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"FOR HE LOVETH OUR NATION"

THESE were many reasons to make this a singular declaration of patriotism. By nationality, by education and by many reasons the man who called it forth was not at one with those with whom his lot had been cast. Yet he had won their sympathies and confidence. He had overcome their strong prejudice. That was a great overcoming, for prejudice is the hardest thing to kill in the world. Any prejudice means unreason, and race prejudice is less under the direction of reason than any other antipathy.

In the case here quoted Jewish elders were pleading in behalf of one who was of a disliked race and of another religion, and their plea was—as they said—"because he loveth our nation." There was nothing remarkable in the fact that the Jewish people should love their own nation. Why should they not? Their country had a wonderful history to bind the people's hearts together. Their country was their birthplace. Their childhood had been there. The earliest and the strongest associations of life appealed to their patriotism. It was the home of father and mother and friends. The rivers, the lakes and the hills were theirs. By race, by education and religion they were led to love their country and to sing its songs from their hearts. But here was a man who had none of these reasons in common with them—of another race, of foreign birth, and of a different religious education—who had

evidenced his love to their nation more than they did themselves.

The people of America have a greater and a better country to love. It has been asking for our thoughtful attention in the last months, and the verdict of the people in the interests that have appealed to them has certainly renewed the love of country and their pride in it. We can sing our "America" in a common chorus of praise that all the world may hear.

A visitor in the schools of the American Missionary Association could not fail to be interested in the cultivation of the love of our country when the children of another race than that which rules are called to salute the flag. Often it does not protect them. Under it they meet discriminations which they feel to be unjust. Many of the privileges common to others they are not permitted to share. Early in life they come to understand how hard, how unreasoning and unreasonable race prejudice is. It is the meanest thing in our country. Even the children of those who feel it most understand this, and yet no children of any race can outvie them in heartiness when they salute the flag, or out-sing them when they sing:

My country, 'tis of Thee,
Of Thee I sing.

They do right to sing this. They have a right to the flag. Of their race, said our President-elect, Taft—before he was elect—"it is their country as it is our country. That is the only flag for which

they are willing to offer up their blood and their lives, and therefore they are a part of us."

If our institutions and schools did nothing more than to instill the lesson of patriotism among the children of eight million of people whose national inheritance was late, so that it can be said of them when they come to be intelligent citizens that they "love our Nation," it would be a great part of the justification for their existence and support.

How greatly would the seriousness of the problem which we are seeking to solve—and helping mightily to solve—be increased if the children of these millions should grow up and not "love our nation." How much more serious

if we should leave them untaught and where they would have less reason to love our country and theirs, than they have. For, to quote again our President-elect, their advancement "reveals a story which when you consider the time and circumstances is a marvellous one, and instead of making us pessimistic ought to make us glad that the race has made such progress." Yes, they can and will sing "My country 'tis of Thee," and well they may, for their hopes are in it, and in it by the grace of God, they will work out with faith and patience their salvation. And those who have been under the influence of prejudice will exchange it for reason because they together "love our nation."

FINANCIAL

The American Missionary Association has entered upon one more financial year. Its missions were providential in their beginning, and no one can trace their work and fail to see that they are equally providential now. Its work has never been more urgent than now. We bring the touch of a brother's hand, the sympathy of a brother's heart, and the help of a brother's faith in our work for the regeneration of a race, millions of whom

are in darkness and need the light of life. The Kingdom of Heaven needs the American Missionary Association. We do not believe that the churches and the Christian people who have undertaken this work will fail in their interest and practical service. As we begin this new year of endeavor we pray for the grace of God upon the churches.

"Lest we forget, lest we forget."

MISSIONS IN CONGO FREE STATE, AFRICA

By Mrs. Althea Brown Edmiston

I COUNT it one of the greatest honors and opportunities of my life to be present at the Annual Meeting of the American Missionary Association. I am glad to be able to thank you in person for what you, through Fisk University, have done for me, also to tell you what God, through the instrumentality of some of your own disciples, is doing in Central Africa, and that I may carry from here a deep spiritual inspiration that shall be most helpful to those among whom we labor in darkest Africa.

