

DISCUSSION of the NEGRO PROBLEM

and

Some of the Difficulties of its Solution.

by

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How often in recent years do our morning papers reveal such headings as; "Nègro Fiend Lynched," "Body Filled with Bullets," "Crowd Fights for Pieces of his Clothes". Such an announcement should lead every humane, patriotic, American to do all in his power to fathom, and if possible to help to put a stop both to the fiendish crimes of these brutish wretches and to the inhuman methods so often resorted to for their punishment, methods which not only violate every principle of justice and humanity, but bring disgrace upon our glorious nation. But in searching for the cause of lynching we soon become aware of other phases of the same problem, which if not so sensational are just as serious.

This, like most other sociologic problems, can be best approached by studying the causes which gave rise to it. Broadly speaking the problem seems to be in a large measure due to the fact that two races of wholly different desires, temperaments and requirements are forced to live together on terms of equality under the same environments and the same government. It is possible that Lincoln foresaw the present conditions when he said "I am not, nor ever have been on favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races. I am not, nor ever have been in favor of making voters and jurors of Negroes nor qualifying them to hold office, nor to inter-marry with white people. I say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality." History is fast revealing the fact that this great emancipator of the colored race foresaw the present condition of affairs, for while law has made the Negro in every sense theoretically equal to the white man, the decrees of man cannot undo the workings of the process of evolution or counteract the laws of nature.

Bah! Bah!

Constitutional amendments proclaim^{ed} the Negro to be on the par with the white man, but did not give him the ability to maintain this claim. How could it be expected that the product of many years of irresponsible parasitic bondage, perhaps only a century removed from the African jungle would step directly from slavery to success^{fully} meet on equal terms in the great "struggle for existence," and to solve the same problem as the tried, energetic, lordly Anglo-Saxon? Nearly every factor in his environments operated toward making the Negro different and while under the present conditions any points of superiority he may have avail him little, his points of inferiority work directly against him. If this is true today it was even more noticeable when the thrusting of these childlike bondsmen without restraint out into the man's world changed the slavery problem into a Negro problem.

Once instituted there were many agencies at hand to aggravate the problem. First followed in the wake of the Union Army that class of people who are ever ready to benefit themselves by the misfortunes of others, and who by unscrupulous deceptions easily used the newly freed and enfranchised Negroes as tools with which^{to} enrich themselves from the wreckage of the Confederacy and from its gallant though mistaken defenders. Nothing could be more natural than when the former slaves were thus used to complete the ruin of their old masters, extreme hatred should be added to the contempt in which the Southerners held those who had formerly been their chattels. But the "carpet baggers'" work did not stop here. Partly as a means of accomplishing their end and partly from pure malice they instilled into the Negroes' minds an intense hatred for their neighbors, the Southern Whites. But even here they did not stop, for not only did these self-elected instructors of the Negro fail to teach him the necessity of work but in some cases even told him that were he to follow their instructions he need never work

any more. The evil effects of the formation of indolent habits by the Negro cannot be estimated. On one hand it left the South almost entirely without laborers and finally led to the decay and breaking up of the old plantations. On the other hand it brought the Negro face to face with starvation, so he was led into crime both because of the necessity of securing in some other way, the bread he would not work for, and through the natural outgrowth of crime and immorality from indolence. So in a few words there seems to be good reason for believing that the race problem is the outgrowth of the natural unfitnes of the races to live side by side and share common privileges and burdens that the enmity between the two races was greatly aggravated by persons who, even if their intentions were good, poorly understood the situation, and that Negro criminality was due in large measure to wrong impressions of life acquired, and indolent habits learned in the early days of freedom.

Before going further in this discussion it is very desirable to come to an understanding as to just what this much talked about but poorly understood problem is. This, however, is no simple matter for instead of a simple problem, we find ourselves confronted with a very complex one. To the Negro sympathizers, the problem is one of race prejudice and unjust discrimination against him on the part of the Whites/who do what they can to prevent his elevation, try to keep him in servitude and ignorance, refuse to pay him living wages for his hard labor, and cheat, lynch and murder him. On the other hand, the problem as it appeals to the Whites, particularly those of the South is one of dangerous competition to the intelligent white laborer, Negro ignorance, arrogance, uncleanness, shiftlessness, immorality increasing criminality, political corruption and continual and awful menace

to the virtue and lives of the Southern women.

