

Message of the President of the Republic of Liberia
To the two houses of the
Legislature
At the
Commencement of the session of 1868.

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J. W. BARBOUR, PRINTER
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{Begin handwritten} Jas. S. Paynes {End handwritten}

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MESSAGE

Fellow Citizens Of The Senate And House Of Representatives: The arrival of the period for the meeting of the Legislature of the Republic enables me to congratulate you that you have been preserved and are still found in your places of duty and responsibility.

We should feel profoundly grateful to the God of all mercies who, in the visitations of His inscrutable dispensations, continues the evidences of His care and kindness unto us. Notwithstanding the peculiarity of the seasons of the year, the health of our communities has been good; notwithstanding the restlessness of some portions of our aboriginal population, the peace of the country has not been materially disturbed; so that we realize our expectation of a good harvest of the staff of life, and have fine prospects of exportable produce from the agricultural operations of the year. Our mercantile interests have been prosecuted with great assiduity, and the success with which they have been crowned has demonstrated the ability of Liberia to give the native population of our entire coast all the supplies they require, while it has also made apparent the propriety and practicability of our merchants taking the products of the coast directly into foreign markets, and there selling them to an advantage not to be expected from the system of barter on the coast.

We should, I repeat, be very thankful for so many proofs of the goodness of God, without whom they labor in vain that build. His unsearchable providence has deprived us, during the year, of two members of your body whose loss no true friend of his country will fail to deplore. The Honorable John H. Paxtan, of the Senate, and the Honorable Thomas Moore, of the House, were men that circumstances never mature in a day. Having served their country long in various capacities, and finally in that of legislators, they had, joined to good natural abilities and acquirements, an experience rich and eminently useful to their country. We lament their early departure from our midst, but we must submit to the doings of Infinite Wisdom, and trust with firmness in Him to sustain, guide, and prosper us. In doing this it becomes us to avail ourselves of all the means to labor efficiently, to proceed safely, and to prosper commensurately in the prosecution of our work.

If there is any sentiment I would impress at this time upon the citizens of the Republic, through their representatives, it is this—we should not consider ourselves beyond danger because we have sustained our institutions so far. Our history is too brief, our existence too recent, our situation too peculiar, to so consider ourselves.

Whether we contemplate the heathenism which surrounds us, or the circumstances of our position, or the accessibility of our race from any quarter from which they may come to us, we should not divest ourselves of that degree of apprehension which quickens caution and watchfulness over the operation of our institutions, so as to secure them from decay and disruption. I do not refer to

a change of the form of government merely, which might result, if not from deliberate choice in the people, from revolution or strife; but to a disappearance as a civilized state, to a failure in our undertaking to maintain such a government, which might result from such lawlessness, such disregard for the administration of justice, such an abandonment of the ideas of a civilized and Christian people as might constrain individuals and communities to separate and vainly endeavor to sustain distinct institutions where only unitedly they are able to stand.

I would, fellow-citizens, notwithstanding the hopefulness that animates me, or the signs of progress and prosperity which encourage me, impress this idea. As yet, we are not established beyond the possibility of a failure. Every thing among us is in a state of infancy; we have only begun to walk. Do you know that in the opinion of men of great intelligence, men well versed in the histories of ancient and modern times, the Republic of Liberia is regarded a problem? Let us not deceive ourselves, our wives, our children, let us not disappoint the trembling aspirations of the friends of our race, and, by carelessness to the workings of the Government or a want of patriotic interest in whatever tends to give stability and prosperity, retard or frustrate the fair commencement of our fathers to secure a home—a Christian government—for our race on these distant shores. We should be wary of any thing that portends alienation, which augments prejudice, or seeks only self-aggrandizement.

