Bacon's long and strenuous advocacy of the cause of colonization. It was the spirit of a large and generous philanthropy, intent not on some one or another scheme, but on every measure that promised good help for the lifting up of a sorely wronged, depressed, and degraded race of his fellow-men. His first and immediate duty was to the colored people within his reach. The first Fourth of July after his ordination as pastor at New Haven (1825) he repeated there the "Plea for Africa" given the year before in Boston. Printed in pamphlets and newspapers, with its unreserved denunciations of slavery, it was widely circulated and warmly welcomed at the South as well as at the North. Two days later a few gentlemen met at Mr. Bacon's room, July 6th, by whom it was—

"Voted, that we, the Rev. Leonard Bacon, Mr. Luther Wright, Mr. Alexander C. Twining, Mr. Edward Beecher, and Mr. Theodore D. Woolsey, do form ourselves into a club, to be entitled the Anti-slavery Association."

The five young men, most of them college tutors, with two others, subscribed $35 out of their little salaries and set themselves about the work to be done, first, for the black population

of the city of New Haven; second, on the public sentiment of the city and State, and, third, through the influence of the theological students in the Yale Seminary. How earnestly and practically they began the first part of their work was soon evidenced by the formation, in conjunction with other citizens, of "The African Improvement Society of New Haven." The documents are still extant showing the careful and sympathetic house-to-house inquiry that was instituted, showing the pitiable degradation in which the colored people of that town were living in their slums or their poor, disreputable suburbs. In April, 1827, the society printed an address which set forth these notorious and painful facts and its own methods and purposes in view of them. Charitable ladies had given their services in personal work. Religious worship and instruction had been organized, with one of the best and kindest of men, the Rev. Simeon S. Jocelyn, as pastor. Schools had been provided both for children and for older persons. A library was to be established suited to their use and a savings society was to encourage every disposition to thrift and providence. These earnest labors, continued from year to year, were "not in vain in the Lord." In 1831 the editor of the *Liberator* wrote from New Haven of the wretched negro community in that city: "As a body, in no place in the Union is their (the colored people's) situation so comfortable or the prejudices of the community weaker against them." But of what sort was the condition of this population where it was most comfortable was set forth in Mr. Bacon's Fourth of July sermon of 1830.

"Who are the free people of color in the United States, and what are they? In this city there are from eight hundred to a thousand. Of these a few families are honest, sober, industrious, pious, and in many points of view respectable. But what are the remainder? Every one knows their condition to be a condition of deep and dreadful degradation, but few have ever formed any conception of the reality. The fact is that, as a class, they are branded with ignominy. They are surrounded by every temptation to vice. More than half the incentives to industry, to self-improvement, to frugality, to the common virtues of society are never addressed to their minds. What the result is may be traced in the statement of a few facts which were collected and published in this city less than a year ago. [Here the preacher read detailed extracts from the report of a Bible

Society's visitor whose duty had called him to visit every colored family in New Haven.]

"Such is the condition of the great body of the 800 people of color in this enlightened and Christian city of New Haven. In the midst of all our enjoyments, what have they to enjoy? And certainly their condition in this city is no worse than a fair specimen of their condition elsewhere. Yet in the United States the population of this description amounts, probably, to not less than 300,000. There are in this country 300,000 freemen who are freemen only in name, degraded to the dust and forming hardly anything else than a mass of pauperism and crime. In this State one-thirty-fourth part of the population is of the description we are now considering; and yet that thirty-fourth part of the population furnishes the State prison with one-third of its convicts. And the facts are substantially the same throughout the Union."

In his strenuous endeavors for the social, moral, and intellectual uplifting of the colored people about him, Mr. Bacon felt, as others like-minded were feeling, the necessity of opening some hopeful career to a people so depressed and discouraged. There had been nothing to weaken his early conviction that the prosperity of the African colony would be a blessing not only to the colonists but to the colored people remaining in America.

"Will not the great body of the free people of color in this country experience the benefits of this undertaking? Will they not soon learn that there is a land where the Negro is no more degraded and where the deep brand of ignominy fades from his brow? And will not the knowledge of such a fact tend to waken and expand the capacities of their nature? Will it not tend to rouse them to self-improvement and to enterprise? Will there not grow up a strong and animating sympathy between them and their brethren beyond the seas? Will they not thus insensibly acquire both self-respect and the respect of others? Will not the wretchedness of their degradation be alleviated? And as this new light shines on their darkness will not a new impulse and a new efficiency be imparted to every other effort of benevolence in their behalf? Let this work be successfully prosecuted, and how long will it be ere the same spirit of adventure which carries so many of our young men to the banks of the Ohio, the Illinois, and the Missouri will impel thousands of young men of color to seek a home on the hardly more distant shores of Africa?"

And then he further commends the enterprise of colonization for its tendency to promote the abolition of slavery. 1, it offers to many individuals a long-wished-for opportunity to emanci-

pate their slaves; 2, it promotes continual discussion of the subject of slavery; 3, it removes one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of conviction at the South—the condition of the free blacks.*

Nothing is more notable and more characteristic of the man in the work of this early advocate of colonization than the constancy with which he held this enterprise in its due relative place as part of a system of efforts for the advancement of the colored race throughout the world; but this was the spirit and temper of the men in general with whom he was coöperating. It was the very people who were laboring to encourage the emigration to Liberia that were at the same time active in efforts for the advancement of the colored people at home, so that it could boldly be said, in 1830, "We doubt whether a city can be found north of Philadelphia which has not its 'Clarkson Society' or its 'African Improvement Society,' or some such association aiming to promote the comfort and improvement of this wretched population."† Perhaps his most intimate associate in the Connecticut Colonization Society was that "enthusiast of humanity," Thomas H. Gallaudet, of Hartford. Between the Christian communities of Hartford and New Haven there was a generous emulation in labors for the uplifting of the black population of the two cities.

A favorite plan of the young men at Andover, as we have seen, was the plan of a college for the liberal education of colored youth. The first public announcement of the scheme was made by Mr. Bacon, when, in 1823, at the age of twenty-one, he urged it upon the Colonization Society, at Washington. It was advocated by him in his "Plea for Africa" at Boston in 1824, and at New Haven in 1825. Not only in Andover was the plan taken up with eagerness. President Griffin, of Williams College, was enthusiastic in its favor. Theodore Woolsey was earnest and wise in counsel about it, and his friend, Ridgely, wrote to Woolsey and Bacon:

"I am delighted with the idea of calling a general meeting at New York to deliberate about the practicability of establishing

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* The substance of this sermon, recast and expanded as a review article, was published in the *Quarterly Christian Spectator* for September, 1830.

† L. Bacon in *Qu. Chr. Spectator*, II, 524.

a Negro university. The necessities of Africa cry aloud for some such institution. Her children are starving for the bread of knowledge. They must have it. It is my opinion that twenty well educated and accomplished young Negro gentlemen (I hope you are prepared for the unusual association of terms) would do more for that forlorn and outcast race than all that has been yet accomplished by their distinguished benefactors at Washington. It would go far to dignify the name."

Already, in the summer of 1825, this project had been talked over in the little "Anti-slavery Association" of young colonizationists at New Haven. The chief discouragement which it encountered was the non-success of a feeble experiment in that direction which was languishing in the hands of the Presbyterian Synod of New Jersey; but the matter was not let drop. After wide consultation and correspondence, in the summer of 1829, the matured plan of the institution was submitted to a circle of leading citizens of New Haven, especially those connected with Yale College, and was cordially approved. A member of Mr. Bacon's congregation, Arthur Tappan, subscribed $1,000 conditionally as the nucleus of a fund. The plan which had been cherished by the young pastor for more than seven years seemed in a fair way to be realized. A little more, and the foundation of Hampton and Atlanta and Tuskegee might have been anticipated by forty years.

