

THE NEGRO: HIS POSITION AND POSSIBILITIES
AND SUGGESTIONS ON PROBABLE SOLUTION OF QUESTION.

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OUTLINE.

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His Position.

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Not to his dark African home do we wish to call your full attention, to wild and desperate deeds, or carry you thru the probable history of his origin and render you incapable of sustaining a wise thought for him; but we wish you to be able to think clearly and soberly of him who has come among us to sup at our board, and answer with feeble voice of fear and mingled joy, when the age calls him brother. We wish you to see as plainly as possible from our present day observations of tendencies, the whole aspect of possibilities for this unfortunate.

Even the school-boy of ten, knows his history in its novel pictures, and drops a tear of pity only to be dried as age creeps over him, and by outside influences, gives to it a growth of distrust with only the rudiments of pity left; while the negro with his black coat absorbs the delicate rays of sunshine, and gives its energy in the bubbling spring of joy so deep and sparkling that only God himself can realize its depths. Could you look at him as you do at yourself, and realize in him the passions, dreads and desires as in you, could you bring back your childhood, and speak plainly to your conscience, since you have it trained to response, you could see and respect his feelings and desires.

At one time all men seemed to be possessed with predominant selfish motives, and with a dread, almost hate, for what is below them; and at another, under the stimuli of moral teaching and mingled religion, soar away in song and prayer for the redemption and betterment of the poor in cities, or the negro in his supposed illiteracy, subject to the harshness of Southern tyranny; while beneath their own roof creeps the rat that gnaws continually to destroy their happiness and they see it not. Tho their touch would stop it, they choke it not. All the negro sees plainly, and notes that what in the white man's

life are called faults, in his, are relics of barbarism. Noting these facts, we will soon see that the great question is not one sided. Don't condemn a person for his views. The Southern men may see the negro better from one side than we, and we may be able to see more clearly some other parts from our experience of his development. Don't consider his comforts for woes, for what will make one man happy will wrench the life from another.

The men who are advancing civilizations, new thots, high ambitions and noble aspirations in God and for man, are at work to prove, each his part or disprove the seeming untrue, that man who comes may walk with less stumbling, and reach farther into the bright, growing and enlarging nature, and establish the needed facts against better antagonism of this low degree of life's manifestations, that man may become more free to cope with the now existing mysteries.

In order that we may, to some extent, understand this great problem, we must look the subsidiary questions squarely in the face, and hold constantly in mind that our views are most apt to be biased and prejudiced to him, since they are to a great degree hereditary and made by mother-teaching. We must know and keep in mind that the Anglo-Saxon race was not the clear, sharp-witted, beautiful, well rounded, symmetrical and charming creature that we picture to-day. Then think coolly and calmly, as moves the world. Take by the hand those below, as the boy leads his brother around by great thorn brush to play in the flower garden beyond.

Since the negro became a subject of freedom, he has been the topic of much worry and anxiety by friend and seeming foe ~~was~~ each in his capacity of conscience development for the negro's welfare. Before his present state of advancement, he was one of a great question, now he is the partner in a greater problem. As he is an important

study for the white man, so also is the whiteman a great topic for the negro. Are we to understand him, or say understand each other?

Since he began to think for himself in freedom he has advanced to questions of higher importance. Firstly, dealing with questions of political importance with as logical reasoning as many of our statesmen, reaching out until to-day many are taking mankind and all nature into account, and reaching beyond this simple life as science reveals the truths to his already doubting, developing mind. He has mankind's welfare at heart, as have all nations in a certain degree, however remote from civilization, but his opportunities have exceeded all other nations of recent development.

It is not to be supposed that the negro has an equal chance with the white man with his previous centuries of freedom; but he has come into possession of the new truths and light of this century at a most important time, the beginning of a period of peace.

Slavery was shifted from the negro to the white man, and the innocent and simple stood between the great enlightened factors as the tender shoot beneath the shadow of the giant oak, and released from his burden, he began pouring out his whole life to see what there is in nobility of blessed service, and take seriously all that appeals to him. Yet in his life he holds his joyful spirit to tune with all nature.

