


ADDRESS
OF
THE HONORABLE
BRIGADIER GENL ALEXANDER WALKER,
GOVERNOR, &c. &c. &c.
AT
A GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS
OF THE
St. HELENA BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,
HELD AT
THE LIBRARY, IN JAMES'S TOWN,
8th MAY 1823.

St. Helena:
Printed (for the Proprietors) by J. BOND.

1823.

PREFACE.



IN submitting the following Address to the Public Eye, the Committee of the Benevolent Society feel persuaded that they express the unanimous sentiments of its friends, when, in discharge of their duty, they return their sincere and grateful acknowledgments to its Author, their highly esteemed and respected Governor, the Honorable Brigadier General Alexander Walker. —Feeling, as they always must, how much the prosperity of this Society depends upon such support and recommendation; convinced too as they were, and still are, of the justice and value of the observations the Address contained, they naturally felt anxious, that its benefits should not be confined simply to the occasion of its delivery; but that they should be extended as widely as possible. —With this view, the Committee thought it their duty to request the

Governor's permission to have it printed for general circulation. This was kindly granted; and they have now, at length, the satisfaction of presenting it to the public.—

The Committee much regret that the tardy progress of printing has occasioned so much delay; but although late in its appearance, they trust it will not be the less appreciated. They earnestly hope indeed, that the paternal solicitude it manifests for the *moral* welfare of this Island, the true foundation and support of its future prosperity and happiness, may be duly felt and improved by every individual of this highly favored Community.

With respect to the vote of thanks which the Brigadier General so kindly proposed at the close of his Address, Mr. Brooke, with his usual cordiality, made a suitable reply to it; and again expressed his sincere desire for the prosperity of the Association. The Society indeed, did not need any additional testimony of the cordial attachment either of Mr. Brooke, or Mr. Greenlee,

but it was a source of much gratification to all, to receive, on the present occasion, the further countenance of these benevolent Patrons.

As to themselves, the Committee conceive, that no assurances are required, on their parts, of their duly appreciating the motives which induced the Governor to connect their services with those of the above Gentlemen. And although in truth, as the Brigadier General justly observed, "they are influenced by higher motives than praise," yet they derive every encouragement to proceed in their duties with unabated zeal, from the kind manner in which the Governor, and the public, have so generously noticed their services. But they may be allowed to observe, what perhaps was not so distinctly marked upon the occasion as they could have wished, that the obligation rather lies upon the Committee themselves, for the opportunity which the friends of this truly Christian Institution have afforded them, of dispensing their bound-

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ty; a gratification of peculiar worth—and also, for the confidence they have reposed in the Committee, by entrusting them with the care and management of the affairs of a Society which concentrates and applies so large a proportion of the pure benevolence of this Community.

To these prefatory observations, it may be well to add a brief account of the further proceedings of the day.—The Committee are induced to this, chiefly for the purpose of preserving a printed record of them; and of affording information to such benevolent strangers as support the Institution.

From the Library, where the Meeting was held, the Governor and Council, together with the Committee, and a large proportion of the Assembly, proceeded to the Under School. Here a specimen was afforded of the progress and abilities of some of the higher Classes, and the Rewards assigned to the most deserving Children

at the Christmas Examination, (when Mr. Brooke presided,) were distributed by the Governor, accompanied by very suitable commendation and advice to each Child. This the Committee trust, will have the happiest effect, in stimulating the Children to future diligence and good conduct.

Not long after, a similar proceeding took place at the Country School, when the Governor and Council, Mrs. Walker, the Gentlemen of the Committee, with some others, were no less gratified with an equal appearance of the happy affects that are likely soon to result from the extensive education of the lower orders. Here also the Children underwent a slight examination, and acquitted themselves in the most satisfactory manner, and reflected, as the Governor observed, much credit upon their teachers.

Upon the whole, the Committee cannot but reiterate their highest satisfaction at the general state of the

Schools, and the rapid progress this grand object of the Association is making: and they must again be allowed to congratulate the Community, upon the able and zealous Friend and Patron, which the Society has most providentially found, in the Author of the following Address; who has hereby afforded the best possible pledge of his earnest desire to promote, in the most effectual manner, the true and permanent welfare of this Island.