The defeat of this part of Mr. Bacon's broad and comprehensive scheme for the uplifting of the colored people was due to a conjunction of circumstances that made an epoch in the history of the colonization enterprise and turned the labors of some of its friends into a new direction. Hitherto the problem had been to awaken benevolent interest in it to the point of contributing the large sums required for the founding of a new State across the ocean and to satisfy conscientious masters desirous of emancipating their slaves that there was a hopeful career open to the freedman in his fatherland. Positive opposition to the enterprise there was none, except from the very few scattering voices that had begun to be heard here and there at the South in defense of slavery as a permanent policy. Henceforth it was to be subject to persistent attack from opposite directions, requiring it to wear "the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left."

In the year 1829 the Fourth of July address at the Park Street church, in Boston, was delivered by Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, who had then just been awakened to a sense of the injustice and wrong of slavery. There are many notable things in Mr. Garrison's career, but by far the most remarkable of them is the protracted torpor of his conscience on this subject at a time when the community all about him was stirred with profound feeling and eager agitation. In his boyhood and youth he had been repeatedly at Baltimore, where the scenes of the internal slave trade had made no impression on his sensibilities. He had been in the newspaper work in New England and apparently had heard nothing of the strenuous anti-slavery activity manifested on all sides through press and pulpit and platform; and yet he must have known something of it. He might by some possibility have forgotten the still recent agitations of the Missouri controversy. He might have failed to read the appeals of Jeremiah Evarts, by which the religious anti-slavery sentiment in his own region had been profoundly stirred. He might not have happened to fall in with the edition of Edwards on "Slavery and the Slave Trade," printed at Boston by Secretary Gurley, of the Colonization Society, or with Mr. Bacon's pamphlet on the condition of the black population. He may somehow have missed the anti-slavery meeting in his own village held on the Fourth of July by the ardent young abolitionists of Andover Seminary. But it is hardly conceivable that, being invited to deliver the seventh in a series of annual anti-slavery discourses he should not have heard of the six that had preceded it; and in fact he himself, when first aroused from his exceptional indifference to the subject a few months before, certified to the universal prevalence of an earnest anti-slavery sentiment, both at the South and at the North, in a paper penned by his own hand.

With the zeal of a new convert, the orator thus suddenly awakened from his long and strange apathy on the subject on which all the community beside were feeling so intensely, made a speech marked by two characteristics: first, his impression that he was almost alone in his sympathy for the blacks, "over whose sufferings (said he) scarcely an eye weeps or a heart melts or a tongue pleads either to God or man;" secondly, the wild extravagance of his advocacy of colonization. It was to accom-

plish a miraculous sea-change in the emigrants; and it might be effected by the deportation of the black population at the cost of the Federal Government. The colonization cause has been frequently imperiled by the extravagance of its partisans, and never more so than at this time.

Happily the danger from Mr. Garrison's friendship, which ruined whatever it clung to, was escaped, and the less serious damage of his bitter enmity incurred. Only a few months after this colonization discourse in Boston, Mr. Garrison was making a tour through the North for the purpose of making what was afterward published under the title, "An address delivered before the Free People of Color in Philadelphia, New York, and other cities during the month of June, 1831." The address contained some wholesome, kindly advice, and some things calculated to flatter that vanity which has so often been a pitiable and fatal weekness of the colored people—to encourage them to a bumptious and pushing demand for social equality, and to excite their bitter and malignant passions. The discourse concluded with a venomous attack on the Colonization Society and its supporters, in which the studious attempt was made to poison the minds of the colored people with the belief that the men and women who, for long years before he had taken any interest in the subject, had been engaged in various efforts for the advancement of the depressed race both in America and in Africa, were really embarked in a dark conspiracy to shut them out from the light of knowledge, to defraud them of their rights, and to perpetuate slavery. Few things are more illustrative of the helpless ignorance of the blacks than the fact that it should be possible for a mischief-making demagogue to deceive them by such talk about those whom they had known for their generous friends and benefactors. The sorrowful facts about the low condition of that people that had been sought out by charitable inquiry and laid before the benevolent public as the ground of an appeal for aid and protection to the helpless and instruction to the ignorant were quoted to them with the emphasis of capitals, as proof that "those who have entered into this CONSPIRACY AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS [the colonization enterprise] are unanimous in abusing their victims." Such talk as this naturally did not tend to inspire with confidence in Mr. Garrison "the Anti-slavery Society of New Haven" and "the African Improvement Society,"

whose labors for the colored people of that town had had the result of making their condition, according to Mr. Garrison's own testimony, better than anywhere else in the United States. But that which more deeply alienated from him the respect of many of the friends of the colored people everywhere was the apparent purpose and the unmistakable tendency of his language to incite bitter race hatred and bloody insurrection and servile war with all its horrors. His language to the Negroes was as mild as Mark Antony's "Good friends, sweet friends, let me not stir you up to mutiny!" and the meaning of it seemed as obvious. Less than eight months from the beginning of the *Liberator* the ferocious insurrection of Southampton broke out (August 22, 1831), followed by a more ferocious retaliation on the part of the whites. It was inevitable that the public mind, justly or unjustly, should connect the two facts in the relation of cause and effect; and the impression upon the public could not but be deepened by the style, not easily distinguishable from glee and exultation, in which the awful news was announced in the *Liberator* with the heading, "BLOOD! BLOOD! BLOOD!" and with the editor's claim that these horrors were the fulfillment of his predictions and a just retribution on the miserable community that had been overwhelmed by them.

Most inopportunely, it was just while the details of this bloody tragedy were still arriving at New Haven that the scheme for an African college, which had so long been maturing in the councils of the friends of the colored people and of the colonization enterprise, and which had received the approval of the leading citizens of New Haven, was announced to have been taken under the patronage of Mr. Garrison, who was not ashamed to flatter the silly vanity of the Negroes with absurd promises of gigantic intellectual superiority that it would confer upon them "after the first four years." The graduates of this college were to become "the Websters and Clays and Hamiltons and Dwights and Edwardses of the day," and the "judges and representatives and rulers of the people—the whole people." Such talk as this, addressed to the poor, illiterate, and credulous Negroes, was more than disgusting to sober citizens; in view of the Virginia massacres, it was alarming. The occasion was eagerly seized by politicians interested in the Southern vote. In hot haste a city meeting was called, and after speeches appealing to the meaner

passions of the populace, a series of resolutions was passed almost unanimously that are an ineffaceable blot on the history of New Haven. In a strain that afterward became shamefully familiar to the public ear, they denounced "the founding of colleges for educating colored people" as "an unwarrantable and dangerous interference with the internal concerns of other States," and declared that "the mayor, aldermen, common council, and freemen will resist the establishment of the proposed college in this place by every lawful means." In face of such a demonstration of public sentiment in that place in which, of all the Union, the condition of the colored people was most comfortable and the prejudices against them weakest, it was vain to urge the project further at that time. In this outburst of popular madness Mr. Bacon lost the hopes and patient labors of eight years. But the occasion did not pass without his solemn, indignant, and reiterated protest. "With mortification and sorrow" he rebukes "the spirit with which we have seen a sober and Christian community (or one so reputed) rush together to blot out the first ray of hope for the blacks." "Are we," he asks, "unnecessarily disturbed or grieved without a cause when those whose business it was fearlessly to stand up and stem this oppressive, inexorable prejudice—to show that it is but a limb of that accursed system of bondage which we all execrate and lament—when such men, we say, join in and fan the flame?"*