Generally speaking we believe that the Negro problem as viewed from the standpoint of the entire American people is— how to deal with the American Negro in order that he may be made to do the greatest good or the least harm to himself, to the white man, to the world in general and the U. S. in particular, and at the same time to treat both Negro and White as justly and generously as possible under the circumstances.

It is impossible to understand the conditions without a brief characterization of the typical Negro. Since he has for many years been the subject of much discussion we would suspect that he has been greatly slandered on one hand and greatly lauded on the other, and we may rest assured that he is neither the saint nor the devil he has been represented. As a class I think we are safe in saying that in his normal state there is no more care-free, good-natured, happy-go-lucky creature on earth; he is a jolly neighbor and a loyal citizen and army records show him to be a good soldier. He is usually an apt scholar and an able artisan, yet, while in nearly every instance the educated white man shows a marked tendency to rise in life, the Negro, educated in just the same way shows as marked a tendency to revert back to the primitive life of his little two-roomed hut. He does this just as naturally as the duck reared by a hen takes to water at the first opportunity. Moreover, while he is not slow to grasp the fundamental idea of a new subject presented to him— even more so than his teacher— he is incapable of the steady application and plodding perseverance characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon. He is easily discouraged and his mind is apt to wander from one subject to another. While his imitative faculties and power of perception are keen, his logical and reasoning faculties are rudimentary. As a class he seems as ignorant of politics and civil government as when he

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was first enfranchised, and when left to govern himself invariably reverts back into savagery, glowing examples of this being Hayti and Liberia. How often our "good" Negro is not over industrious, while the Negro as a class is positively lazy, particularly in regard to close mental application. He has neither the aggressive nor the executive ability that would enable him to cope successfully with his white competitors nor the ambition that would lead him to make his presence felt in the world. His simple wants make him, like the Chinaman, a dangerous competitor to the white laborer whose higher tastes cause him to require more wages. But when aroused his nature is entirely changed and he becomes the most lawless desperate and brutish of criminals. In recent years his criminality and immorality are on the increase, due to some extent, at least, to his growing tendency to gather in towns where he idles out a worthless^{existence} amid poverty and lust, often getting what he must have to support life by thievery, and bringing up a generation whose only training has been that of unrestrained crime.

Having now made out acquaintance with the causes of the problem and its principal factor, let us briefly consider some of the aspects of the problem itself. So long as the Negro occupies the same delicate position as now, he will be a continual source of disturbance and danger, therefore some change is highly desirable. In this change his rights and interest should as far as possible be considered, for we not only owe to him the consideration due to a[ll] of God's creatures, but he has an additional claim upon us in that the present condition of affairs is due to our fore-fathers' bringing him here against his will. Furthermore he has been in this, his adopted home, nearly as long as the white man and has bought a claim on our flag with his blood spilled in its defence.

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But, be this as it may, when it comes to a case of absolute necessity there is another law, terrible as it may seem, which is incorporated into the very workings of nature and is the final guide when all others fail—the law of the Survival of the Fittest. This law, cruel and relentless heeds no call of justice or humanity but decides in favor of the one best fitted to live in the world^{and} as cruelly destroys the other. Our very existence in the world is due, not to right, but to might, by which we destroy every creature that would have interfered with our life and welfare. This was the principle used in dealing with the Indian, and though we blush to think of it we believe that few will disagree with us in that it was best for the American continent to be reclaimed from savagery. And if all other means fail, we believe that just as stringent means will and should be used to make our continent and our people to do the utmost for the world in the future. We sincerely hope that it will never again be necessary to apply this principle in its broadest sense, yet in the conflicting interest of the two races we fear that no solution can be reached that does not interfere with^{the rights of} one or both of the races.