I would not have you become indifferent to politics, and resign to the rampant and professed politician your right to wield a portion of the power in shaping the course of the state. I do not recommend the abnegation of the benefit to a government of a proper party spirit. In the juvenile condition of our Government, no citizen should yield his interest to another. I would, therefore, recommend you—the Representatives of the people—to consider yourselves bound by the solemn duties incumbent upon you to inculcate, by all the weight of your influence and position, circumspection and devotedness of Government as the best means to preserve our institutions and insure success and prosperity. The Republic of Liberia continues to be an object of sympathetic interest, and has the sincere aspirations for her prosperity and success of the best men and wisest nations of the earth. While she continues to govern herself wisely, to sustain herself vigorously among her heathen population with the humanity and justice which should characterize her acts, while she continues to accord to the subjects of friendly governments the protection of her laws, we may reasonably conclude that this state of friendly interest will continue.

We may entertain this conviction from the belief that, in spite of the convulsions and exciting changes taking place, the world is advancing in the acquisition of sound principles and true morality. The fashion to absorb or to crush a feeble power has been substituted by a disposition to encourage. The principle that might is right is beginning to be ignored as unworthy of a place in the moral code of nations. The propensity to enslave the ignorant and the heathen has been displaced by a charity as expansive as was the disposition to prey upon them.

Amidst this state of unexaggerated feeling it is our happiness to begin to act as a nation. Certainly we should accommodate ourselves to it. Rising above the heathenism of the continent, its feelings and principles, we should show ourselves perpetually entitled to the continuation of the friendship of enlightened powers.

But it is not improper to apprise the world of our objects and to solicit their quietude, if not their encouragement, while we apply ourselves to the acquisition of them. We are laying the foundation of a power to be felt in the peaceful counsels of the nations of the earth. Centuries of existence (if we are watchful of our institutions and true to our principles) are before us. In this belief, is it to be expected that we would shape our course without a reference to the future of the probable existence of this Government? Amidst the disposition of Christian governments to acquire sections of the African continent—appropriating to themselves the North, the South, and the East, to exercise their ameliorating influence—can the Government of Liberia, composed of the descendants of Africa, be required consistently to content herself with a slip, comparatively of a hand-breadth, on the West Coast. For the future purposes of the Republic of Liberia the area from the River Jong to the San Pedro is insufficient, admitting that no one comes into any portion of the distance claimed in the interior of us. We can not, in the face of our probable extension, be required to release ourselves from all care for the future by any government which participates in the healthful changes taking place among enlightened nations. While all acknowledge our hereditary connection with Africa, we think the Christianity of none would allow them to deny our right to secure the space on the territory of our fathers on which to develop the nationality we have begun.

If, in the intensity of the interest taken now in African civilization, it should be feared that this Republic would employ unjust methods to acquire the territory she needs, we can appeal to our past history, to the absence of severity in dealing with our aborigines when they have given us just cause to come into hostile collision with them; and to the fact that our natural connection with them makes their preservation and elevation subjects of deeper interest and anxiety to us than they can possibly be to any other race.

As a people, we are far from a disposition to question the purity of the interest taken in all that relates to Africa, whether manifested in efforts to colonize her children from the land of their captivity, or in the efforts which have resulted successfully in breaking the bonds of slavery and the abolition at once of this curse of humanity. Neither can we divest ourselves of equal admiration of the interest taken by all enlightened powers, with few exceptions, in the abolishment of the African slave-trade. Having labored so effectually to check it on the West Coast, they follow it with equal determination into the territories of the Sultan of Zanzibar, the East Coast, and the region of the upper Nile. If civilized governments, in the days of the legitimacy of the traffic, generally participated in it, they now so generally oppose it, so determined are they upon its death, that

no descendant of Africa can question their sincerity or withhold his high appreciation of their deeds.

With such interest, manifested by the greatest effusion of blood the world has been drenched with and the expenditure of almost fabulous amounts of money, the man of color everywhere should be gratified particularly. At least a word of concern should be uttered toward the enfranchised—the former victims of centuries of oppression. All nations have, or individuals of all nationalities have done this—yea, more than this, except Liberia! We should have been among the first to hail with the most grateful feeling the changes taking place in favor of our race. We never have been a pro-slavery institution, and should have applauded the efforts to abolish it. No reasonable community or nation could justly have censured us for so doing. The youthfulness of the Republic of Liberia, the plea of some for silence on a subject as near to our hearts as to any, does not excuse us from an expression when it is right and manly and proper to make it. The question of what good could we accomplish by an expression of concern and congratulations for the millions of our race so recently made free, betrays a disposition to underrate ourselves.