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* *Religious Intelligencer*, September 17, 1831. The authorship of the article was not doubtful. The way in which the history of this affair is written in the interest of Mr. Garrison and his sect is highly characteristic. According to writers of this party, the Colonizationists were in a "conspiracy" to defeat all efforts to elevate the colored people in America. and thus to force them into exile. But "the Abolitionists from the beginning recognized the duty of devising some means for the education of colored youth." Mr. Garrison had thought and spoken of the idea when he lived in Baltimore; but Mr. Jocelyn, of New Haven, who represented Mr. Garrison's views in that "hot-bed of colonization," was the first white man to conceive the idea of founding in this country a college for Negroes, and his plan, which had been broached two years before, was defeated (so the story is made to run) through the guilty connivance and cowardice of Mr. Bacon, who "did not find his voice on this occasion, but bent before the storm." (See O. Johnson, "Garrison and his Times," 119-124. Life of Garrison, chap. VIII. Henry Wilson's "The Slave Power," I, 215.) This is one instance out of a multitude of the insane recklessness of truth that is manifested in the writings of this school.

The concerted and persistent attack on the Colonization Society that was led by Mr. Garrison imposed upon Mr. Bacon a double duty. His immediate task was to refute the calumnious misrepresentations made by Mr. Garrison in his address to the colored people, and a few months later in his pamphlet, "Thoughts on Colonization." How thoroughly this was done, with exposure of fallacious arguments and false references and shockingly garbled quotations, may be seen in Mr. Bacon's successive articles in *The Quarterly Christian Spectator* for June, 1832, and March, 1833. The favorite fallacy of the Society's assailants had been to present an array of wrong sentiments which individual supporters of the Society had expressed or could be represented as having expressed, and to prove by these that the Society was a cruel and inhuman defender of slavery and enemy of the colored race. It might have been proved by exact parity of reasoning and with far greater copiousness of evidence that it was an abolition society devoted to the promotion of the interests of the colored people in America. In fact, it was neither one nor the other, but simply a colonization society, limited by its constitution to a single, definite work and having no competency to meddle with others.

And nevertheless it was true that the Society, conceived and sustained as it had been in the noblest spirit of Christian patriotism and humanity, publicly advocated and sustained for the promise that it gave of elevating the colored race on both continents, of promoting emancipation and procuring the abolition of slavery, was exposed to unjust odium by the unworthy arguments and the unworthy tone with which it had sometimes been commended by individuals. Having its headquarters at Washington, the center of political management, there was danger that sinister influences might prevail in its councils. It was a besetting temptation to the Society to lean on the fleshly arm of distinguished politicians. The crisis called for a determined effort to hold the institution true to its course as a benevolent society.

It was a deep sense of the importance of this that induced Mr. Bacon, notwithstanding an unusual pressure of work and care at home, to make the tedious wintry journey to Washington to attend the annual meeting of the Society in January, 1832. What importance was attached by some of his nearest friends

to this journey of his is indicated in a few lines in a letter from his wife. After giving several instances of kind attention to her on the part of the Rev. Simeon Jocelyn, the devoted friend and pastor of the colored people of New Haven, she adds:

"He acts and talks as if you had conferred a special favor on him by going on this business. He told his people on Sunday what you had gone for, and proposed to them to have a concert of prayer on Monday morning that you might be strengthened and directed from on high to do those things which would be for the good of the poor slaves and for the glory of God. He said they all, every one, rose up like a cloud and agreed to observe it. The people, all that I have seen or heard of, are glad you went, and, I think, will take more interest in the Society on account of it."

A letter from Mr. Jocelyn himself expresses the deepest interest in Mr. Bacon's "visiting Washington to plead the cause of the oppressed people of color and to present the true interests of the Colonization Society on the pure principles of benevolence and not 'after the rudiments of men,' 'the men of this world.'"

At the thronged meeting in the Hall of Representatives, Mr. Bacon was followed by Edward Everett in one of his most exquisite pieces of rhetoric, and by Congressman Archer, of Virginia. His own brief speech distinctly defines the dangers which the wisest friends of the colonization enterprise apprehended as besetting it at this critical time—dangers which their best efforts did not succeed in wholly averting. It was in support of a resolution to the effect that the Society ought to be commended to the public as a benevolent institution, and especially to the free people of color as an institution designed primarily for their good. The meeting, he writes:

"Is universally said to have been a meeting of extraordinary interest. The great hall was crowded at an early hour, so much so that when I arrived I found much difficulty in forcing my way through the crowd to the narrow area that was left vacant near the chair of the president, where I was compelled to stand through nearly all of the exercises. I had not been able to put pen to paper by way of preparation for my speech, and it fell to me to speak first, in that strange place, in that great assembly, and in a most inconvenient location for making an unembarrassed extemporaneous address. Yet I got through very confortably, on the whole, and said nearly all that I had intended, without being

betrayed into any expressions suited to give offense and without exceeding twenty minutes."

That twenty-minute speech may be read in full in the *African Repository* of the year 1832, but some parts of it are specially illustrative of the history of that period:

"I apprehend, sir, that at the present crisis there may be some danger of forgetting that our institution is primarily and preeminently benevolent. It is not impossible that, in our reasonings about the ulterior results and complicated bearings of the work, we may too much overlook the immediate and grand design of doing good to the wretched, elevating a degraded race from its misery, and chasing from a wide continent the deep darkness that has covered it for uncounted ages. Let the institution cease to be a benevolent institution, and its prosperity will begin to fail, the devout will cease to commend it to God in their prayers, and the friends of suffering humanity will no longer toil in its behalf.

* * * "There is danger that the free colored population will fall into the hands of far other men than the friends of this Society. We have seen something of this danger, and the sources of it are not difficult to be discovered. Our institution is one the success of which will not only bless those who are the immediate objects of its beneficence, but by blessing them will bless also the country in which no laws and no benevolent exertions have as yet been able to secure them an equal birthright, and the people among whom—such is the force of mutual prejudice—they are strangers and outcasts. Unquestionably, sir, this is an important aspect of our enterprise, and one which I would by no means desire any man to overlook; yet here is the source of the danger referred to. When the Society is spoken of as an institution which is to relieve us from present and pressing evil, and which may relieve the country from a prospective and not distant danger—when such views are urged on the self-interest of the nation, the people of color are not ignorant of this aspect of the subject; they read, they hear, and when they are spoken of as a nuisance to be got rid of, they prove themselves men—men of like passions with us—by resenting it. Their prejudices are roused. They stand aloof from the design; and the fact is not to be concealed that the free people of color, taken as a community, look on our undertaking with disaffection. Meanwhile there are men whom nature has endowed with such talents as equip a demagogue, and with whom it seems an object worth ambition to head the free people of color and to receive the honor of their applause. Such men know how to move these people in the line of their prejudices. 'This country,' they tell them, 'is

your country; here you were born, and here you have a right to stay. We are your friends, and we will maintain your rights against those who would drive you into exile.' Thus moving on their ignorance, wearing the aspect of friendship, and let us say, too, acting as their friends in many other respects, such men find it at present an easy matter to confirm them in their prejudices, and to acquire an influence over them which may be directed to disastrous issues.