The question of race prejudice enters deeply into the problem. We see evidences of it on every side. With good reason Judge Tourgee a few years ago declared that the white men in this country who favor absolute justice, complete civil rights and fairness in all things for the Negro do not reach ten thousand. In our democratic nation few questions are asked about any white man who has succeeded in winning himself a place among men and he is given entrance to all social as well as business and industrial circles, but he who has one drop of Negro blood in his veins is not only ostracised from society but is greatly handicapped if not barred from meeting a white man as an equal in the commercial and industrial pursuits. The most

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ardent advocate of Negro rights would about as readily agree to his daughter or sister marrying a gorilla as a Negro, No matter how cultured this Negro might be. Why does this prejudice exist? Does the American, usually just, tolerant, and fair-minded discriminate in this manner against a race for no other reason than an ungrounded prejudice? No, it exists because his black skin and kinky hair mark a difference between the Negro and white man just as truly as the hairy skin of the Gorilla sets him apart from the human race. We object to close association with him because we instinctively feel that there is a difference between us— for the same reason that horses and cattle do not herd together. This race prejudice is noticeable among the blacks as well as whites. In view of these considerations there seems to be ground for believing that this prejudice is due to some instinctive feeling of difference between the races, and is something hard, if not impossible to overcome.

From the political standpoint the problem is serious not only because of the questions involved but also because of the enmity which results from them. Few things alienate races or even classes of the same race more quickly than for them to be arrayed against each other politically as is the case of the Negro and Whites of the South. This enmity has the counter effect of leading to even greater political evils, for when we consider the unfair advantages used by politicians when only opinion and interest is at stake, we need not be surprised at the frauds which frequently occur in the elections where the opposing parties are often as anxious to do the other party harm as themselves good. This has caused the "race war" in politics to eclipse all other considerations and the "solid south" has been the result. We do not realize at first what a calamity it is for

all the voters of a state or group of states to vote solid for one party, for this gives them no opportunity to divide on any question that might otherwise come up for legislation.

Things have now come to such traits in the South that they make no pretensions of giving the Negro the right to vote or to have representation in making the laws. This is brought more strikingly before us by the following quotation from a southern writer; " The Legislature [of North Carolina] has recently passed a law that will forever disfranchise the mass of blacks, and remove them as completely from the political field as if they were so many slaves.....It is only a question of time now when the mass of the southern Negroes will have no voice whatever in any election either local or national." Great condition of affairs for a people that maintains that taxation without representation is tyranny? But on the other hand is it fair that the southerner who has spent much money and time in educating himself how to vote intelligently to have his vote counteracted by a person who knows absolutely nothing about the workings of our government who can be readily managed by unprincipled politicians, and who considers his vote to be something that he has a perfect right to sell to the highest bidder? This is just the condition which is so common in the South and is becoming more and more frequent in the North as the Negro population increases. Truly the condition is lamentable, for in return for the much harm that the Negro may do and frequently is doing with his ballot it is a hollow sham as far as doing him any good is concerned. When he succeeds in casting a vote and getting it counted he must work for candidates in whom he has little interest further than that they oppose the candidates he wishes to see defeated. Under the existing conditions the power of the ballot is little if any use to the Negro in defending his rights, while the harm

sometimes done through the exercise of his franchise is unquestionable. This leads us to believe that there may be some grounds for the criticism of the hasty acts of Legislators who neither understood the Negro nor the condition of affairs in the South. Perhaps W. A. Council, a Negro writer, was not far from right when he said, "When the old grey-haired veterans who followed Gen. Lee's tattered banners to Appomatox shall have passed away, the best friend of the Negro will have gone, 'now there arose up another King over Egypt which knew not Joseph!' " Looking at it from the southern standpoint we cannot help but agreeing with them in their protest against being governed by a race of people who have in every instance proven themselves incapable of successful self-government.