In communicating with friendly governments we have had so far the most respectful attention, and from none more than the Government of the United States. We have no reason, therefore, to believe that an expression by us would have been deemed offensive or officious. If there was ever a time when it was necessary and proper, it was when the eventualities of the late civil war in the United States had given them freedom, when the great American Republic united her voice in the dirge of slavery, and, regardless of the enormous cost, declared that humanity should no longer be bowed to her earth by the odious institution.

It is not too late to do good, and therefore I recommend you to express, in appropriate resolutions, Liberia's high appreciation of this great act of justice of the Government of the United States. I recommend also a like expression in reference to our race in them, manifesting the deep interest and hope which the Republic entertains for the colored population so recently placed in a condition in which they are at liberty to demonstrate their manhood and susceptibility to whatever improves and elevates and dignifies human nature.

On the subject of the foreign relations of this Government, I am thankful that I have no ill tidings to communicate to you.

Friendly relation to the civilized governments of the world has been an acknowledged necessity from the time of the Declaration of the Independence of Liberia. Such a relation is fraught with the interest, encouragement, and quickening energy necessary to an infant government so peculiarly situated. From the time application was first made to the Government of her Britannic Majesty to the present, none of the nations to whom similar applications have been made has hesitated to give the benefit of their recognition or the

advantages of a generous treaty. This has had a marvelous effect upon the uncivilized inhabitants of our coasts. They have given up their opposition to our laws, and become reconciled to our jurisdiction in proportion as they have become convinced that certain governments were in friendly relation with us. Acting upon the principle—an appreciation of the amity of civilized governments—I have to communicate to you that this Government has reciprocated the declarations of adhesion to the treaty with the North-German Confederacy by their royal highnesses the Grand Duke of Baden, and his majesty King of Wurtemberg, most courteously made through Charles Goedelt, Esquire, our Consul-General to the North-German Confederacy, for whose appointment, the eighth day of June, 1868, I have to ask your confirmation.

Two subjects, of no small degree of interest to the parties concerned and annoyance to us, have engaged the attention of the Government, which I can not bring myself to believe can amount to any thing subversive of good feeling upon proper explanations.

The facility with which traders and merchants may enter our northwestern territory and intersect our interior, and by so doing violate the laws of the Government, forestall our commerce, and prejudice the nativemind, demands that the most stringent measures should be employed to prevent these effects, and the question of our northwestern boundary should be put finally to rest. Unable to do this in the way most effectual, I have presumed to hold to account some persons who, there was reason to believe, were employing the privileges granted them—to trade within our ports—to trespass upon our rights. Neither the enactments of the Legislature nor the injunctions of conventional law have been regarded, and the effect upon our aboriginal inhabitants in the Vey territories has been so decidedly pernicious that I am entirely convinced that nothing less than a military expedition is likely to adjust existing difficulties and cause the laws of the Government to be respected.

The notorious Prince Manna, taking advantage of the exposure of our northwestern territory, and vainly flattering himself that the denial of Liberia's title to it has settled the question, being too much under the influence of heathenism to know that a denial does not, per se, adjust and determine, in these days, a question of so much magnitude, has actually come out of the country in which he resides into the Manna territory, to which this Government has as clear a right, and there defies its authority. He shelters himself, as he supposes, under the wing of Her Britannic Majesty's colony, and by representations unfavorable to Liberia, taking their rise from Liberia's unrelenting demand upon all within her jurisdiction to abandon forever the slave-trade, he seeks to shield himself and justify his acts.