"I have not made these remarks, sir, without a view to their practical application. We all believe that this institution is admirably calculated to do good to this unhappy portion of mankind. We know that this is its immediate design. In our view, it stands with its hands full of blessings for these our fellow-men. Let us go, then, and show these fellow-men that we are individually their friends. Let us show this in every way in which intelligent and substantial benevolence can manifest itself. Thus we may get within the intrenchment of their prejudices, and may bring them to understand how vast, how rich, how noble is the inheritance which the Society offers to them. They need only to know this clearly, and nothing more will be necessary to carry them thither."

The speaker urged upon the managers of the Society the policy of no longer paying the transportation expenses of emigrants, but rather of putting the whole strength of the Society into the improvement of the colony itself.

"May it not be that this hiring them by paying all their expenses has confirmed them in the suspicion that their removal is designed entirely for our benefit and not at all for theirs. It seems to result from the principles of human nature that when Liberia shall be known and indisputably acknowledged to afford the free people of color all those privileges and blessings which we are assured that it will afford them, they will rush thither of their own accord and pay their own expenses. We may be confident that the more you do for the improvement of the colony, for the erection of public edifices, for the construction of roads and bridges, for the establishment of schools, the more you do to make it a desirable asylum, the more rapidly will you promote emigration. Let there be in Africa a well-ordered, prosperous, and intelligent republic, stretching along the sea and penetrating the continent, the forest vanishing before its citizens and the wilderness becoming a fruitful field, and when the tale come back to us, as surely it will, the children of Africa among us will hear it. The story will soon go down even to the dark depths in which they dwell. Voices which they cannot but understand will tell them of riches that are theirs if they

will rouse themselves and be men, and at that sound they will come forth to light and liberty as from the sepulcher.

"The enterprise of your Society, considered as a work of benevolence bearing first and most of all on the well-being of the African race, commends itself to the regard of all who feel for the miseries of degraded humanity or who pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God. It occupies an eminent position among those undertakings of Christian zeal which are the glory of the age. It is to sustain a grand part in bringing about the consummation of those hopes which look for the day when truth and righteousness shall everywhere prevail and under the light of the word of God every system that degrades or enthralls mankind shall vanish like the fabric of a dream. Let us go on, then, with our work, cheered by the thought that these efforts of ours are combining with other influences to introduce the universal dominion of liberty and purity and joy, when under the broad sky all around the green world there shall be one aspect of peace and no throne of a despot shall offend those smiling heavens, no footstep of a slave pollute that new and rejoicing earth."

The peril against which Mr. Bacon strove so earnestly was only partly and for a time averted. The immediate effect, indeed, of Mr. Garrison's crazy onslaughts on the Society was not very considerable. His extravagant invectives were easily refuted, even refuting themselves sometimes by their own extravagance; but the indirect effect of his attacks was more serious. They multiplied to the Society a retinue of most undesirable friends. For an egregious example of this, a small lawyer named Judson, in the small country town of Canterbury, Conn., made himself notorious as a ringleader in the disgraceful persecution of the Crandall sisters for keeping a school for colored girls in their own house. Presently he was found posing before the public as an advocate of the Colonization Society. This signalized him as an opponent of abolitionists and commended him to the favor of Southern politicians and of the administration, by whom he was exalted to the bench of a Federal court, in which capacity it afterward fell to him to preside at the famous trial of the case of The Amistad. Accessions of this kind could not take place without disgusting and repelling others, and the accessions could not easily be debarred. The platform of a colonization meeting was often used not only for defense against the virulent attacks of the Garrison abolitionists, but for those open apologies

for slavery which now for the first time began to be heard at the North from politicians of both parties. A right and useful enterprise does not cease to be right and useful when a bad man steps forward to advocate it from evil motives with fallacious arguments. Thus Mr. Bacon conclusively argued. It was not logical to desert a good cause because bad men adhere to it. It was not logical, but it was natural and inevitable that this would be done. Some honorable and high-minded men withdrew from the Society, disgusted with their new associates. Mr. Bacon, not less disgusted, remained, still maintaining the integrity of his anti-slavery principles and recording his open protest against every wrong in act or deed.

In these few pages I have recorded briefly and with many important omissions the services of Mr. Bacon to the cause of African colonization in the first decade of his public life, beginning in his boyhood. Services still more important were to be rendered by him in the stormy and perilous years that were to come. It may be that I shall have the privilege of continuing the story down to a later time; but so much as this, out of the life of one of the earliest and most ardent of the advocates of this cause, is enough for a vindication of the noble principles and motives of himself and the men with whom he was associated, and enough for a refutation of the calumnies which nearly seventy years ago were invented and published against the Society and its friends and which continue to be republished to this day.

It is not unlikely to be said by some reader that the record of Mr. Bacon's work may be accepted as a vindication of himself individually from the charge of sympathy with the system of slavery and of cold-hearted indifference to the welfare of the colored people, but that it shows no more than that he was an exception among the friends of African colonization generally. It is a sufficient answer to this to say that it was against him individually and by name and as representative of the friends of colonization that these charges were made; that it was eminently his arguments and denunciations against slavery that were garbled and falsified by misquotation to prove that colonizationists were in sympathy with slavery; that it was his long public and private labors for the liberal education of the blacks, defeated through the folly of the enemies of colonization, that were claimed

by these as the fruit of their belated zeal, culpably abandoned by him; that it is in full view of the instrumentalities organized and set in operation by him which had made the colored people of New Haven superior in condition to those of any other place in the Union, that he is maligned to this day as having had, like other colonizationists, "nothing but disparagement and contempt for the free people of color;" that it was the pitiable facts set forth by him in an appeal to Christian hearts to enter into these labors for the uplifting of the depressed and degraded, that were used to poison the minds of the colored people against him and the philanthropists associated with him as men "who have entered into a conspiracy against human rights," and "are unanimous in abusing their victims." If now it appears, as it must needs appear to any one who acquaints himself with the facts, that Leonard Bacon, from his brilliant boyhood to his honored grave, was the unwavering and ardent friend of liberty and justice, the unflinching enemy of slavery, the lover of humanity at its lowest and neediest not only, but the ready and eager helper, according to his opportunity, of every most helpless human creature, with a special tenderness of sympathy toward the African race as being most depressed and least befriended—the result is something more than to vindicate him. It is to impeach and utterly discredit before the judgment-seat of history the witnesses who, undeterred by repeated and irrefutable exposures, persist in their attempt to fix upon him and men like-minded with himself an undeserved stigma. Their calumnies so recoil upon themselves as to put suspicion on any statement made by them in disparagement of any man's character or in glorification of themselves or of one another. The progress of exact historical study cannot be long in demonstrating that the history of their bitter controversy with the great body of the Christian anti-slavery men of their time, as that history is written or inspired by them, is a tissue of vainglorious and malignant fiction, in which the very truth that it contains is largely perverted to do the work of falsehood.

Leonard Woolsey Bacon.

THE SERVICES OF LEONARD BACON TO AFRICAN COLONIZATION.

II.

In the year 1833 the affairs of the American Colonization Society were approaching a perilous crisis. This was not only, nor even chiefly, on account of the fierce attacks upon the Society by Mr. Garrison. These were, some of them, so extravagant as to refute themselves; others of them were capable of being refuted and were refuted, and by none more conclusively than by Mr. Bacon himself; but the incessant reiteration of them was nevertheless effective in alienating from the Society some of those good men who had been attracted by the fervor of Mr. Garrison's anti-slavery crusade and were not yet repelled from him by his frenzies.