St. Helena, }
June 1823. }

ADDRESS

From the Honorable the Governor,

BRIGADIER GENERAL ALEXANDER WALKER,

At a General Meeting of the Benevolent Society,

8th May 1823.

Gentlemen,

IN addressing this Meeting, I must bespeak its indulgence. I have perused, with a lively interest and satisfaction, the Reports of the St. Helena Benevolent Society. It is now approaching to nine Years since the institution of this Society;—its progress has been gradual and steady. The capital and amount of subscriptions have annually increased. It has been subject to some fluctuations, but not to any alarming extent; and none which have for a moment prevented it from improving the moral condition of a large class of the Inhabitants.

The Benevolent Society is intended for the advantage of a class of people, who are excluded by their poverty

from instruction, or who have been oppressed by unmerited misfortunes, and who are universally acknowledged to stand in need of support.

The improvement of the morals of a numerous portion of the Community, must excite the sympathy, and animate the zeal of every friend of Religion, and of established order. These are the first objects of every good Government: they are the foundation and bond of civilized life. It is a source of gratification to observe the success of the labours of the Association which has been formed at St. Helena, in favor of those principles, which comprehend the Law of Reason, and the greatest moral duties we owe to God and Man. The exertions of the Patrons of this Society, and the Inhabitants at large of this Island, well entitle them to the thanks of their Country. A rising generation has been instructed in the paths of virtue and religion, and many who had already engaged in the business of the world, it is fair to presume, have been improved in their morals.

Whatever has a tendency to enlighten the understanding, and to increase the general stock of knowledge, is of the utmost importance to human Beings. The happiness of individuals is promoted; they are more firmly linked with the welfare of the Community; and are better qualified to perform their tasks in life.— Education and instruction are the only safe means by which we can judge rightly between truth and error.— It is in the manner of training up youth, and by a strict education in the early stage of life, that we can hope to lure them to virtue. It has been said “that the Soul of Man is an active principle, and will be employed one way or other.” Men are naturally disposed to activity; and we are taught by daily experience, that it is essential for the welfare of the Individual, and of Society, that this activity should be properly directed. To those who have a competency, the avenues to knowledge are open; but to many who labor under the pressure of indigence, they can only be opened by the efforts of benevolence.

To this object the attention of the Benevolent Society of St. Helena has been chiefly, though not exclusively, directed. The exertions of the Society have been principally devoted to the Instruction of Youth; but the distress of individuals has also occasionally met with a compassionate and liberal relief.

There are many evils that attend human life which may be removed or alleviated by following the instantaneous feelings which misery seldom fails to excite; but it requires something more than a transitory impulse to implant and nourish the principles of knowledge and morality. A combination of talents and of minds, a course of uninterrupted order, and a long train of laborious exertion must be applied, before we can hope to produce any lasting, or great change, in the state of Society.—Those who engage in the task of improving the condition and circumstances of the people, must look beyond the present state of things: they must look forward into futurity; but they cannot be satisfied without retrospection.—A

gradual and regular advance is their object; but they cannot ascertain their progress without looking backwards. They cannot trust to single and unconnected efforts, commonly the momentary effects of sympathy and compassion. They must employ and exercise their minds in forming a system which must unite many things in order and succession. Finally, they must watch over the execution of the plan with unwearied diligence. It has been by the combination of all these means, by a warm ardour and a devoted zeal, that the Managers of the Benevolent Society of St. Helena have been so eminently successful in attaining the important objects of this Institution. It is evident that it was only by the establishment of a Society, by the union of many for one general purpose, that this combination and its train of consequences, could have been obtained. Without this Institution, the object of general instruction could not have been enforced and rendered fully successful. It is usual for Societies of this nature, to owe their origin to benevolent and philanthropic Individuals; but they can only