I fear he has succeeded in his unfavorable representations; but it is to be hoped that his success is limited to that class of persons in whose estimation the profits of trade are paramount. For it must be obvious to any unprejudiced person that

the representations of our aboriginal inhabitants should admitted with the greatest caution, since they will not be entirely convinced, for some time, that the existence of the Liberian Government among them is a benefit to them. Restrained from the slave-trade—the favorite traffic of the chiefs—opposed in their marauding propensity, and threatened by the desertion of their slaves and women, who begin to understand that by flight into the towns of the Republic they can free themselves from the domestic institutions of slavery and polygamy, it is not probable that heathen princes and chiefs would be favorable to the Government which they imagine is operating detrimentally in these respects to their interest.

At the time of the cession of the Gallinas territory, April 30th, 1850, and the confirmation of the cession, February 19th, 1851, by King Rogers and chiefs, Prince Manna, one of them, was but a third-rate man, and stands now accused by the survivors of the Rogers family of foul play resulting in the death of King Rogers, whom he succeeded. That he should be disposed to ignore the acts of his predecessor is not incredible.

But in all cases where these representations have failed to take effect, and the natives have been given to feel that their appeals met no response, they have identified themselves with us and become satisfied. A communication, of the date of October 23d, has come to the Government from bombs, asking aid and apprising it that Prince Manna and his allies threaten him with war because he refuses to join with them to conquer and reduce the Zara people to

slavery. He says: "Now, the facts in the case are these. The Zara people were slaves, and decreed themselves free, some years since, and Prince Manna and his allies say they shall not be free; if they let them alone, all the slaves in the country will run away and go to them." To conquer these revolted slaves, he has come into the Manna country, and defies the authority of this Government. This is the man who thinks to sustain himself by a treaty made subsequently to the cession of the territory.

The other subject is one of a delicate character, on which I can not refrain from expressing my sympathy with the complainants, who are gentlemen of the highest respectability in England, and whose extensive business on the Liberian coast entitles them to consideration, and their claim to respectful attention.

The Company of African Merchants, through their director, have made a demand on this Government for certain lots in the town of Robertsport which they claim to have bought with the improvements thereon, and confirmed their title by certain payments to the natives. This Government regrets deeply the occasion for this complaint and the inconvenience to the company. Nevertheless it has the good fortune to know that it is entirely innocent of the perpetration of any wrong in the premises. The assertion of this company that their agent made a payment on

these lots to the natives, could not be admitted by this Government, however true it might be. The laws of Liberia prohibit even its citizens from such transactions with the aborigines, and to allow foreign subjects the privilege would be most dangerous and cause endless confusion.

Ignoring the right of the company's agent to purchase any land within the jurisdiction of the Government of Liberia from the aborigines, I confess that it was the right of their total agent, being a Liberian, to have secured the lots in the way the law prescribes; and I am unable to account for his neglect to have done so, when an application has been made by the general agent to the Government June 10th, 1864, and its consent obtained July 14th, 1864.

In the month of December, 1867, these lots were offered at public auction, and were bought for President D. B. Warner, who duly fulfilled the requirements of the law as to payment for them. Under these circumstances, it is inconceivable that any just demand can be made upon this Government. Notwithstanding, I have deemed it proper, in consideration of the character of the Company of African Merchants, and the importance of the question, to have them furnished with all the satisfactory information within the power of this Government to give. And it is to be hoped that they will hold no unpleasant feeling toward the Government.

It has been a matter of profound regret that the Government has not been able to meet the demands made upon it by citizens and foreigners. The claims of foreigners are not numerous, and for this reason it is humiliating to have them standing for presentation. The causes of the inability of the Government to meet them this year arose from the condition of the Government in January, 1868; the emptiness of the treasury, there being only \$506 in it; the condition of the Commissary, the ammunition and arms in it not being sufficient to supply one company in an emergency; the destitution of all the public offices, except that of the Collector of Customs, of the most common and necessary facilities for the transaction of the affairs of Government; the large amount of debenture script in circulation, which threatened the absorption of all the revenue from imports and exports; and the large expenditure in the quarter ending December 31st, 1867, including the default of \$1536.09 by the ex-Secretary of the Treasury, which the accounts and Auditor's report will show. The Government found itself in these circumstances too greatly embarrassed to undertake the settlement of outstanding claims and yet carry forward its regular operations.

