

# THE AFRICAN EXODUS.

## Experiences of Liberian Emigrants on the Bark Azor.

### ARRIVAL AT MONROVIA.

#### Appearance, Customs and Resources of the Young Republic.

#### HOSPITABLE RECEPTION OF THE NEW COMERS.

#### Neglect and Dishonesty of the Exodus Association.

[BY TELEGRAPH TO THE HERALD.]

CHARLESTON, S. C., July 24, 1878.

The emigrant bark Azor, which left this port on last Easter Sunday for Monrovia, with 350 exodists, arrived here early this morning and dropped her anchor at the quarantine station, having made the return trip from Monrovia in thirty-six days. The Azor brought Mr. A. B. Williams, the special correspondent of the *News and Courier*, and sixteen colored passengers, who are returning from the promised land and are bound for Mississippi, from which State they emigrated to Liberia some years ago. Mr. Williams having explored the country around Monrovia and seen the emigrants safely housed wisely returned to Charleston, and with the facts in his possession as a lever he hopes to move the Exodus Association into a position where the responsibility of the leading officers shall not only be felt, but acted upon. This is due to the colored people, who are too timid to act for themselves, and submit meekly to any exaction or imposition that is fathered by persons of their own race whom they regard as being in authority over them. The return of the bark was entirely unexpected and has created much excitement among the negroes, who have thronged the wharves throughout the day in the hope of getting a glimpse of the "Gospel ship," as she is called. It is impossible to tell as yet what the Exodus Association intend to do. The return of the bark is as unexpected to them as to every one else.

#### WAITING FOR THE NEXT TRIP.

There are at least three hundred emigrants waiting in Charleston to go on the next trip, whenever that will be, and there are, it is said, thousands more in the upper counties of this State and in Georgia who are only waiting a word from the leaders of the movement to come flocking down to the sea coast. The association is deeply in debt. The First National Bank of this city now holds two drafts, amounting to \$1,650, from Messrs. Randall and Fisher, of Sierra Leone, for provisions and towage of the Azor from Sierra Leone to Monrovia. These drafts were extended thirty days and will shortly fall due, and the officers of the association have no idea how they are to be paid. With this situation of affairs it is extremely doubtful if the Azor will be fitted out for another trip for some time to come, and it is far more probable that she will be libeled and sold to pay the debts of the association.

#### MR. WILLIAMS' NARRATIVE.

The *News and Courier* will publish to-morrow the first part of a long descriptive letter of Mr. Williams, written at Monrovia. It takes up the narrative at the moment of the arrival of the Azor in the roadstead of Monrovia. Another instance of the bad management of the mismanagers of the exodus scheme is given. It appears that they neglected either to make any announcement to the Liberian government of the coming of the emigrants or to arrange for the reception of those helpless people. The government officials fortunately learned of the departure of the Azor from Charleston. They seemed to have acted with commendable promptness in averting from the strangers the evil consequences of the stupidity in the steamship officers here, and the Liberian citizens heartily assisted in this work. A grave charge is contained in the statement as to the provisions for the first six months, which the emigrants paid for, but which were not to be found when sorely needed. In the language of Mr. Williams this makes matters look very black. It savors strongly of criminal misappropriation of funds and breach of trust or of more criminal carelessness.

#### ARRIVAL OF THE EMIGRANTS.

In speaking of the arrival of the Charleston emigrants at Monrovia Mr. Williams says:—"About nine o'clock on the morning of our arrival a large rowboat, manned by eight Kroomen, pulled out with the Harbor Master and Emigration Commissioner, who came aboard. Being the first American-Liberians that we had seen they were watched with much interest. The Harbor Master is a young man, a quadroon, and was attired in a dark blue coat, brilliant with tarnished gold shoulder straps and trimmings and buttons, while his head was ornamented with a white cocked hat, from the back of which depended a pugaree, a scarf or veil of white cloth worn around the hat, and much affected by "the bloods" of the tropics. The rest of the dress was that of an ordinary civilian. The Commissioner is also acting Secretary of the State. He is about the same color as his companion, but taller, and apparently several years older, and was made very sick by the swell. The appearance of these well dressed and intelligent specimens of the inhabitants of the Black Republic was a great comfort to the emigrants, giving them assurance that there were at least some clothed and civilized beings ashore. Just here a surprising discovery was made. It was found from the statements of the visitors that the Liberian government had received no notification whatever of the departure of the emigrants or of any of the proceedings of the Liberian Exodus Association or the Steamship Association. Nothing was known in Monrovia of the emigration except what had been gathered from stray copies and extracts from the papers. This was not encouraging news to begin with by any means.