Since I am one of the rough stones which you have polished, you will be interested to know what induced me to go to Fisk University and to be a foreign missionary.

My parents, having no learning themselves, desired that their children should be educated. Having heard of Fisk University through one of its graduates, and having secured the promise of a scholarship of fifty dollars, the lot fell on me, the fifth of their ten children. In 1892, with a little tin trunk containing my

meager wardrobe, I left a very humble home on a cotton plantation in Mississippi for Fisk University. When I reached Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, it was to me a new world! a wonderland! a Paradise! And could I, a poor, half frightened country girl, with common calico dress and hair done up in little knotty braids, enter! Yes, they really let me in!

I was able to make the seventh grade in the English School. After three months, through the influence of some of the teachers, I became a Christian, and with this new birth came the distinct call to Africa as a missionary. I made this fact known to my friends and decided to take the collegiate course. This seemed a mighty undertaking; the goal nine years off and no money! I was, no doubt, regarded by teachers and students as was Columbus when he started out to discover America. But the Lord had laid His hands on me and kindled in my heart a burning desire to help those sitting in the dense darkness of heathendom. At the first opportunity I signed the declaration card of the Student Volunteer Movement and with a strong determination I started out to win the fight in spite of poverty.

My parents were able to help me but little. After four years they could do no more. I worked as a servant in families, until I was able to teach. After that with the fifty-dollar scholarship given me I had no trouble in helping myself. My clothing came from the missionary barrels you so kindly send South.

During those nine years of hard work and struggle I was not unmindful of the kind helpful words and deeds, not alone of my beloved teachers, but also of dear Dr. Beard. The American Missionary Association offered to help me through school, but wise Dr. Cravath thought it

would make a much better woman of me—a stronger woman in every way—if I were left to bear my own burden.

Nineteen hundred and one brought me to the end of my nine years and I graduated, receiving the degree B.A. But the goal had not yet been reached. My destination was Africa. Through all those years I could not put aside the call of the Lord! I could see my less fortunate sisters, whose souls I had learned to love and longed to win for Christ, groping in darkness, waiting for the light.

I wanted to go out under the Board of my own church, the Congregational, but found it necessary to turn to another Board, whose requirement was that I join their denomination. It was indeed hard to leave the church in which I became a new creature, "but a little talk with Jesus made it right, all right."

Having a year to wait, I went to Chicago and, taking two years in one, graduated May, 1902, from the Bible Course of the Chicago Training School for City, Home and Foreign Missions.

You will see the broadness of my religion when I tell you that I was born a Baptist, united with a Congregational church, was educated in a Congregational institution, took a Bible course in a Methodist training school and went to Africa under the Southern Presbyterian Board.

Just here I wish to commend the Southern Presbyterian Board for its kind consideration for and courtesy toward us as colored missionaries. We are most cordially received at the mission rooms and invited to speak before the churches and missionary societies when on furlough. On the field our missionaries are made up of half southern white men and women and half colored. We work together in perfect harmony.

In August, 1902, I left the homeland for the fatherland. When we loosed from

the shore and the band began to play "America," I realized for the first time that I was leaving all that was nearest and dearest to me, but there was joy in the thought that I was going in obedience to the Saviour's last command, bearing to a benighted multitude His message of love, salvation and redemption.

Our mission being in the very heart of Africa, far away from all civilization and all means of supplies, we must take with us every needful thing, such as household articles, food, clothing, barter goods, etc. These we buy in London, England, repeating the order annually.