be permanently supported by the tone and spirit of an enlightened public. It was in fact to the sensibility and extensive moral views of an eminent individual, unto whom the Community of this Island owes many obligations, that the Benevolent Society of St. Helena rose into existence. It is with sincere pleasure that I look back to this origin, and contemplate a plan which is calculated to confer so many benefits on a numerous body of the Inhabitants, as emanating from the wisdom of my respected and inestimable friend, Colonel Wilks. The Plan was suggested by his active and comprehensive mind, as the best probably that could be devised, for improving the circumstances and condition of the whole people. His good sense and experience did not seek to attempt a reform by sudden and violent measures. This must not be immediately expected: a change to be permanent, he well knew, must be gradual.

Colonel Wilks's plan of benevolence was happily seconded by the liberality and humanity of his Colleagues,

by the succeeding Members of Government, and by the general charity of the Inhabitants of this Island. It would be unnecessary for me, Gentlemen, to point out more particularly the good effects which have flowed from this voluntary Association: they are daily brought under your observation. The decrease of crimes would prove that the morals of the people have improved, and that all the hopes of the distinguished founder of the Society, are in a fair way of being realized.

There are some local considerations with respect to St. Helena, which render the operations of this Society of peculiar interest and importance. It is only by an increase of knowledge among the lower classes, that a due effect can be given to the liberal policy of the Honorable Company, and of the Inhabitants of St. Helena, who have proposed the freedom of their Slaves. The situation of this Island with respect to slavery, and the approaching emancipation of that class, connects their instruction with the well-being of this

Community. The fetters of slavery, in its mildest form seem to involve the utmost extent of human calamity; but this is made more dreadful by the fetters of ignorance, and the restraints of the want of Education.—

But no Society of this kind, Gentlemen, however well conceived at first, and prosperous in its origin, can proceed with regularity and steadiness, unless it is supported by the favorable disposition of individuals;—above all, by the inclination of Parents and Masters—As the fathers and guardians of the infants who are born under their roof, it is one of their most solemn and imperious duties to send their children to one of the numerous Schools which are open on this Island for their reception. Their own interests and those of the community, would be equally promoted by bestowing Education on the Children unto whom they owe the obligation of natural protectors. I implore the whole body of the inhabitants of the Island to attend to this circumstance, and to use all the influence they possess to induce those who are already out of the

bonds of Slavery, to render their Children more fit for the blessings of freedom, by increasing their knowledge. It is impossible that the calls for service and labor, can be so extremely urgent as not to admit of a few hours attendance at a School, which is but a short distance from their homes: this sacrifice of time, as the founder of your Society, has justly observed, "would be repaid with interest in the additional value of the future labors of the Slave." Sunday is particularly recommended as a day on which these Children, without any sacrifice at all of service, may be sent to the Schools for instruction. By attending on Sunday, the profanation of the Sabbath would be prevented, and it would repress idleness and mischievous activity, the real parents of vice.

I would wish particularly to impress on the minds of the free Blacks the advantages of Education to their Children. It is the only means by which they can maintain that rank in the community which is conferred by freedom,

and by which they can expect to enjoy the privileges of their new condition in society. The institution of the Benevolent Society is of more importance to this part of the population of our Island, than to any other. I hope that I shall not address myself to them in vain. Many of the free blacks are Men not only of respectable characters, but they are in possession of considerable property : it is incumbent on them to confirm these benefits by the education and instruction of their Children.

Some men have, by a kind of moral obliquity, questioned the utility and propriety of Education to those classes of society, whose lives must be devoted to manual labor. They would adopt a proverb which is disgraceful to Religion and humanity—"that ignorance is the mother of devotion." This doctrine has been rather the result of the credulity and obstinacy of political party, than of reflection. It has been confuted by the experience of all ages. It is ignorance, and not ign-

struction that is dangerous to the peace and happiness of society. It is not necessary that the youth who may be trained in the seminaries of this Institution, should be entangled in mazy systems, which often confound truth and falsehood. Their instruction will be confined to subjects which they may be able to comprehend, and which may be useful to them in a walk of life suited to their condition. "All the knowledge that they can want is within their attainment, and most of the arguments which they can hear are within their capacity."