In the search for his different abilities, we find him holding high and honorable places of toil in every profession. He is said to be able to understand but few things at a time, and unfit for general work. In bondage he could not take on the general, his mind was not receptive. It was not necessary that he should do so. His position did not demand it of him. He was driven for the most part in single occupation; but where he was given a chance, many began to think for themselves, and were able to take on as much as the average white man.

We can mention but few positions in which has not distinguished himself in capability and with honor to his and our races. Is it fair to measure the whole race by their less fortunate, and point with pride to our distinguished ancestors, and ignore the fact that from his race are springing men whose talent is unquestioned. He is not the same lazy creature that we have found him in slavery. When his thots are kept free, and on nobler ambitions, he is not the shiftless, worthless negro. If encouraged, he will take hold and let go when the burden drops upon him, just as white men do, and is again revived to the work by encouragement.

From the white man's ways, the negro saw that the ease taken by his master was preferable to the drudgery of his life, not that he was naturally lazy and indolent and used too harsh words and immoral conduct, but it was an acquired characteristic. For all this, the white man is responsible. For all his good work our race has been the moving influence upon his richly perceptive nature, tintured with divinity. His gradual change was an evolution, caused by environments. His tendencies are now inborn. Not only did he envy the white man his ease and comfort, but also his education, in which he could see a life of pleasure and refinement, and more rational knowledge of his creation and creator. In vain we attempt to show a ray of light for him in his grand and joyful being as we see it full of one perfect and impregnable virtue, sweet and tender almost to tears. And again we see the joy shrouded in mystery that nature holds dear; yet we drink to intoxication of his musical soul, but cannot paint him. In our search for his fundamental characteristics we fail to find in him the greedy man, and are asked by nature to think that he may be the leader in the period which is to succeed this financial age in its grand, and

glorious truth-searching efforts for his as well as our advancement.

In this age of evolutionary belief, it seems that the negro is subject to the same laws. That the mind varies to a greater degree than the physical parts, is shown in him as it is with the white man. Some negroes have taken almost our ideas of perfection in some parts of nature in her arts. The young negro ladies have become natural nurses. The close and exclusive application of their female ancestors to this work has caused it. The petty theft so common among the negroes seems to be an acquired characteristic. As it is also being overcome by those able and willing to sacrifice their desires for their betterment, we count his idle days, those of idleness and ours, those of that. Are not his days of idleness as essential to his development, so far as we know, as is our days of worry and anxiety are for our development, and the satisfaction of our nature?

The negro realizes his present ability, present conditions and possibilities. He can read his past history. He also feels his present inability as a race, which is necessary to his becoming a power to guide his people. He now sees that he has a time in which to develop that no other race can boast of having. The way for him seems dark as yet, to many; but his development under present conditions, as the times indicate, is certain, and to as high a degree as the forest under similarly light antagonism. He realizes that holding his race in subjection is not depriving him of personal liberties, since society holds the right to give liberty its bounds, with the ability to know and do for their betterment. This is recognized by the thinking negroes of both North and South, and with his grand emotional and imaginative mind, he sings of peace to intoxication, and exhausts himself in the triumph of his hypnotic spell of joy or gladness as does the barbarian in his spell of cruelty and immortality.

In arms he has shown an aptitude and bravery which causes our ~~our~~ brother nations to hide in shame. In the closing years of our civil war's truth seeking battles, his blood stained the innocent flower of the mountain, and mingled with the crystal waters pure and sweet, and painted the sand of the plain, not for honor, for he knew it not; not for justice for he knew it not. Can we say it was the invisible coordination of secret love and wisdom that caused him to throw his life on Grant's black drift as snow flakes when the battling elements have ~~xxxx~~ released their grasp? Did not the same motive which stimulated our white boys at San Juan also stimulate our black boys in their desperate charge which only victory can stop, and only peace, love and respect for lower humanity could satisfy?