Leaving England, three weeks' sailing brings us to Matadi on the Congo River, sixty miles from its mouth. Here the river is rendered unnavigable by sixty-two cataracts, around which we travel two hundred and sixty miles on a little narrow gauge railroad train, which running only by day brings us in two days to Stanley Pool, where the Congo River is again navigable. Here our own mission steamer meets us, and, traveling by day only, on the Congo, Kassai, Lulua and Luebo rivers, brings us in twenty-six days to our great mission station, Luebo.

Our second station, Ibanj, is forty miles farther in the interior, to which we go in strong canvas hammocks suspended on a bamboo pole borne by native men. This station proved to be my goal. Having picked up a few sentences of the language on the way, I began work the next day after my arrival, and have had five and a half years in the blessed work of my heart's greatest desire. For nearly three years I was the only foreign woman at Ibanj Station. My special work has been that of making a dictionary and grammar in the unwritten language of the Bakuba tribe, teaching in the day-schools and Sunday-schools, helping to organize the native women into Christian bands, being matron of a girls' home,

making charts and text books for the school and working among the women and children in general.

Our mission, 1,200 miles from the coast, and five degrees south of the Equator, is situated in the Western Central part of the Congo Free State, in which we find many distinct tribes speaking totally different languages, and varying in superiority of intelligence, dress, industry and habits of living. Their villages are usually very large and neatly laid off in rectangles and are from one to ten miles apart, with from five hundred to ten thousand inhabitants. Their tribal distinction is tattooing, which often adds to or subtracts from their personal appearance. They vary in color from a jet black to a very light brown. Some tribes go perfectly nude, others wear a small piece of cloth, still others wear a neat tunic extending from the waist to just below the knees. Children from birth to about eight years of age do not wear anything.

They have many very interesting industries. They raise an abundance of Indian corn, peas, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, peanuts, bananas, plantains, pineapples, and cassava. There are among them excellent blacksmiths, who make from native ore spears, arrows, axes, razors, hoes, knives, adzes, needles and pins. They also make many kinds of beautiful baskets, mats, water jars, and pots. They weave in little hand looms their cloth, which consists of threads made from the pineapple and palm leaves. Much time is spent by the men in hunting, fishing and gathering rubber. They have weekly markets and a regular commodity of exchange. They cook only one meal a day, which is supper. Their principal food is "greens" and boiled bread. However, they often have chickens, goats, fish, antelopes, elephants, pork, buffalo, monkey, boa-con-

strictors, rats, and such dainties as shrimps, grasshoppers, caterpillars, locusts, grubworms and big white ants.

They have organized governments, with kingdoms, chiefdoms, towns and villages, having judicial courts, with lawyers and judges. They punish crime by imprisonment, fines and death.

Their marriages are considered sacred and binding. Families of three and four generations may be seen dwelling together. Among many of them is found great family affection. Their standard of morality is remarkably high.

Their language is beautiful, highly inflected, rhythmical, musical and full of stories, fairy tales and songs. They have many games, and musical instruments and some of their dances would compete in grace with our Delsarte.

The people are not altogether homely. We find among them handsome men with fine, tall, stalwart physiques. Some of the women are really pretty with even features, delicate forms, and quiet, lady-like appearance. Some of them are very bright, intelligent, diplomatic, witty and deep thinkers.

They believe in a great Spirit known as Midi Mukula or Nzambi, whom they regard with terrible dread. They know Him not as the true God who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

How great has been our joy to declare unto them the unknown God and the loving Saviour whom so many of them now worship as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and sing with us the songs of Zion: "Come thou fount of every blessing," "Jesus loves me this I know," "Pass me not, O gentle Saviour," and scores of others. The light of Jesus Christ does truly dispel the darkness. The fetters with which they have been bound by Satan so many centuries are

now being broken, and we see many evidences of the Spirit's working in the hearts of the people and souls are being born daily in the Kingdom of God.