One of the most serious phases of the problem is the increasing criminality among the Negroes and the outrageous means sometimes employed in the punishment of their crimes. A few facts as revealed by statistics will give us a better idea of the conditions. Contrary to our expectations we do not find the greatest crime among the most ignorant Negroes, but crime has increased side by side with education. Perhaps there is no relation between the two but the parallel follows so closely as to excite surprise at least. The number of Negro criminals in the North is much larger in proportion to the Negro population than those of the South. It is also true that he is more criminal in those states of the South where he is better educated. Taken as a whole, the element which is educated is more criminal than the element which is illiterate. Between 1870-80 the Negroes of the United States became twenty five per cent more criminal; from 1880-90, thirty three per cent more criminal. Though constituting less than twelve per cent of the population of the United States they furnish thirty per cent of all the crime. This increasing crime may be due to the fact that the Negro is in

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a state of transition, but when we consider that the most crime is in the North where many of the Negroes have been free longer and where they have had the best opportunities to acquire the characteristics suitable for their new condition we may wonder where this state of transition will take them. It is more probable that it is due to the fact that when weaker races are brought into contact with stronger ones they tend to imitate most what is bad and profit little by what is good. They are brought into contact with all the allurements, temptations, dangers, and terrible strain of civilization before they have acquired the strength to enable them to safeguard against these evils. According to the present trend of things it is hard to even conjecture what will be the results of even a few more decades of contact with the Whites.

The punishment inflicted upon Negro criminals is often but little less criminal than the criminals themselves. The absolute lack of all justice and equality which is so evident in the trials of Negroes in some parts of the South together with the inhuman Lease System which, ever since the War has been used in the punishment of criminals in many southern states, can be compared to nothing of our time but the despotism of Russia and her convict "Chain Gangs" of Siberia and is an awful stain upon our supposedly free, equal, Christian land.

Far better known is the revolting practise of lynching whose savagery is so well known as to need no further explanation. We have nothing but the most hearty condemnation for this atrocious practice yet think it no more than just that we consider the conditions that give rise to it. The "bad" Negro is the most inhuman of all criminals and once started he knows no restraining and is capable of anything. Those who live

in northern states do not realize what it is to have the honor and lives of their sisters, wives and daughters, continually in danger. In some places in the south the danger is so great that no woman dares to go beyond ear shot even in day time. The increase of the terrible crime against womanhood seems to foreshadow a condition that would make the old times when the woods were filled with lurking Indians enviable. Even though there is no justification there is at least a cause which leads our otherwise law-abiding citizens to wreak such terrible revenge.

Such are some of the evils of the race problem but it is much easier to discover evils than remedies. Up to date we think that no solution has been offered that appeals to any considerable number of people as being both satisfactory and practicable. Some of the solutions offered for the whole or various phases of the problem are, education, religion, race amalgamation, disfranchisement and transportation, each of which we will mention in turn.

The results effected from higher education, especially along industrial lines seem in many ways encouraging. The Negro's ability to comprehend and do himself credit in all departments of learning is no longer any question. In thirty-five years he has reduced his illiteracy forty-five per cent. There are now 40,000 Negroes in higher institutions, 30,000 teachers, 20,000 learning trades, 200 doctors and 250 lawyers; there are 300 books written by negroes and four banks owned by them. It is true that his crime has increased with his knowledge but we are convinced that this is not true of those who have taken a college course but of those who have learned enough to take them away from their own simple ideas without receiving others. In his case surely a little learning is a dangerous thing.

But even if he is an apt scholar is it reasonable for us to expect that higher education will in itself solve the problem? It might reduce the criminality of a select few but it is very doubtful whether it will ever reach the lazy, immoral class that furnishes the criminals. Furthermore, " you cannot change the color of his skin, the kink of his hair, the bulge of his lips, the spread of his nose or the beat of his heart with a spelling book." The educated Negro is a Negro still and the same prejudice is felt against him. Education unfits him for his old place, yet up to date has failed to tear down the barriers which keep him from other walks. What white person would employ a Negro lawyer or doctor? Even his own race frequently fail to support the black man who has educated himself for a profession, but will patronize white men, and poor ones at that, rather than to trust their interest to skilled men of their own race. Therefore the educated Negro too often finds little call for his ability and so has little encouragement to fit himself to be more useful in the world. Before education will solve or even relieve the problem, some factor must be brought in to remove race prejudice.