#### MORE DISAPPOINTMENT.

Another discovery was also made which tended still further to lower our opinion of British steamship captains. This was that the commander of the steamer which had towed us had quietly dropped us about three miles farther out to sea than we should have been, leaving us anchored probably four miles from the Cape. Captain Holmes having never visited this port before was to a certain degree at the Englishman's mercy, and had accepted his statement that we were on the usual anchorage as true, whereas it was totally false. The wishes for a prosperous voyage for the Britisher were not very fervent after that. About ten o'clock several of us went ashore in the Harbor Master's boat. On the way we passed a small schooner anchored just off the head of the cape, bearing the name A. Lincoln, and were informed that she was a Liberian craft, owned in Monrovia. We also learned that the dense green foliage which covered the Cape was the coffee tree, the hill being a coffee plantation belonging to the estate of ex-President Roberts. A German bark, also at anchor, comprised the remainder of the shipping in the roadstead. We pulled over the bar with no trouble, the surf being light. Now we were inside the Cape and on the Mesurado River, which here is about half a mile wide. On the left the beach stretches away from a landscape of wooded country extending back from it; on the right a bit of white beach comes out, and behind it is a small extent of flat land, lying between the foot of the hill and the water.

#### THE KROOS AND THEIR VILLAGE.

Among the trees and bushes of this little plain are to be seen the thatch houses composing the village where the Kroos live, while on the beach are generally a few sleek looking little cattle, Kroo men and women, and a number of canoes, the latter drawn out of the water and resting bottom up. A little further up past the beach, the green trees and wild indiarubber vines again come down to the water, which here is placid and clear, bending over and almost sweeping it. Under the roots of the trees the water has worn away the soil, leaving the reddish looking stones bare. Some of these trees are valuable, among them being cane wood. Past this and a few yards further up the water runs in again, forming a shallow little bay, and we see the town of Monrovia, looking picturesque and pretty, straggling up the hills and the scattering houses only half seen through trees and undergrowth. As we went on I noticed the houses were generally of stone. Many of them had windows broken and gaping, and all showed sad need of repairs. Nearly every yard, like the street, was grown up in rank vegetation. On every side was the very abomination of desolation. We did not meet a soul in the streets. Then we went to breakfast with dark forebodings of the character of the country. At this breakfast I repeated that novel experience of sitting at the table with colored folks. It struck me as curious that in a country whose vegetation is so exuberant that it is impossible to keep it out of the streets, that being the reason assigned in answer to my inquiries as to the existence of the previously mentioned condition of the thoroughfares, that every-thing composing the first meal I saw there should be imported. So it was, however. A piece of fresh fish and the coffee were the only Liberian products on the table. The meat, the oysters and the vegetables were all canned goods from England. After breakfast—through the same path, through the same streets and by the same dilapidated houses—we visited the American Consul. The position is held here by Mr. M. A. Aerrmy, a Hollander, who fulfills its duties pending the appointment of a successor to J. Milton Turner (colored), the former Consul, who has resigned and gone home.

#### THE LIBERIAN CAPITAL.

Monrovia has between 2,000 and 3,000 inhabitants, and straggles over about a mile from the head of the

Cape inland, extending about half way across (about half a mile) on the side opposite to which we landed. The town stops down in the woods somewhere. We learned ashore, much to our relief, that having some ten days' notice of the arrival of the emigrants, through the newspapers, the Liberian government had made arrangements to receive them. I will say for the Monrovians that they seem to have actively aided the government in this matter. No more by the mercy of Providence than by good management on the part of the association the emigrants were assured of a shelter, for a time at least. This was especially welcome, as the rainy season has just set in. If these poor people had been left to the tender mercies of the managers in Charleston they would have arrived here unannounced, unexpected and unprovided for, and many of them without means, and their condition would have been deplorable indeed. When we returned to the Azor we were of course eagerly plied with questions, the kindest possible answers to which were just what we had as yet seen nothing and could judge of nothing. I confess that in my own mind I had grave misgivings. From what I could see the land seemed anything but a Canaan. In none of the many houses that I visited in Liberia did I see a book worthy of the name except the Bible. It is literally true that with the exception of that and a few school books, a hymn book or two, a small medical library and a couple of those familiar Sunday school novels, those cowardly introducers of a very few grains of flabby morality in an inferior sugar coating of flabby sentiment and diluted sensation, I did not see a book or an apology for a book of any sort. The literary taste of the librarians seems to have expended itself in photograph albums, of which there are two or three or four or five to be found on every parlor table, the spaces intended for pictures gaping like open mouths. I really believe that much of the wonderful inertness of the people proceeds from the utter lack of intellectual food. Monrovia, which is named after ex-President of the United States Monroe, is the capital of the country, although Grand Bassa, which is situated south of it on the coast, is said to greatly surpass it in the amount of business done. Each county elects four delegates to the National Legislature, and two Senators, except Mont Serado, which elects three of the latter. The Congress, or Legislature is, therefore, composed of sixteen representatives and nine Senators. The Vice President presides over the Senate and the lower house elects its own chairman. Every head of a family is given by the government twenty-five acres of land and each male adult ten acres selected from any unallotted lands. Only property holders can vote, after taking the oath of allegiance. There is no prescribed term of residence before becoming a voter. No white man can hold property, and that race is therefore disfranchised, which is a practical satire on the universal suffrage dogma to which the American negro and his particular friends have ever been so especially devoted.