Standing, as he does with one foot in our threshold, can we refuse him admission? Are we to withhold from him our line of truth, one smallest part of a degree of the development of our great cycle? Are we to stubbornly resist, in the face of facts, all claims of rights due him? Must a people of such mental capacity as our American white men, backed by thousands of years of inherited virtue, talent and wisdom, developed thru centuries of seed sowing and harvest, at the same time knowing the difficulties thru which they passed, and with reasonable expectation of what is to be faced. Ask, "What is to be done with the negro?" When two hundred and fifty years of slavery and thirty years of freedom have produced negroes with as fine education as our land can boast. It is true he cannot take up all lines of work, and especially is this true in mathematics. But should this count against him, when the same is true of some of our best statesmen, and even the executive head?

As he stands the product of the same evolutionary process over which the countless millions have mourned, and upon the same on which

the thousands now rejoice, and nature smiles to see the changes, we recognize him as having the same qualities of manliness, subject to the same laws of nature, habits, wants and necessities. The same food stimulates the body, the same force bows his head in reverence or turns his eye to the supposed above. The same martial note causes his heart to pulsate with patriotic rhythm. The same insults, tho feeble expressed turns green the blood of hate, and in like manner benedictions run red the blood of joy. His beautiful nature captivates mankind. His beautiful voice captivates the truly great. You may trample him under foot, and like the puppyish hound he as a nation bursts forth in melodies rich in forgivings and blessings, when the slightest benediction is bestowed. He is not revengeful. He is not cruel. He is simple and rude. He has been subject to dictation, ~~as~~ so to-day - is destined to be until the prongs of antagonism of the one and the lovable nature of the other have been grafted into emulating growth towards the next fruiting stage of civilization's history.

How can he be expected to be civilized, highly educated and honest, and yet be satisfied with the rule of men of doubtful character. They are fast coming to see that the whole people mean well, but the political issues and the poorer classes are against them.

A nation able to boast of the power, influence and wealth that the United States does, even assuming a place in the front rank of civilization. Shall not ask what shall be done with the negro. She should be abreast of the times, and map out as clearly as possible by her bright and unprejudiced thinkers and truth lovers free from predominantly religious or political views, the best road the times will afford for the negro to travel. This should be done in conjunction with the best negro thinkers. This is being done, almost unconsciously; but slowly the work is moving ~~on~~ forward, in spite of our age of

financial greatness, with its accompanying greeds and debasing lusts.

To make him what we should, take him in as a partner to solve the great question of which he is an heir. Do this as he shows himself worthy, then encourage him to strive for higher dignity. A few will be lost by conceit but the people will move slowly onward and upward in the best truths. They will not reform, but will add knowledge and approach to wisdom. As we know and see the beautiful, we are made to see his progress and his power to apply his knowledge. The application of his knowledge is the seasoning of his feast. We must recognize his power to progress as a factor well marked in him, with ability to cope with the questions at issue. Men with true manliness and without selfish motives, could come together on an easy and definite plan, not by hard fast rules, but with earnest painstaking and sturdy coalescence of highest and noblest ambition for the oneness of mankind aspirations and truest regards for utterness of truth in the solution of nature's law which all mankind must know; no nation can exist to-day in the highest sense, without the element of advancement - Education and its accompanying coordinates Truth, Freedom and Justice,

How the question is to be solved, has long been apparent; namely, by education. But the real question is of what material will we cast the foundation.

The three great moving principles of to-day, in their order of importance, must do the work and give place according to their developing power, education, religion and politics. While the first, with its subdivisions will speak in power of all flowing authority, and like the elements of the so-called physical, may destroy in the twinkling of an eye or bring nature's force to be seen. While religion will have its soothing effects in the safe feeling of retribution; and the third

will be the great ark where the course and fine variegated products assert their authority for both good and evil, with the evolutionary tendency for the better.

Consider him as you may, do so in your finest conception of life's manifestations, as a part to make our great cycle complete, for nature pure and true, with beauty and love in her abode where her character is painted to vividness. You can not see as we do; but your plane of that will be fit to some part of ours on which we can pass freely to the coordinating relations without fear. We can show only the undeveloped fragments of life in the various aspects in which the negro is an agent. We cannot think of him in comparison, without a noble life standard. The ruling force in each is the same on the various planes. There is a oneness thruout grand and splendid. Quoting from all wise men, the common phrase: "We dare not fear, for fear banishes love; and love like all indefinable species of life manifestations moves, and cause us to express the true Life - Nature - God."