But these "fightings without" gave Mr. Bacon no serious concern for the cause that had grown dear to his heart through ten years of earnest and unpaid labor in its behalf. He was more concerned that there should be no just ground for attacks on the Society, and that even the pretexts for unjust attacks should be taken away. This is the aim of the following letter to Secretary Gurley, March 19, 1833:

"I see by the newspapers that there is some commotion in the Society at headquarters. I am anxious to hear authentic particulars. The relations of the Society to slavery seem to be the ground of dissension. Let me show my opinion. I would have the Society declare by solemn public acts:

"1. That it looks to the voluntary and peaceful abolition of slavery in the United States as one of the ultimate results of its labors.

"2. That as a Society it has nothing to do with slavery, either for or against it, except as slavery may be affected by the existence and growth of our African colonies.

"3. That it has no control over the opinions or conduct of its members and friends; that it leaves every man to act on the subject of slavery and on every other subject according to the light of his own conscience and under his personal responsibility to God, and that it is not to be held accountable for what any man says or does in relation to this subject.

"4. That it does by no means propose its own enterprise as the *only* thing to be done for the abolition of slavery or for the improvement of the ignorant in this country or in Africa, or as necessarily rival or hostile to any other enterprise aiming at these ends."

There were other and not less grave troubles in which the Society had become involved through business mismanagement. Mr. Bacon's anxiety led him to New York in "anniversary week," May, 1833, for consultation with the friends of the cause. In company with those energetic anti-slavery advocates, Gerrit Smith and Robert J. Breckenridge, he addressed the colonization meeting in the Brick Church.

His interest in the whole subject was deepened by news from Maryland that the colonization society of that State had boldly taken an anti-slavery position, and was moving with declared purpose for the abolition of slavery in Maryland. The State society, dissatisfied with the negative position taken at Washington, had determined to establish a separate colony for Maryland, independent of the control of the national society, and in the name of free soil to invite the coöperation of the friends of liberty in all parts of the country. These proposals were communicated to Mr. Bacon in a long letter from the very able chairman of the Maryland society's committee of correspondence, John H. B. Latrobe, Esq. Inclosing to Mr. Bacon the outspoken abolitionist manifesto of the Society, Mr. Latrobe says:

"It is believed that the Society acted in accordance with the feelings of the people of the State and the legislature upon the subject. A slave-holding State has therefore now for the first time openly avowed its determination to free itself from slavery, and it has called on the North for assistance in the accomplishment of its design. Will the North aid it? There can be no doubt that the State of Maryland could be made a free State, and there can be as little doubt that if this could be effected colonization would be nobly illustrated. Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina would be influenced by the example, and more would be done for the cause of liberty than can ever be effected by the scattered, and feeble because scattered, operations of the American Colonization Society over the whole Union. Instead of quarreling with the North as to the effects of colonization, Maryland now says, We admit the justice of your views in regard to it; come and aid us in carrying them

into effect. Let the South alone for a season. Time and circumstances will work the same conviction there about the evils of slavery that they have wrought in Maryland. When this last is freed from the blot that is upon her, we will lend our aid to remove it from Virginia."

Then, after entering into full details concerning the Maryland plan, the letter concludes:

"In this long letter, if I have trespassed upon your patience, it is because I rely upon your friendship to colonization. For this last ten years interested in it, I have never thought it promised fairer than at present. A slave State has determined to be a free one, and there is success in the very determination. Can the North refuse to hasten the period when it shall be complete?"

This spontaneous movement at the South for the abolition of slavery was well fitted to stir the enthusiastic hopes of the young pastor. A few months later (October 11) came another letter from the same hand, reporting the hopeful progress of the new enterprise and inviting Mr. Bacon to accept, either permanently or for a time, the general agency for the Society, north of the Potomac, at a salary far beyond that of his pastorship at New Haven. Mr. Bacon's answer to both of these letters was as follows, under date of October 22:

"In regard to the position taken by your Society, and your scheme for a new colony, I may say at once that you have my hearty approbation and may depend upon my humble but zealous coöperation. I have had my fears, which I expressed to Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Gurley, that there might be collision, or at least a want of cordiality, between the two societies, highly disastrous to both and to the common cause. These fears are now happily removed, and I cannot but hope that each colony in Africa, and each society in this country, will be a support and will impart new life and energy to the other. I have no doubt that the Christian public in every State this side of Maryland will be perfectly ready, not, indeed, to transfer their stated contributions from the parent society to you, but to afford you, from time to time, in emergencies like the present, prompt and efficient aid.

"In regard to your proposal to me to undertake the general agency of your Society, I feel constrained to answer your inquiry in the negative. The proposal was certainly very gratifying as a mark of your confidence in one whom you know only by repu-

tation, and as proceeding from men whose works show that their confidence is worth having; indeed I know not that any offer of the kind could be more inviting to me. I decline this, as I have declined similar proposals from Washington heretofore, on this ground distinctly, viz., that I regard my connection with my people as too sacred to be dissolved by any such call, while their affection towards me continues unabated and my strength is adequate to the labors of the pastoral office."

The approaching annual meeting of the Colonization Society, in January, 1834, was felt to be a life-or-death crisis for the Society. There had been grave mismanagement in its business affairs; a debt of $40,000—formidably large for that day of small things—had been incurred; and the need was felt and acknowledged of serious changes, not only of organization but of constitution. Two weighty and statesmanlike letters from Mr. Bacon in the *African Repository* for December, 1833, and January, 1834, indicated the lines that must be followed if the Society would fulfill its trust and hold the confidence of the public. Reviewing the large responsibilities of the Society which had been inadequately discharged, he remarks:

"It is a new phenomenon in the history of legislation and civil polity, that the supreme government of a young and growing nation in Africa, a government sustained by no military or naval force, a government preëminently dependent on the consent of the governed and on their experience of its utility, resides for the present, and, if rightly administered, will reside for some years to come, in the annually elected board of managers of an unchartered and unendowed benevolent association here in America. The governor of the colony is appointed by those managers, and is immediately and constantly responsible to them. The laws enacted by the governor in council are only temporary edicts till approved by them. The funds by which the government is supported and all its measures are prosecuted are drawn from their treasury; and the affairs of that government are every year becoming greater and more complicated. How important, then, is it that the organization of the Society should be such as to secure the greatest attention to its concerns, and the greatest promptitude, economy, and efficiency of action!"

As the annual meeting approached, urgent importunities were multiplied from different quarters to induce Mr. Bacon, at whatever sacrifice, to attend it. Mr. Gurley writes: "I am more and

more convinced that *all* for the cause depends on that meeting. I hope you will be with us. Gerrit Smith will." He could not refuse to go; and yet it was with no confident hope of a good result. He writes home from Washington:

"I fear we shall not succeed in a reform without a struggle, and I fear that a reform with a struggle will destroy the Society as it exists at present, and will be made the occasion of alienating and terrifying all the South and putting back the anti-slavery influence of the Society; but reform we must have, for without reform we are ruined, and we can be only ruined with it."

Well, the reform was achieved, and how important was the contribution to this result made by this youngest of those in council is partly manifest from the records and the journals of the time. Led off by the inspiring eloquence of Gerrit Smith and his munificent subscription of $5,000 toward the extinction of the debt, the assembly was aroused to new courage, and the fresh start was full of hope; but much still remained to be done, and in the midst of immense and multifarious labors Mr. Bacon found time to bestow on the cause so dear to him. Under date of February 3, 1834, he writes to Mr. Gurley:

"I take the earliest opportunity to put down on paper one or two thoughts for your consideration. If you think either of them worth attending to, you can make what use of it you please.