#### THE BRIGHTER SIDE.

Up to this time Mr. Williams had heard nothing which gave promise of success and comfort to the new emigrants, but on going back to the bark after breakfast he met a strange colored man, with whom he entered into conversation. He had, he said, come out from Lynchburg, Va., just after the war. In answer to my inquiries he expressed himself as being delighted with the country. In some years he said he made from \$1,500 to \$2,000 clear. I was much pleased, being interested in the fate of the emigrants. Here was a man, who, from his own accounts, had come out with little or no capital, and generally very much in the condition of the components of the present emigration, and yet achieved a competence and attained the high road to wealth. I was inexpressibly gratified and relieved. One more question:—"What is your occupation?" I asked.

"An underriaker," was the cheerful response. Now, this is no fancy incident, put in here for fun's sake, but it is an actual occurrence. That day the emigrants began to disembark in large rowboats, furnished by the government. Each family generally took with it its immediate personal effects, such as bedding, &c. Most of them arrayed themselves in their Sunday best to go ashore in, although a few adhered to the somewhat dilapidated and frequently uncleanly habiliments in which they had made the voyage.

#### MONROVIAN HOSPITALITY.

Whatever else may be said of the Monrovians they certainly displayed great kindness to the strangers, who were in many instances utterly destitute of provisions, sending them cooked meals and delicacies for the sick, liberally and continuously. In this way only was suffering avoided. Under these conditions, and as few of the emigrants had any means to speak of, and many were entirely without funds, it will be seen that they ran a great risk of being without food altogether. People more poorly provisioned and fitted out for a struggle with the difficulties of a strange country it would be hard to imagine. Many of them had absolutely no money at all except the I. O. U's, notes, stock and receipts of the steamship company, which are not worth their paper here. When at last the provisions were gotten ashore and divided, a work which by needless delays in transportation was spun out over a week's time, it was found that there were barely three weeks' provisions around. Every passenger of the Azor had paid, besides his or her passage money, for provisions for a month's voyage and six months' provisions after their arrival here. After a forty-two days' journey, with the replenishing at Sierra Leone, there were barely three weeks' scanty provisions left, including all of the ship's stores, which Captain Holmes turned over to them, and the stores belonging to those put ashore in Charleston.

#### A CHARGE OF FRAUD.

There has been foul play somewhere. The money that these people paid to buy food with, for which they have receipts generally signed by the Rev. B. F. Porter, has been misappropriated. In fact it has been difficult to conceive what has been done with the funds, which seem to have been wrung from them by all imaginable devices. I will give an instance of this as showing the *modus operandi*:—In looking over the papers held by the Williams family, from Burke county, Ga., one of the heads of which died on the voyage, I find the following receipts:—Mitchell Williams (deceased)—Provisions, \$70; provisions, \$60; provisions, \$60; provisions, \$90; share in grist mill, \$33.20; dry goods, \$120; due bill, \$5; due bill, \$10; stock, \$110. Total, \$558.20. For this the widow has the stock, the dry goods, about \$15 worth of provisions and the papers. There has been no sign of any gristmill. This is but a fair sample of many similar instances. This Williams family paid in and have receipts for \$1,411.65 in cash for the bringing over of thirty-six persons, many being children, and would be in a starving condition had they not some other little means. The "steamship" company seems to have remorselessly drained these people, having actually started some of them off in a penniless condition. This, with the criminal neglect which allowed the emigrants to come over at the beginning of the rainy season, for all they knew unannounced, without physician or shelter, makes the matter look very black. It savors strongly of criminal misappropriation of funds and breach of trust, or of more criminal carelessness regarding the lives and welfare of a band of helpless people who relied on them, by the officers of the steamship company. Many of the buildings occupied by the passengers were dwellings which had apparently been long vacant and had become leaky, exposing the emigrants to the rain, which in this season pours down almost every day. After the first day or two, however, the roofs were patched up so as to render them tolerably water tight. The health of most of the sick began to improve as soon as they got free from the rolling and confinement of the ship. The total number of deaths up to the time of reaching Monrovia was twenty-nine.

#### PERSPECTS OF THE EMIGRANTS.

The remainder of the letter is full of facts, figures and sketches. It gives an account of a voyage up the St. Paul's River, during which the soil and people, the productions and the resources of the interior were carefully examined; of a visit to and interview with the President, and of the progress, situation and prospects of the emigrants. In short, the condition of the emigrants at present is not enviable. They are dependent on the charity of the Liberians, and will not be able to leave for their new settlement at Bapora for about a month. From a general examination of the soil and products of the country it is, however, fair to presume that if the emigrants will work they can make a living, and those who have money may become independent. The return voyage was devoid of any noteworthy incident.