The voice, in short, of experience declares that knowledge is necessary for a judicious exercise of power, and a virtuous agency in the affairs of life. Education, to a certain extent, is necessary for enabling the lower orders to perform with intelligence their handicrafts, and to execute the labor by which they must gain their bread. It maintains amongst them self-respect, and a regard for character. It is the support of Religion, and

the best check that can be imposed on the mass of our population. Morality, and virtue and the restraints of life, generally bear some proportion to the degree of knowledge spread through the lower classes of society.-- If it is a fact, and as Col. Wilks has observed, it has never been controverted, that of the thousands who have been educated in the Seminaries of Bell and Lancaster, not one had held up his hand in a Court of Justice, we have a triumphant demonstration in favor of Education.

It would, however, be an unjust estimate of the state of human nature to expect that the efforts of this Society will be able to eradicate vice and misery. But we are warranted by reason and experience to conclude, that there are no means so likely to diminish these inflictions as Education. Instruction and Education are the means which enable us to judge between truth and error, good and evil. The Children of the Schools of this Society are taught the pure and moral doctrines of the Bible;

they are taught to love Religion as founded upon a reverence of God, and the expectation of future rewards and punishments. For the business of life, they are taught English, Reading, Writing, and the rules and principles of Arithmetic. They are instructed in truth, and all that is necessary for their condition.

I have enlarged on this subject, because I am satisfied, that on the instruction, and the manner of training up Children, depends all their future usefulness and happiness. It is only according to their degree of information, that men, in the inferior walks of life, are to be depended upon as loyal subjects; that they are faithful and good servants; and that they have any chance, by successful labor, to acquire wealth; and may expect to fill the station of Masters.

These are the great objects which are held out to the pupils of this Institution. It is by Education alone

that they can rationally hope to raise themselves above their present condition, and qualify themselves for a higher rank in Society. This object should be continually before the eyes of the pupils; and as it is within the reach of every person of a common capacity, possessed of a small portion of industry, it should excite them all to pursue their studies with unremitting diligence.

The stability of this Society must evidently depend on the Funds provided for its support. These have hitherto been principally supplied by the liberality of the Inhabitants; and I am sure they are still disposed to bear cheerfully this self-imposed burden. A small Capital, by the benefactions of individuals, has been created, which it would be very desirable to increase. The Institution is unavoidably exposed to many expenses. Those who enjoy a moderate share of affluence may, and do meritoriously devote a portion of their

time gratuitously to these charitable duties; but there is an operative and active agency which must be paid.— A variety of direct and subsidiary expenses must be defrayed; and some considerable advances are occasionally made for the relief of persons under peculiar distress. But the regularity of the Accounts, which the intelligent and zealous Committees have annually laid before the Society, must convince every person, that the expenses of the Establishment have been managed with frugality and integrity.

A Fund of this nature can neither be created nor supported without frequent calls upon the generosity and benevolence of the public. In the present case, the contributors have an opportunity of seeing and judging of the purposes to which their bounty is applied. The Annual Statements of their Secretary and Treasurer must satisfy them that their Subscriptions are devoted for the improvement of the objects for which the Society

has been established. Regularity in the Accounts, and economy in the disbursements, appear to have been equally attended to. While the Funds have been administered with a laudable discretion and parsimony, "there has been," in the words of the last well-written Report, "no lack of liberality on the part of the Society, nor any want of compassion towards the unfortunate and distressed." A spirit of charity and humanity has been the constant guide of the Managers.