On the other hand, the education of the Negro seems in some respects to have a marked tendency to aggravate the problem. The educated Negro is coming to demand just recognition, and objects to being thrust aside by the more ignorant and uncultured whites, yet these ignorant whites are none the less arrogant in thrusting him aside and asserting their own superiority. To quote again from W. A. Councill; " The educated Negro will feel that there is no disgrace attached to his physical features or his previous condition; hence he will more and more love his race and will grow into a kind of pardonable clamishness or racial pride which is the

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mainspring of racial achievement. "A blind man can foresee the result."

Of all races the Negro most readily accepts religion yet there seems to be little hope that religion will solve the problem. While there are many faithful, pious Negroes, still as is usually the case with all races, christianity fails to reach the criminal classes and so fails to have any marked effect in the mitigation of crime.

Neither does the christianity of the whites show any marked tendency to lessen his race prejudice, for man has a way of fitting his religious principles to his prejudices, his interests and his politics that frequently makes him inconsistent in his actions. It is true that christianity and moral sentiments ^{have} done much to solve the question of slavery but at present there is no indication of any similar movement that would solve the Negro problem.

So much for these solutions but what of race amalgamation, is it possible and is it desirable?

History does not record a single instance in which races so dissimilar have fused nor does there seem to be the least tendency of fusion of the African and Anglo-Saxon. On the contrary there seems to be every indication that they will not fuse. There seems to be a difference of characteristics that makes individuals of the two races wholly uncongenial to each other and this, together with the growing aversion between the two races, makes intermarriage practically unknown. As the relations between the two races are much less intimate than they were in old slavery days, the number of mulattoes coming from illegitimate intercourse is rapidly decreasing. The mulattoes now in existence are as effectually barred from intermarriage with Whites as ^{with} full blood blacks and so, soon revert back to the

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the Negro race and Negro characteristics. So there seems to be no indication that ~~race~~ amalgamation is possible.

But even if race amalgamation was possible there is still a question as to whether it would be advisable. Whites and blacks have a race pride and as a class are ^{both} adverse to having their race become extinct. Who of the whites wants the heroic blood of the old Norsemen, the blood that gave life and energy to the sturdy Puritan, the strenuous Scotch Covenanter and the gallant Cavalier, the blood that has made its vigor felt in every corner of the world to be deteriorated by the sluggish blood of the tropics? No, if our blood was forfeited by our ancestors who kidnapped the black man and brought him to our land, let us yield ~~up~~ upon the battle field where so much of it has already been spilled to keep the world from ignorance and anarchy rather than to allow Columbia's fame, like that of Greece and Rome, to be lost amid the viciousness and depravity of a mixed and degenerate people.

Political silence might extend the time before the crisis, but it does not seem possible that disfranchisement would by any means solve the problem. If the Negro would submit to such a blow to his race pride and rights it might remove some of the present causes of friction between the races but would not materially affect the main problem nor afford more than temporary relief. It does not seem possible that the measure of the relief would justify the means were the ~~ballot~~ ballot to be taken away from them as a race, but we are convinced that it would be both right and expedient to take the ballot from such persons of all races as are unable and unworthy to use it properly.

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The plan of transporting the Negroes back to Africa or to some other suitable place has been suggested by some prominent persons of both races and after due consideration does not seem wholly impracticable. In that case the Negro could have a government of his own where he would have full measurement of his rights and where he would not be handicapped by race prejudice. Then the white man could no longer complain about the Negro being in the road. One of the difficulties in the way of the execution of such a plan is the absolute impossibility of doing justice to the Negroes most of whom own property which could neither be transported nor replaced in any other place. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine the extent of the hardship that would be worked upon him by such a radical change. Yet it would only be taking him back to his own environments and would be little greater than our forefathers experienced after the Revolution, or the South after the War and the freeing of the slaves. Of course we would still be under obligations to guide and protect him in both domestic and foreign relations.