"1. Ought not measures to be taken immediately to organize in Liberia a representative legislature, small, but larger than the present council there, on a plan somewhat like that of the legislative councils in our United States Territories? Will not some security be thus obtained against negligence and abuses in the government? It seems to me that the report of the committee of the citizens of Liberia which I saw at your office the other day is pretty good proof that such a legislature might be organized there and might be of great use. Of course, it should be so limited in its powers as to leave the sovereignty for the present in the hands of the Society. The governor might have a veto on their acts, and the board at home might control the governor.

"2. Ought not arrangements to be made that every officer elected by the people shall be paid by the people, or not paid at all? This, I think, would have two effects: (1) It would curtail the expenses of the Government; (2) it would make the people the more willing to keep their connection with the Society, when they should see and feel the difference between paying officers themselves and having them paid from our treasury.

The patronage of the governor and of the board is likely to make the Government there strong enough, even after such a curtailment."

In this and later letters are other suggestions as to administration, and plans for the reduction of the debt, for which he was not only laboring, but out of his slender resources giving far beyond his means. "My anxiety for the cause," he says, "is such that I find it difficult to hold my peace."

One of these letters to Mr. Gurley, dated February 25, enunciates a fundamental maxim of charitable management that is not always observed:

"In regard to the 'statement about your debt,' let me say, make a full and fearless exposure of all the mischief and all the mismangement, come the blame where it may. *There is no way to gain the public confidence but by giving your confidence first to the public.* Let them see everything, and, among other things, let them see that the Society is thoroughly revolutionized; that the spirit of mismanagement and inefficiency is no longer the presiding genius of your institution. If the public see any identity or sympathy between the present and the former direction, your ruin is irretrievable; you die insolvent, and leave your affairs to be settled by your creditors. * * *

"[Speaking of the difficulty of finding a suitable man for colonial agent, in which the writer had taken active interest:] * * * If it were not for my own domestic ties and duties, I think I would offer myself at once as a candidate for the colonial agency; but I would advise no man to undertake that warfare who has a wife and children to provide for."

Later, in this same correspondence (March 24), is an earnest effort to steer the Society clear of one of its besetting dangers. The opening sentence quotes a phrase of Mr. Gurley's which seemed to show a misapprehension of Mr. Bacon's position.

"It is not, it never has been at all, my view that the good effects of colonization are to be 'limited to its Christian influence in Africa.' I look upon our institution as 'the great means,' though not at all the only means, 'of hope and elevation to the colored race.' Yet, in my view, *our* work, as the Colonization Society, is to be done chiefly, almost entirely, in Africa. If we are successful there, we are successful everywhere. If we are successful there, we elevate the character and standing and enlarge the being, I had almost said, of every man of color in the world. If we are successful *there*, we draw thousands

upon thousands of these people to the possession of the privileges which Liberia will offer them. If we are successful *there*, the effect on this whole nation will be inestimable and illimitable. If we *fail there*, we fail utterly. To me it is clear as the noon that our sphere of action is Africa; the object of all our efforts should be the promotion and perfection of our colonies. What we accomplish in respect to this country is to be accomplished, not by direct action, but by *reaction*. This is the only safe policy. The moment you depart from this line and begin to act directly with a view to diminish the colored population in Virginia or anywhere else, you begin to involve the cause in embarrassment and defeat."

It was inevitable that the good work accomplished at the annual meeting of the Society should be evil spoken of. The strange animosity with which Mr. Garrison had now for four years been assailing the beneficent enterprise which just before he had extolled with extravagant eulogy had infected some better men than himself, and had been exalted into a sort of condition of fellowship among the extreme and violent abolitionists. So good and upright a man as Joshua Leavitt, editor of the New York *Evangelist*, was moved at this period of the controversy to excesses of statement which he afterward regretted. In answer to a statement in his paper that "the attempted reform" was ended, "leaving all things in regard to the management, &c., as they were from the beginning," Mr. Bacon published a not discourteous but decisive article which had wide currency and influence:

"The reform which I and those in whose behalf I acted desired has been effected. * * * The direction of the institution, instead of being left in the hands of an indefinite and imperfectly organized body, is now committed to the executive officers and nine other individuals, who will annually render a strict account to their constituents. I feel no hesitation in saying for my colleagues, as well as for myself, that we have full confidence in the ability, fidelity, and benevolent views of the new board as it is actually constituted, and, what is of no inferior consequence, while these reforms were discussed with much freedom, and while on particular points of discussion there was no little difference of opinion, the reformed constitution was finally agreed to, and the reformed board of managers was elected with entire unanimity.

"My confidence in the success of the colony of Liberia is not impaired, but strengthened. The want of management here

and in Africa, by which the cause has been so much embarrassed, is at an end. The only constitutional object of the Society, namely, the voluntary colonization of people of color, now free or to be freed hereafter, will be pursued, I doubt not, vigorously, wisely, and with *singleness of purpose.* With the discussion of the ethics of slavery or the principles and process of its abolition the Society has nothing to do; nor will the present board be disposed to meddle with that subject. On the other hand, I am equally confident that the Society as now organized will not suffer itself to become auxiliary to any scheme for the compulsory removal or the increased oppression of the colored people."

Mr. Bacon's fixed resolution that the Colonization Society as a corporation should stick to its proper business and not enter into the slavery debate then raging did not at all imply that he shrank from that debate himself. In the *Quarterly Christian Spectator* for December, 1833, appeared a very serious and carefully studied paper from his pen on the ethics of slavery. It has historical importance as being one of those "occasional essays" controverting, on the one hand, the fanatical notions of Mr. Garrison and his followers and, on the other hand, the equally fanatical defenses of slavery which, being gathered a few years later into a volume, helped to fix the clear, strong, and temperate convictions of Abraham Lincoln. Of course, the argument was violently attacked by the "immediate abolitionists." It impugned their fundamental thesis, as enunciated by themselves, that "slave-holding under every possible modification is man-stealing. Man-stealing, as combining impiety in principle, falsehood in claim, injustice and cruelty without intermission and without end, is the most flagrant iniquity which a sinner can perpetrate. All profession of religion by a man who thus acts is a gross deception." Debate with men who started from such premises was not hopeful, but one of the replies bore the signature of that former neighbor and yoke-fellow, but actual antagonist, Joshua Leavitt, whom Mr. Bacon held in such sincere respect that he wrote a detailed rejoinder, sending it in a fraternal private letter that said: "I take all this trouble about the matter because I am determined not to fall out with such a brother as you." Among other misconceptions of his position which he corrected is one so important to the subject of this paper and so persistently and unscrupu-

lously repeated to this day that it is worth while to make this extract:

"You say that 'the *Spectator* has now ceased from the delusive dream of abolishing slavery by expatriation,' intimating that the *Spectator* has formerly taught that slavery is to be abolished by expatriation. I am bold to reply, as having written nearly all the articles which have touched upon that subject in the *Christian Spectator* for the last ten years, that no such doctrine has been taught on the pages of that work. I am not such a stickler for consistency that I cannot give up even a published opinion. I have learned much respecting slavery and the means of its abolition since I began to write on these subjects. I expect to learn much more; and as my mind advances, I have no doubt the complexion of my publications will continue to change; but I have never taught—and I do not risk much when I add, no other writer for the *Spectator* has taught—that slavery would be or could be abolished by what you call expatriation. You have fallen into a common mode of misapprehending the opinions of those who befriend the American Colonization Society. You seem to think that no man can favor that cause without holding to the scheme of abolishing slavery by the simple and single process of carrying away the slaves and making them free in Africa. Such a view does great injustice to my opinions and to the opinions of thousands besides."