Though our mission is very young, we have an enrollment of nearly seven thousand Christians. There are more than four thousand pupils in our Sunday-schools, more than two thousand in our day-schools. We have nearly two hundred native ministers, teachers and helpers, all trained in our mission schools. There are two main and forty-eight out-stations, where preaching services are held daily and where more than eight thousand souls hear the Gospel message on the Sabbath. Every day is Sunday with us in Africa! We go to church three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. There were added to the church last year seven hundred and ninety-eight souls on confession of their faith in Christ, an average of two a day.

Our greatest hope is in the young people. We have two flourishing "Homes" for girls, out of which come each year well-trained young women who are making excellent wives for our native ministers. We have an Industrial School for boys, out of which are coming some of our best Christian workers.

Among our converts are representatives from many tribes. I bring you greetings to-day from our Christian Baluba, Bakuba, Bakite, Bashelele, Bimtadi, Bena Lulua, Bangella, Ba-Congo and Zappo Zaps.

I need not tell you that no condition in Africa is more *pitiabile*, more *pathetic* than that of the women, who are the beasts of burden, slaves for service and victims for vice! But, praise the Lord, I am glad to tell you that Christianity is doing for these what it has done for women wherever it has gone. They are among the majority of our converts. We have four Christian organizations for them in which

they are being lifted up. They are beginning to see that there is something sweeter, higher and more beautiful in life than a mere existence. They are being more tenderly regarded and loved by their husbands, and they show more thought, love and care for husband, children and home. Instead of an offensive body, greased, matted hair and a small loin cloth, many are now seen with combed hair and clean bodies, neatly draped from shoulders to ankles. Among them are some of our best teachers and helpers.

How I wish I could tell you more of the wonderful way in which God is blessing that work, how the hearts of the people are open to the Gospel, how eager they are and anxious for education.

I wish that I could tell you of the capsizing of our mission steamer five years ago, when one of our missionaries and twenty-three of our native Christians were drowned and all of our annual supplies went down. I wish also that I could tell you of the terrible revolt four years ago by the great Bakuba tribe, against all foreigners, both friend and foe, because of oppression. At that time our mission station at Ibanj was burned and entirely destroyed. We were made destitute of every earthly possession and barely escaped with our lives! How I wish I could tell you of our return to and the rebuilding of Ibanj Station, of the great spiritual results, of how we are now getting hold of that very tribe. Many of their boys and girls, as never before, are now under our daily care and instruction. Surely we have seen many demonstrations of God's causing "the wrath of man to praise Him." That station is now larger and more beautiful than ever before, God has also given us another lovely steamboat, much larger and far more comfortable than the first. Thus we are thoroughly persuaded that

"Ill that He blesses is our good,
And unblessed good is ill,
And all is right that seems most wrong
If it be His sweet will."

However, in spite of these bright features I bring before you it is only a mere beginning of a great work yet to be done. There are thousands in our own vicinity that have not yet been touched. We can not reach them because of our limited strength and numbers. They are still in the midnight darkness of ignorance, superstition, vice, degradation and sin, waiting, hungering, thirsting, pleading and begging for the bread of life. Their greatest curse is domestic slavery, which is the root of ninety per cent. of all the evil among them.

In conclusion, I wish again to thank you, most honored friends of the North, for what you have done for me. I owe all I am and all I hope to be to you, through Fisk University. You have prepared me for serving God and my fellowman. Not for me only have you done this, but for thousands of others of my race. We have nine other colored missionaries on our field, among whom are Mrs. Lucy G. Sheppard, Miss Maria Fearing and Mrs. Lillian Thomas De Yampert, educated by you at Talladega College, and who are doing a most efficient work.

I wish also to thank you for the consecrated, self-sacrificing men and women whom you have sent to teach us. Their lives and example are even of greater help and inspiration to us than their instruction from text books. When I think of those grand, noble men, our beloved Professors Bennett, Spence, Chase and President Cravath, *immortal men* who lived and died in our service and whose last expiring breath went up before the throne of God pleading for Fisk University and the Negro race, I am filled with a greater desire to do my very best in life's service.