There is some question as to whether the Negroes could and would maintain themselves as a nation by themselves or would retrograde as they have in Hayti and Liberia. On the other hand should we have the progress of our own people handicapped indefinitely by having in our very midst a people naturally incapable of self government, and although the transportation and reestablishment of twelve million people would be an enormous undertaking, yet when we consider that since the War the Negro has already cost the South alone \$120,000,000 for education, that he has already cost us one great and terrible war, that he might not only undermine the very foundation of our nation but cost us other wars, such a measure in the end might

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be the least of many evils. Even though his rights would have to be sacrificed, such things are sometimes necessary when great principles are at stake, as when the slave holders were forced to give up so many million dollars worth of property when the slaves were liberated. But it seems that the people as a whole must look at the problem in a far different light from what they do now before such a solution will be attempted.

Now having considered the problem in some of its relations to the American people, we may well ask ourselves where it will all end? In the study of the problem we have been fully convinced of one thing— that the present conditions cannot continue indefinitely. " In a Democracy you cannot build a nation inside of a nation of two antagonistic races and therefore the future American must be either Anglo-Saxon or Mulatto." In one of Lincoln's famous debates he said, " 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free." Is there not good reason for substituting the words " Negro " and " White " for "slave" and "free" and giving this as status of affairs in America today? The American ^{people} must either solve their race problem or the United States will before many centuries be in great danger of going down in ruin like the once proud, glorious Roman empire because they failed to solve it.

The future of the problem is largely conjecture but we may be sure of one thing—that if man fails to solve the problem for himself, nature will in time solve it for him as she has solved every ^{other} race problem, though this solution may not be very satisfactory to him. Nature still works out the destinies of nations and races as surely as her laws rule in the plant and animal creation. May she not finally use the same old

"struggle for existence," which in the present instance may take the form of "the battle over the loaf".² Some one has advocated that when the Negro gets a mortgage on a white man's farm the problem will be settled. Probably it will, and that by mortal combat over that farm.

Or may not nature use another method in the solution of this problem, the same that she used in dealing with the Indian and Tasmanian and is now using with the Hawaiians and several other primitive people—that of race extinction.² The suggestion seems at the first thought to be absurd in view of the rapid increase of Negro population. But according to Darwin and other authorities the manifestations of racial degeneracy are lessened fertility and prevalence of venereal and other diseases caused by immorality and resulting in large infant mortality, manifestations which seem strongly enforced within the colored race. The mortality among the Negroes is even now twice as great ~~as~~ among the whites, and there is a marked ^ftriflingness among the younger Negroes who are as a class undoubtedly weaker and lazier ~~than~~ their fathers who owed their temperate habits ^{as} well as much of their industry and muscle to the overseer's whip. These weaknesses are doubtless due to the inauguration of new characteristics born of unrestrained lust due to the tendency mentioned above of weaker races taking on the weaknesses of the stronger races with which they come in contact. The Negro has been like a child freed in a confectionery store who crams himself with sweets, not knowing or at least not heeding the consequences that are sure to follow. If immorality and unrestrained lust continues to increase for a few centuries as it has in the past four decades we can easily imagine a condition ^{as} so degenerate ^{to} make race extinction a possibility at least. This brings us face to face with another question which we will

^{not}
discuss, that is, what will be the effect on our people and upon our nation if a place were to go to decay within our borders?

Again we ask, " where will it all end?" Surely this is the most important of the questions before the American people today for it involves the very warp and woof of our nation-- the American citizen. The statesman who plans and carries out a desirable solution to this problem will not only have made his name immortal but will have rendered a lasting service to the world. But let us not despair; let us trust to the people who have successfully met every obstacle which has confronted them for the past thousand years, who have made their presence felt in every corner of the world and who have benefitted ^{nearly} every people with which they have come in contact. But the time seems to be drawing near when this great people must solve one of the most serious problems that ever confronted it. When that time comes it may with the greatest truth be said, "Two thousand years look down upon the struggle and two thousand years of future bow to catch the message of life or death."