

**OUR ORIGIN, DANGERS AND  
DUTIES: THE ANNUAL ADDRESS  
BEFORE THE MAYOR AND  
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY  
OF MONROVIA, JULY 26, 1865**

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**EDWARD W. BLYDEN**

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# OUR ORIGIN, DANGERS, AND DUTIES.

©

THE

## ANNUAL ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MONROVIA,

*JULY 26, 1865,*

*The Day of National Independence;*

AND REPEATED

ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 1, 1865, AT CALDWELL, ST. PAUL'S RIVER.

BY

REV. EDWARD W. BLYDEN, A.M.,

PROFESSOR IN LIBERIA COLLEGE.

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*New-York:*

JOHN A. GRAY & GREEN, PRINTERS, 16 AND 18 JACOB STREET.

1865.

TO THE  
Hon. DANIEL B. WARNER

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA,

THIS ADDRESS IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

As a Memorial

OF LONG-STANDING AND INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP,

AND OF SINCERE ADMIRATION

FOR

EARNEST, SELF-DENYING, AND UNOSTENTATIOUS PATRIOTISM,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

CALDWELL, ST. PAUL'S RIVER,  
August 2, 1865.

DEAR SIR:

We have the honor to forward to you the following resolutions, passed at the meeting of the citizens of Lower Caldwell, on the first instant, before which you kindly repeated your Address, delivered at Monrovia on the 26th of July, the National day.

On motion, it was unanimously

*Resolved*, That the thanks of the meeting be tendered to Hon. EDWARD W. BLYDEN, for the repetition of his very able and instructive Address.

*Resolved*, That, the meeting being convinced that a diffusion of the patriotic sentiments of the Address is calculated to do great good, a committee of three be appointed, to solicit a copy of it for publication.

Hoping that you will comply with the request of the meeting,

We remain, respectfully yours,

Colonel ISAAC LAWRENCE, }  
Capt. SAMUEL S. POWERS, } Committee.  
Hon. H. W. JOHNSON, }

To the Hon. EDWARD W. BLYDEN,  
Secretary of State, Monrovia.

## ADDRESS.

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TO-DAY we celebrate the eighteenth anniversary of the Independence of Liberia. We are entering upon the nineteenth year of our national career. Amid various discouragements and difficulties, joys and sorrows—in sunshine and shadow—we have held on our way. We are laying the foundations of empire on this coast. We are inaugurating what others must take up and continue. With all our failings and deficiencies, we are obviously the agents in the hand of the great Ruler in doing an important work. Well, how should the day be spent?

If we had thoroughly solved the problem to which we are committed; if we had firmly established a nation; if we had fairly demonstrated our capacity to achieve and maintain sovereignty and independence; if the mass of our people had risen to the dignity of superior and cultivated life; if we had exalted the general tone and character of the tribes around us; if we were united by the sympathy of one feeling and of one interest; if all asperity and bitterness and ignorant jealousies were unknown among us, and we lived in the warmth and glow of one common cordiality; if, superior to local or individual prejudices, we were combining our energies and our means for the benefit of the whole country; if we were daily developing a stronger



attachment to the cause of race, and a more determined zeal for the upbuilding of an African nationality; if we had effectually silenced the cavils of adversaries; then we might devote the day to unbounded festivity; then we could afford to impose no check upon our feelings of gladness and joy. But when we review the years during which we have been numbered among the nations, and see how far behind we are in all the elements of abiding prosperity and usefulness; how little we have done for the cause of Africa's regeneration; how small the quota we have contributed to the comfort and happiness of mankind; this should be to us a day of earnest and solemn thoughtfulness, as well as of joyous demonstrations.

The question is still agitated: "Is Liberia a permanent fact, or will it, after all, prove a failure?" This is a time when, in the opinion of some, both citizens and foreigners, a serious crisis has arrived in the history of Liberia. I propose, therefore, to recall your attention to THE ORIGIN OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, AND TO SOME OF THE DANGERS WHICH THREATEN OUR NATIONAL EXISTENCE.

Now that it has ceased to be fashionable or necessary on the part of the friends of Liberia to magnify her virtues; and on the part of her enemies it has become useless to exaggerate her failings; and when it must be evident to every one who has, for the last ten years, watched the current of Liberian history that her success rests upon a very different foundation from that furnished by the panegyrics of her friends abroad, and that her progress can not be impeded by any obstacles thrown into her way by her enemies, it is rendered possible to take a candid view of ourselves, without, as some have heretofore supposed, endangering our exist-

ence. We can afford to look at a true picture of ourselves without experiencing, it is to be hoped, any other feeling than one of stimulation to effort.

The foundation of Liberia was laid under circumstances peculiar in the history of the world. The emigrants were urged to these shores by motives far different from those which led to the founding of other colonies. They were not a restless people, who, finding their advancement to wealth and honors in their native country too slow for their ambitious and enterprising minds, resolved to accelerate their dilatory fortunes beneath a foreign sky. They were not persons who had once been in a condition of opulence and splendor, and who, having fallen by luxury and extravagance into penury and disrepute, sought new scenes to repair their shattered fortunes. They were not politicians adhering to some new principle in politics deemed by them all-important, and seeking some new field for its untrammelled exercise and fair development. They were not the victims of religious persecution fleeing from the horrors of an enthralled conscience. No. Had they belonged to any of these classes, they might, perhaps, have contented themselves with cultivating small farms and reaping slow gains; they might have taken fresh courage, and, by patient industry, restored measurably their dilapidated fortunes; they might have changed their political or theological views, rather than brave the dangers and undergo the privations of founding a home, and residing in a country proverbial for its unhealthy and dangerous climate. But they belonged to none of these classes. They were a peculiar people. They were those who themselves or whose ancestors had been, in the providence of God, suffered to be carried away from heathenism into slavery among a civil-

ized and Christian people; and who, from the degradation necessarily attached in all countries to those in any way related to slaves, could not rise. The force of circumstances over which they had no control kept them down—hopelessly down. They felt the depression; they saw its causes. They felt the deteriorating effects of these causes upon their minds and the minds of their children. And they found that it was useless to contend against these unfavorable influences. They saw clearly that to remain in that land and contend against what they could have no reasonable hope of overcoming, would be no more than “beating the air.” They, therefore, concluded that it would be wisdom in them, if they desired to possess a home for themselves and their children, where they might enjoy those rights and immunities which their neighbors enjoyed, to direct their attention to some other scene. Earnestly did they look abroad for some “asylum from the deep degradation.” At length the West Coast of Africa was fixed upon as offering the greatest inducement for the settlement of Africans. They left the land of their birth, forsook the scenes and associations of their childhood, and came, with hearts heavy and distressed, to this far-off and barbarous shore—*forced*, by irresistible circumstances, from their native country in their poverty and ignorance, to seek a home where to be of African descent would involve no disgrace.

They came, having *seen* their operations, but never having studied or learned the moral and political principles which prevailed in their native land. They came then to found a home with nothing more to depend upon than the capabilities of memory to recall what they had seen and heard. They came to imitate words and actions, for they could not practice and inculcate prin-