Out of their common anxieties, consultations, and labors in that critical annual meeting of 1834 grew up an intimate acquaintance between Mr. Bacon and that very remarkable and noble character, Gerrit Smith, of Peterboro, New York. There were strong contrasts between the two men in temperament, in intellectual constitution, and in the circumstances of their lives; but in their love of liberty and justice and hatred of oppression and earnest interest in the enterprise of the African colony they were at one. For two years the letters between the friends were frequent and sometimes voluminous. In one of the earliest of them (March 20, 1834) it is almost startling to read in Mr. Bacon's handwriting his proposal in detail to add to the enormous weight and diversity of his actual duties the editing and publishing of a weekly, *Journal of Freedom*, the leading object of which (he tells his correspondent) "should be to enlighten, concentrate, and express Northern public opinion on the subject of slavery and the various means and processes by which slavery is to be abolished." The project met with strong sympathy and aid from Mr. Smith. One of the leading features of the *Journal of Free-*

dom, through twelve successive numbers, was a detailed refutation, paragraph by paragraph, of the letter of Mr. James G. Birney against the colonization enterprise. It is to this that Mr. Smith refers at the beginning of his letter of October 1, 1834.

"I have read your review of Birney's letter so far as it is contained in the two numbers of the *Journal of Freedom*, and am highly gratified with it. Birney is a good man, a man of talents, and a fine writer, but he evidently had, during his agency under the American Colonization Society, and has yet, cloudy and very erroneous views of the nature and objects of colonization. You show him up well. I say *you*, for I presume you are the author of the review. * * *

"If I can find time amidst my multiplied engagements, I wish to write three numbers for publication, and I wish you to write me whether they had better be published in your paper or some other. * * * The first number will advocate the doctrine of immediate emancipation. The second will enter into the means of advancing this doctrine, and in doing this it will examine the merits of the Anti-slavery Society. The last number will inquire into the merits of the American Colonization Society; will find some fault with it, but accord it still more praise. In a word, my views on all the subjects will, I think, agree substantially—not precisely, perhaps—with yours and with those of intelligent colonizationists throughout New England. * * * I shall want you to publish criticisms of them whenever you think that they deserve criticisms."

Extracts from successive letters of Mr. Smith will give a vivid idea of the fluctuations of sentiment in this period of history:

"December 3, 1834.—I have just received a delightful letter from James G. Birney. It is so full of friendly and affectionate and Christian feeling that had I not criticised his letter before I received it I should hardly have had a heart for the office, and yet I say nothing harsh of him, and I am glad that in all your review of his letter there is not an unkind or harsh line. He is doubtless a capital fellow."

"December 18, 1834. I yesterday received the package of journals containing the first essay and your letter on it. I thank you in the name of the public for this letter. It will do good. It well describes the views of the intelligent friends of abolition, however they may differ among themselves about the words 'immediate emancipation.' By the way, I am not *very* confident that you are wrong and I am right in the sense we attach to these words. I will think more on this point, and at some future day I may address a letter to you for publication touching this point and some others. I am very happy to find that

your views and my own in respect to abolition are in such perfect accordance. I feel very confident that we are on the right ground, and I hope the Lord will bless our efforts to bring others to that ground.

"February 6, 1835.—I have no doubt that you should, in some way or ways, devote yourself, your time and powers, to the welfare of the African race. You have loved that race and been deeply interested in it from your boyhood. No man in our country has written so much as you have on the subject of the interests of that race. No man in this country understands those interests as well as you do. Here are reasons, not to speak of others, conclusive in favor of the consecration of yourself to the cause of the African race.

"June 17, 1835.—Colonization, as commercial men speak, is 'on the rise,' evidently. But it does not yet wear a right aspect. I am impatient to see it freed from its evil mixtures. Colonization is carried on in too much of a worldly spirit, even by good men. It is in this wise made palatable to the wicked. The Anti-slavery Society is acquiring a more and more offensive character. Not only the *Liberator*, but the *Emancipator*, responds to Thompson's outrageous, infamous attacks on the English delegates [to the Baptist churches]. I believe that the spirit of the Society responds to that attack. It is an ugly, unbaptized, unblessed spirit.

"October 17, 1835.—I propose to stop with my wife for a day or two in Utica to witness the proceedings of the Anti-slavery Convention, in which I understand all the anti-slavery magnates—Birney, Jay, Tappan, Thompson, Weld, etc.—are to appear. Of course, I shall be there, but in the character of a spectator. Still, I expect to be much interested and instructed. I wish you could be by my side on that occasion. * * *

"I have just received the October number of the *African Repository*. It is quite too anti-anti-slavery to please me. I very much fear that our Colonization Society, still dear to me, will fall into the arms of slaveholders."

Mr. Smith's long letter of October 24 gives a vivid narrative of the Anti-slavery Convention at Utica, interrupted and dispersed by the violence of a mob claiming to act in the name of "the citizens of Utica," and adjourning, at Mr. Smith's invitation, to meet at the church in his village of Peterboro. The letter concludes :

"I am now perfectly convinced—I was about so before—that the enemies of the Anti-slavery Society have established it. Henceforth this Society will be the rallying point to the friends of the right of free discussion, and I do sincerely believe that

the Society has already become so identified with this right that the fall of the Society would be the fall of the right. For one, therefore, valuing this right above almost every other right, I cannot do anything toward demolishing the Anti-slavery Society. That, however, I have never done. I have labored for its purification, not its destruction. What is more, though, I see as clearly as ever its gross faults, and have believed that I could never join it until they were rectified, I now believe that not many months will pass away before I become a member of it. I believe I shall have to identify myself with that society in order to make the best defense I can of the right of free discussion.

"The meeting resolved on giving me a seat with them. I took my seat and made them a speech, wholly about the right of free discussion.

"January 22, 1836.—I am sick of the partisan and intolerant spirit which is so prevalent in the Anti-slavery Society and among its opponents. God grant that I may never be infected with it. I still believe that I have done right in joining the Anti-slavery Society, and although I have no better views of the Anti-slavery Society (they were always favorable, in the main) than I had when we last met, I still think that you should join it, and that you could do more good in it than out of it.

"The Colonization Society is as dear to me as ever; but I have written Gurley that I must stand aloof from it until it ceases from its impertinent concern with the subject of slavery. Gurley writes me in reply a very kind letter, saying that mine to him will be published. You will then see it.

"June 10, 1836.—How unhappy is it for Africa and her children in our country that the Anti-slavery Society should stand in the way of the colonization of Africa, and that the Colonization Society should stand in the way of the abolition of slavery! Whatever the causes of it, innocent or guilty, this is nevertheless the attitude of hostility which they bear towards these respective objects, and this is true, notwithstanding there are hundreds, if not thousands, in each of these societies who deeply lament the false and injurious position of their society in this respect. For instance, though I love the cause of African colonization as much as ever, yet am I numbered with its enemies, and my little influence is, contrary to my will, exactly against it. On the other hand, such men as yourself, Mr. Frelinghuysen, Dr. Proudfit, with an abolition pulse not less strong, surely, than my own, are, from your continued connection with the Colonization Society, standing in the way of the anti-slavery cause. In a word, the Anti-slavery Society is an anti-colonization society, and the Colonization Society is an anti-abolition society. * * *

"The Anti-slavery Society is, I think, going on pretty well. Its spirit is improving; it is good. But we greatly need an ac-

cession of wise and prudent men, and especially for the purpose of arresting our tendency to become a political party. The temper of its last anniversary meeting was most happy. You would have been delighted with the exhibition in it of solemn, religious, compassionate feeling, and you would have been disgusted with the pro-slavery effusions and the merry-making in the Colonization meeting the following evening."

