

**THE A.B.C. OF
COLONIZATION: IN A
SERIES OF
LETTERS, PP. 3-42, NO. I**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649310586

The A.B.C. of Colonization: In a Series of Letters, pp. 3-42, No. 1 by Mrs. Chisholm

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Cover @ 2017

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MRS. CHISHOLM

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THE
A. B. C.
OF
COLONIZATION.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS,

BY
MRS. CHISHOLM.

No. I.

ADDRESSED TO THE GENTLEMEN FORMING THE COMMITTEE
OF THE

FAMILY COLONIZATION LOAN SOCIETY,

VIZ.

LORD ASHLEY, M.P., THE RIGHT HON. SYDNEY HERBERT, M.P.,
THE HON. VERNON SMITH, M.P., JOHN TIDD PRATT, ESQ.,
F. G. P. NELSON, ESQ., M. MONSELL, ESQ., M.P.

HAVING APPENDED

A LETTER TO LORD ASHLEY,

AND THE

RULES OF THE FAMILY COLONIZATION LOAN SOCIETY.

LONDON:

JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL MALL.

1850.

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TO THE COMMITTEE
OF THE
FAMILY COLONIZATION LOAN SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR having done me the honour to comply with my solicitation in becoming Members of the Committee of the Society which I have ventured to suggest with the view of carrying out a comprehensive and self-supporting system of Colonization, I feel myself called upon, considering your position as public men, and the onerous and numerous duties you may have to attend to, to explain more fully to you and to the public at large the principle of the proposed Society, and how I think it may be worked in detail in the Australian Colonies. Although it is not yet three months since this plan was first submitted to the public, I have the pleasure to inform you that without any prominent move whatever having been made in the matter, that about 370 individuals have already enrolled themselves into groups, consisting of respectable families of the working classes, a few young men, and some friendless young women; the whole party can contribute £.1200. towards their passage; some reside in London and its immediate vicinity, while others have sent in their names from the rural districts in England and Wales, and I have had several applications also from persons in Scotland and Ireland, anxious to join the Society, but who at present

are unable to state how much they can contribute. This first step is highly encouraging to the benevolent who may feel disposed to aid struggling families and deserving individuals.

In propounding any new plan, it is usual, and it may become desirable, at times, in order to elucidate one's own, to refer to some existing system of the same nature; if then I have to revert to the mode of emigration carried on by her Majesty's Emigration Commissioners, and have to remark that some grave evils exist which ought to be rectified, I must at the same time allow that they have had to compete with many difficulties, and that I know from long tried experience in these matters, that the greatest care cannot at all times prevent abuses. In this emigration it must be borne in mind, that the Board of Commissioners are but the agents of the squatting interest, or men of capital in the Australian Colonies, and that they are often necessitated to enforce rules which their best feelings must shrink from. Indeed, it has always been a source of deep regret to me that an office which is precluded by stringent regulations from carrying out a national system of colonization, should ever have been called, Her Majesty's Land and Emigration Commissioners; for I would have her Majesty's name connected in the minds of the peasantry of England, Ireland, Scotland, and of the Colonies, with every feeling that could cherish their loyalty and conciliate their affection,—I should like every one to feel that under that revered name it mattered not, when they made application for a passage, what country they came from, so that they were British subjects—what creed they professed, so that they were loyal and peaceable men. I hold it to be derogatory to the high and moral feeling of Englishmen, that under the insignia of

the Royal Arms of England, modest British matrons should be asked the question, "Whether any increase to the family is expected, and when?"

I consider it a gross outrage to humanity—a violent rending of the tenderest ties of nature, and injurious to morality, that heads of families above 40 years of age and those who have a certain number of children under ten years of age, should be excluded from the advantages and rights of emigration—that under other rules children beyond a certain number should be taxed £7. each on account of passage-money—that again single men passed the age of 35 should not be considered eligible, and that the "candidates most acceptable are young married couples without children." These, indeed, are evils, trials, temptations, and stumbling-blocks thrown in the way of weak human nature, which ought not to be; humanity should forbid it, and religion ought to raise her voice against it; the aged, if able to go, should not be left to pass the remainder of their days round a lonely and cheerless hearth, or to find their way to the workhouse. These evils, however, must not be charged to the Commissioners, for they are only the agents of a system, and I should not be doing justice to those Gentlemen, or to my own feelings, if I did not here acknowledge the many obligations I am under to them. But the country which had cheerfully paid twenty millions sterling to strike off the cankering chains of slavery, is not likely to countenance this violence to the dearest feelings of our nature. Colonization then, must be the instrument which must be used for breaking asunder these barriers thrown up against the natural egress of the people. Viewing it in a political light, I consider it highly injudicious for a Government to be in connection with an