The accounts of the Treasury Department for the first quarter of the fiscal year ending December 31, 1867, not having been audited, neither their correctness nor their effect upon the general appropriation for the year could be ascertained until properly appointed auditors had examined and reported upon them. The Government considered it obligatory to have this attended to in the most faithful, impartial, and efficient manner possible, and therefore appointed H. W. Dennis, W.H.Lynch, and W.A.Johnson, Esquires, the report of whom will be submitted to you by the Secretary of the Treasury. This report served only to increase the

embarrassment of the Government, showing the disbursements of the first quarter to have amounted to \$15,823.56, which exceeded the receipts by \$2617.46, of which \$1536.09 are adjudged by the auditors to the default of the ex-Secretary of the Treasury. Impressed with the conviction that the finances of the country require great stringency and particular exactness, I directed an inquiry to be made for the bond of the ex-Secretary of the Treasury, which resulted in, the information that his bond was cancelled; therefore, neither that person nor his sureties have been held to answer for this default.

In this state, it became obvious that to attempt to meet the demands of citizens who require their assets for the expansion of their business, and the just claims of a few foreigners, and to admit to be taken at the custom-houses the large amount of debenture script in circulation contrary to law, would materially impede the operations of the Government for them year. Accordingly, the policy was adopted to limit the acceptance of debenture script by the officers of the customs to such as had been issued agreeably with the law. Adhering to this policy, while it is much to be regretted that the indebtedness of the country has not been decreased, it has not, I hope, been materially augmented, while the affairs of Government have not been disturbed. And I am impelled to state the gratification I have had in the patriotism of the citizens and the forbearance of foreign claimants, manifested by a general disposition to withhold their claims rather than to add to the complication of the Government and thereby check its operations.

I invite your attention to an inquiry into the workings of our post-offices and a consideration of the entire postal arrangements, with a view to ascertain the cause of the country's continual indebtedness for this service under the operation of the postal treaty with Her Britannic Majesty's Government, the provisions of which I consider to be liberal and prudent. The account of the British post-office left a balance against the post-office of this Government, to December 31st, 1867, of \$406.13 or \$1051.92. With our system of prepayment and the amount accruing to Government from postage, it is difficult to understand how this service involves the Government. The Postmaster-General's Report will be laid before you, and I hope you will be able from it to ascertain the cause, determine the remedy, and make such improvements as will increase the efficiency and healthiness of the entire postal service.

Besides the regular business of the Government, I have considered it necessary to procure, according to an enactment of the Legislature of the Republic, a vessel to operate on our coast as a Guarda Costa. The schooner Liberia was purchased on the 20th April, 1868, and put in commission under a lieutenant-commander, suitably supplied as to crew and armament to answer the purpose of a revenue cutter, and has been actively employed in watching against the violation of the revenue laws, suppressing difficulties along the coast, in cooperation with the Government officials in the Southern counties. Her service under Lieutenant-Commander W.H. Lynch has been efficient and highly useful. The native

population, which were becoming restless and turbulent, have been quieted, and are now on the best terms of peace and friendship with themselves and us, being convinced that disturbances which retard commerce will not be tolerated without a vigorous effort to suppress them. The Americo-Liberians who have stationed themselves at different places on the coast for purposes of trade have felt assured. In fine, the presence of the Government vessel Liberia has been an advantage thus far which in my opinion quite justifies the expense of her purchase, outfit, and maintenance. But it is necessary to have more than one vessel on our coast. The revenue laws of the Government are frequently violated, I have cause to believe, to the south of Cape Palmas, and it is difficult for one revenue vessel to prevent these violations.

The debt of the country has been a subject of anxious, and I may say fruitless, inquiry for some years. I have endeavored to have this ascertained as far as practicable during the year; and I am happy to be able to report that the claims registered against the Government, amounting to \$66,636.94, justify me in the belief that the indebtedness of the Government is not as great as was supposed. We may congratulate ourselves for two circumstances in the premises, that during the twenty-two years of our national existence—after embarking upon the sea of nationality with comparatively nothing—the Republic has entailed upon herself no larger debt; that without having made even the effort to contract a national loan, its indebtedness is, with a small exception, like the great and influential debt of Great Britain, limited to our own citizens. The time may soon come, however, when the Government may feel compelled to adopt the common practice of other governments to introduce capital, to gain access to the interior, to intersect the country with practicable roads, and develop more expeditiously the resources of the same.