This is not a history of the work of Gerrit Smith; but I make no apology for these large extracts from unpublished letters of that very eminent and noble gentleman, for I know no better way of illustrating the agitations of the period. It was a time of violent actions and reactions (to borrow a metaphor applied by Dr. Bushnell to this very case) between a corroding acid and a caustic alkali, and the effervescence was tremendous. Men of clear convictions and independent judgment found themselves, from time to time, in unexpected company. Dr. Channing perceived that the fury of the abolitionists had produced in the free States a reaction favorable to slavery; and yet he "found himself compelled by the persecutions and mobs which had been got up against these societies to take sides with a party whose doctrine of immediate emancipation he renounced, whose system of agitation he deprecated, and whose spirit of denunciation he abhorred. Just so, thousands of the best of men, struck with the ferocity of the denunciations indiscriminately launched against all slave-holders in all possible circumstances, had been constrained to take sides with slave-holders and to say, Whatever may be true of slavery, slave-holding is not necessarily so bad as you represent it. Those who have demurred at the new doctrine of immediate emancipation, or its corollaries, such as the exclusion of every slave-owner from all Christian communion, have been villified in the publications of these reformers as "doughfaces," "pro-slavery advocates," "apologists for oppression and man-stealing," and by suffering the same reproaches with the slave-holder, from the same quarter, have been compelled thus far to sympathize with him.*

While the atmosphere was thus vexed with contrary currents, in one direction drifting the most munificent and enthusiastic of all the friends of the Colonization cause into the ranks of its avowed enemies, in the opposite direction drawing other friends

* L. Bacon in *Christian Spectator*, January, 1836.

of the cause into seeming compliances with injustice and oppression, men felt the value of a man solidly fixed on his clear and well-reasoned convictions and "standing four-square to all the winds." From his early student days the demand had been pressed on Mr. Bacon that he should devote himself officially to the cause of Africa and the African race. This demand was now renewed with the most urgent importunity. Within the space of a few months no less than five distinct proposals were declined by him, offering him large increase of salary, and even inviting him to name his own terms on which he would give himself to the public service in this line of work. In one case only did he hold the question for a time seriously in suspense. In 1836 there was an earnest and hopeful effort to organize the sober, reasonable, and Christian anti-slavery sentiment of the country into a working society; and that leader of the extreme Abolitionist party, Arthur Tappan, a member of his own congregation, with whom, nevertheless, he was on this subject in the sharpest antagonism, declared that if Leonard Bacon could be induced to take the practical leadership of the movement he would sustain it with an annual subscription of a thousand dollars. This request was backed by the personal urgency of such numerous and weighty names that he could not refuse to ponder it deliberately, but it was not long in doubt in his own mind. It was decided by the superior claim of the flock at New Haven "over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer."

It is not necessary to dwell in detail on the later services of Mr. Bacon to the Colonization cause. I do not find that his early convictions of the wisdom and hopefulness of the plan of colonization were changed by the embarrassments that beset the administration of that enterprise in America or the occasional failures or reverses in Africa. But the discussion of the slavery question now began to take a wider range, and his part in the debate turned upon other points. In fact, the warfare which the Anti-slavery Society had waged against the friends of the African colony had quite ceased to be a warfare of principle, if, indeed, it had ever been more than a matter of partisan prejudice and passion. When in 1846 he collected into a duodecimo volume of 250 pages some of his more important writings on the theme than which "no subject not immediately connected with his official duties or his professional studies had occupied so

much of his attention," he eliminated some passages relating to the colonization enterprise, as belonging to an obsolete controversy. "That controversy," he said, since our Anti-slavery friends have done so much at colonization in Canada, seems to be at rest, and I have no wish to revive it."*

The question has often arisen in my mind, as I have reviewed the published and unpublished records of the long and always active life of Leonard Bacon, what would have been the difference to himself and to the country if some of those entreaties that were repeatedly urged upon him from his boyish entrance upon public life on to the prime of his manhood that he would devote himself wholly to the subject of slavery and the remedies for it, had won his consent. Is it possible that with his clarity of vision, his judicial temper, his confessed mastery in debate, and that power of conciliation which on so many notable occa-

* Slavery discussed in Occasional Essays from 1833 to 1846. By Leonard Bacon, pastor of the First Church in New Haven, p. ix. On the same page occurs a notable sentence, which is currently quoted as from Abraham Lincoln. It is indeed Lincoln's sentence, adopted by him from this very volume, to which he repeatedly acknowledged his obligations for settling his mind in those clear, temperate, and strong convictions on the slavery question, on which he stood so firmly and inexpugnably against attacks from opposite quarters. The entire closing paragraph of Mr. Bacon's preface is worth quoting for its historical bearings:

"It is no part of the object in any of these essays to *prove* that the slavery which exists in these American States is wrong. To me it seems that the man who needs argument on that point cannot be argued with. What elementary idea of right and wrong can that man have? If that form of government, that system of social order, is not wrong—if those laws of the Southern States by virtue of which slavery exists there and is what it is—nothing is wrong. Such a book as Wheeler's 'Law of Slavery' leaves no room for any argument to prove that our Southern slavery is wrong, if only the reader is gifted with a moral sense. It is therefore taken for granted in these essays, from first to last, that every man has his rights, and that our American slavery, which denies all rights to some two millions of human beings and decrees that they shall always be held at the lowest point of degradation, is too palpably wrong to be argued about. The wrong of that slavery, however, is one thing, and the way to rectify that wrong is another thing. The wrongfulness of that entire body of laws, opinions, and practices is one thing, and the criminality of the individual master who tries to do right is another thing. These essays therefore treat chiefly of the way in which the wrong can be set right."

sions availed to draw divided parties to unanimity of action, he might, from some center of national influence, concentrating all his faculties on this one subject, have controlled the vehement courses of public sentiment that were rushing through diverse channels toward the awful verge of civil war? Or would he, perhaps, have lost more by the change than he could have gained—the completeness of view that is not to be had from the thick of the fight, the all-roundness of judgment due to the habitual holding of this subject in its proportionate relations to other subjects, and would it perhaps have been proved in his case, as in the case of so many who gave themselves exclusively to the study of this agitating theme, that "oppression maketh a wise man mad." The question is of little interest except to those who love and reverence his memory. As for him, he found his path of duty made plain to him, and he was fully content to rest and stand in his lot till the end of the days. I cannot doubt that he would have repeated at the close of his long life the words which he wrote in his youth concerning his labors in behalf of the colonization of Africa:

"We esteem it a privilege to be among the least honored of the co-workers in this undertaking. In our retrospective moments, when we think what we have been doing in the world and ask ourselves how life has gone with us thus far, there is nothing which more illuminates the past with cheering recollections than our humble efforts in behalf of Africa. It is in the hope of adding to that treasure—a treasure of which no mortal vicissitudes can ever deprive us; it is in the hope of communicating some additional impulse to a cause in which the destinies of unborn millions are so deeply involved; it is because conscience and God forbid us to be silent so long as our voice can be raised in behalf of such interests, that we urge on our readers these facts and arguments. If we may but awaken one mind to a lasting sympathy with our own enthusiasm; if we may but enlist in behalf of this cause one new efficient friend, it will not be in vain that we have snatched from intervals of relaxation, from hours of repose, and from the duties of a laborious and responsible calling the time which we have spent in this endeavor."*

LEONARD WOOLSEY BACON.

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*Quarterly Christian Spectator for 1830, p. 481.

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