agency, the principles of which are calculated to wound, irritate, and annoy the best feelings of a large portion of Her Majesty's subjects. If the Commissioners will but cease to act as mere agents of a party, and convert their office into a National Crown Land Office, it will become the most popular department under the Crown, always provided that impartiality on the one side, and justice on the other balance the scales. Why should not a Government gain and hold the affections of a people the same as a parent does of his children? What has it to do but to fulfil the laws of God, and to act equitably towards its people? The one is the natural guardian of his offspring, the other the deputed one of those who form the commonwealth.

The evils connected with emigration which are now before the public, though they may be pretty familiar to those who are conversant with the system, shew the deep responsibilities which a Society like the one proposed will have to incur, and the great necessity that will exist for its devising every precautionary means to lessen, and if possible, entirely to do away with the abuses complained of. A Society such as that contemplated would commence its labours with many advantages over those which Her Majesty's Commissioners have enjoyed, or a mercantile House can command. The objects of such a Society's care are not deterred from emigrating by the mercenary and calculating consideration of age, or whether their families number many or few children; nor would the Society, like a mercantile firm, enter into any scheme of mere speculative emigration. A Society of this nature, if judiciously managed, may converge the moral force of the nation into its service, and engage the sympathy of every local committee, and every benevolent contributor. If an

act of oppression is perpetrated—if a scandalous insult is offered to female virtue, it is not the Colonial office, —it is not a ship-broker, or a mercantile agent, that is to institute an inquiry into the alleged abuses, and try to defend the accused and the guilty, but the moral feelings of the country will stand as the arbitrator; the benevolent from all quarters will in fact be the agents of this Society; each may feel an interest in some individual or families he or she has helped over. Nay, such emigrants may have friends, relatives, or benevolent contributors ready on the distant shores of Australia to take up their cause: thus a moral guardian will be formed; a phalanx of the good, of the rich and the powerful will be raised, which may prove ample to protect the defenceless and the innocent.

It may be well, however, to view the two systems; the present Government Emigration, and the one proposed under the surveillance of this Society. The emigrants sent by the Government assemble at Deptford or some other port: not two families know each other, or perchance until their meeting at the depot had ever seen one another before: young females find themselves there as perfect strangers. But what scenes take place before they have got thus far: what conflicts of nature are endured ere they leave their homes; what harrowing scenes arise out of the taxation clause; at times young children may be seen handed over to the care of a grandfather, an aunt, or a cousin, or as one poor man in Australia said to me: "my wife was obliged to take the child from her breast by the side of the ship, and hand it to a friend." Others, on account of having just passed the prime of life, are necessitated to remain behind. What wailings in the cottage! what sad farewells outside the village! how nature will then exclaim, "Never

see that dear face no more—never look at that venerated parent again,” now sunk in agony in the darkest corner of his own dreary habitation. This is not a piece of romance, but one of the scenes of real life. Which are most to be felt for, the intending emigrant, or the desolate beings left behind? These heart-burnings of nature are not extinguished here; the same feeling, which a benign Providence, for the wisest of designs, has implanted in the human heart, keeps the flame alive in the distant colonies; the child longs for the parent—the father or the disconsolate mother sighs for the offspring. I cannot tell how often I have been entreated by sons and daughters in New South Wales to do all I could to see their parents sent to them, or the numerous applications I have had made to me by parents to forward to them their children. These appeals follow me to this country. I have lately had a letter handed to me, written by an Englishman out there to his brother, wherein he says, “First try Park Street (Government office), if you cannot get a passage that way stick to the parish, but if you get no good from neither, go to Mrs. Chisholm, for I have written to her and sanctioned her to manage.” Another poor widow writes to me, and to whom I sent four of her children in 1848: “They have safely arrived, all well; the eldest girl got well married; two of the boys I have got apprenticed; you have my most heartfelt thanks for your kindness in sending out my children, and you have my prayers night and day.” So many and such heart-rending applications I had made to me shortly before leaving the colony, that I ventured to appeal to the local Government in their behalf, and I have since had the comfort of seeing some hundreds of children and young people sent out through the Government Commissioners; but I grieve to say