For the present, I prefer that the people should tax their own energies to improve the condition of the country, and demonstrate their ability, self-reliantly, to sustain themselves without resort to a foreign national loan. We will, at least, learn the value and the proper use of capital by this course. It remains with you, Senators and Representatives, to determine the means of paying off the ascertained debt. Whether it is most feasible to appropriate a certain per cent. on the revenue inviolably for its liquidation, or take up the claims upon long bonds bearing interest payable annually, or to employ the assets of the sinking fund, consisting entirely of demand notes, for its settlement, preventing the increase of this debt by deposits of unusable paper in the Treasury, by legislative enactment, are questions which I submit to your united wisdom.

If Government could at once relieve the citizens and put them in possession of the amounts due them, the economy and the wisdom of the act would be beyond question. My proposals on this subject are: 1st. That you repeal the Funding Act, which proposed that the claims against Government should be funded and the interest on the bonds be paid annually in specie, without providing the means of

procuring the specie. This cardinal defect has embarrassed the Government not a little, and I trust you see the impropriety of such legislation.

2d. That you authorize the payment of the registered debt by annual payments of twenty-five per cent. each, in debentures of the character of the "demand notes" of the Government. This I believe to be as much as the probable receipts of the Government will admit without disturbing the business of the Government. And I am of the opinion that your adoption of a plan of this nature will enable the Secretary of the Treasury to pay off the registered debt in four years.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that a commission, composed of Lieutenant-Commander W.H. Lynch and J.L. Crusoe, Esq., succeeded in a most peaceable manner in adjusting the Settra Kroo difficulty. Becoming satisfied of the inability of the community to deliver up to justice the murderer of our fellow-citizen James Douglass without serious disturbance amongst themselves, the commissioners accepted the voluntary proposal of the proper authorities—King and Headmen—to cede that territory, and identify themselves politically and absolutely with the Republic. This was done by their signing in the presence of witnesses a proper document, the transfer of the Liberian flag to the territory, and a salute by the people of Settra Kroo on the 29th of June, 1868.

I have to solicit your speedy action upon the interdict laid upon this country in 1866, the raising of which I considered appropriate only to the National Legislature from the tenor of the act.

I have now to ask your attention to some measures which I have concluded, upon deep reflection, to recommend to you, the representatives of the people, for your deliberation and action. Your wise deliberation, in the spirit of true patriotism, will mature them; and your favorable action upon them alone can invest them with the authority of law and make them obligatory upon the country.

I recommend the adoption of a compulsory educational system for the whole country; a system making it obligatory upon every parent, every guardian, protector, or any person having a child or children, apprentice or apprentices, orphan or orphans, legitimately in his, her, or their control, to cause them to attend either the government school or any other in the city, town, or village, three hours each day that school is taught when not unavoidably inconvenient. And that the advantage be extended to the native population in the neighborhood of a school. I will not take up your time with an unnecessary dilation upon a subject which I am sure interests you.

But the importance of a general education permeating the masses, and the propriety of obliging those who do not study the interests of the persons committed to their care, are subjects worthy of the vigilant attention of the Government—the common guardian of its populace—and of the action of the

law-making department of the same. I do not intend any reflection upon the people of Liberia by an intimation unfavorable to their appreciation of the advantages of education; yet I propose to leave with no citizen the election whether a child or an apprentice, committed providentially to him, should be withheld from the advantages of a common-school education while he is incapable of thinking and acting to his own advantage.

Fellow-citizens, it is a subject involving a tremendous responsibility; it is with you to determine whether within a few more decades every citizen, aboriginal and Americo-Liberian, shall possess a primary-school education, a sufficiency at least of the rudiments of education to qualify them...

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