There is one source of supply which I think might be considerably extended. The Funds of the Society have been occasionally benefited by the Donations of strangers; but not to the amount which I should have expected from the situation of St. Helena, as the entrepôt between India and Europe. Many of the passengers are indebted to the hospitality of the Inhabitants; but independantly of this circumstance, we may appeal with confidence to the liberality of our Countrymen, who

are, generally speaking, returning with warm hearts and in good circumstances to their native Country. By the care and attention of the Rev. Mr. Boys, of Mr. Eyre, and Mr. S. Solomon, the aid of passing visitors has been occasionally raised. This assistance might probably be increased, by opening regular Subscription Books; and by taking care that they are placed in situations where they must be seen. Means should be adopted to solicit the assistance of every passenger and visitor, by presenting to them a formal and methodical application. I think that a direct appeal would not be made in vain, and that few would withhold their Mite.

The Benevolent Society, Gentlemen, may be considered as firmly established. But as an over-security has proved fatal to many Institutions of this kind, it is still necessary that the Members should continue to combine and unite their exertions for its support: that they should not abate in their zeal, nor relax in their efforts.

The authority of Scripture corresponds with experience : in order to teach the duties of life to the rising offspring of this Community, there must be perseverance : “ line upon line, and precept upon precept.”

Hitherto the affairs of the Society have been conducted under the happiest auspices. They have been judiciously confided to a Committee who have been intelligent, active, and zealous Superintendents. They have provided patient and good Teachers. The two respectable Clergymen of the Island, have shared in the scholastic labors : they have guided the instruction and discipline of the Scholars. To the talents of the Committee we owe the valuable Annual Reports, which have laid the business of the Society so fairly and distinctly before the public. I must congratulate the Society on these advantages : they have been the consequences of a wise and prudent management, which has given permanency to the efforts of the Benevolent Society of St. Helena.

I regret that my residence on this Island has been too short to enable me to enter into many details which might be useful; but I can confidently predict, that an increase of knowledge, will promote the happiness and respectability of the Inhabitants of this Island. To attain and to secure this object, they may always rely on my cordial support.

The immediate object however of this Meeting is, for the improvement of those classes of Society, who would find it impossible to obtain the advantages of Education without assistance. I would again therefore impress on the minds of those who have a control over Children, whether of slaves, or of free blacks, to make use of their influence, that they may be sent to one of the Schools which are now open for their instruction in different parts of the Island. It is by this means alone that they can be made useful members of the Community; as it is only by an early instruction that they can make a proper use

of the faculties of reason, and be fitted for the boon of freedom.

There is also another effect of knowledge amongst the lower classes, which I would beg to mention: it has always a tendency to mount upwards, and to excite a desire in their superiors to extend their intellectual acquirements. I am convinced, therefore, that the Benevolent Society is calculated to spread knowledge and improvement, beyond the limits of its original establishment.

I fear that I have exhausted the patience of this respectable Meeting. I have only to add, that I am compelled by duty and inclination, to express a wish to enroll myself amongst its Members.

After closing the preceding Address, the Honorable the Governor proposed the following Vote of thanks, which was received with universal approbation.

"The Gentlemen who have discharged with so much
 zeal and ability the arduous superintendence of the Af-
 fairs of the Society, are entitled to its approbation and
 thanks. They have been influenced by higher motives
 than praise; but it nevertheless behoves the Members to
 perform the agreeable duty of expressing a due sense of
 the benefits conferred by those who have devoted their
 time and attention to the service of the Community.—
 They have distinguished themselves in the career of Be-
 nevolence: it is to their unremitting zeal and labor that
 we owe the triumph of this Institution. I propose there-
 fore, that the cordial thanks of this Meeting, be given to
 Mr. Brooke, Mr. Greentree, the President, the Vice-
 President, and the Members of the Committee of Manage-
 ment for the Year 1822."

THE FOLLOWING ARE NEW SUBSCRIBERS,
PER ANNUM.

	£	s	d
The Honorable Brigdr. General Alexander Walker	20	,	,
A. A. Seale, Esq.	1	10	,
T. B. Knipe, Mr.	2	2	,
G. Melliss, Lieut.	1	10	,
M. Johnson, Mr.	1	10	,
Mr. Mulhall	1	,	,
Rev. D. Welsh	2	,	,
J. Andrews, Esq.	2	2	,
G. Mead, Lieut.	1	16	,
H. Kay, Mr.	1	1	,