

The President's Message and the Afro-American.

BY BISHOP ALEXANDER WALTERS.

I have read with a great deal of interest and profit the admirable message of President Theodore Roosevelt, but was sadly disappointed when I discovered that he had ignored the subjects of lynching and disfranchisement of the Negroes in the South. The good President seems to have ransacked earth and heaven to find something to write about, and has been profuse in his recommendations to Congress; indeed he has asked that body to act upon everything from the cedars of the far West to the Census Bureau of the East with anarchy, reciprocity, Isthmian Canal, trusts, emigration, increase of the navy and a number of other minor matters thrown in, but not a word concerning the paramount issue of the day: "The amicable adjustment of the relations between the whites and blacks in the South."

That part of the President's message which relates to anarchy and his recommendation to Congress to pass stringent laws to eradicate it, is especially pleasing, but I am sorry that the President did not go a little further and at least mention such vital questions as disfranchisement and mob violence, for anarchy and mob violence are twin sisters—in the same category. It is foolish to think of making a law that will protect the life of the President or other high officials while lawlessness is allowed to stalk abroad unimpeded. There can be no security at the top when there is rottenness at the bottom. The way to make the life of the President safe is to banish lawlessness from the land. In this great republic the life of the humblest citizen should be as sacred as the most exalted. I reiterate that the only way to make the President's life secure is to make the life of every citizen secure.

It seems to me that our president's of late have in their messages studiously ignored the "Brother in Black." When President McKinley in 1896 failed to speak out against lynching, the Negro press and the leaders of the race sent up a long and loud protest against his sin of omission, but what was a crime in President McKinley does not appear to be an offense in President Roosevelt. If it was wrong in President McKinley to ignore the question of lynching in his message then it is equally wrong in President Roosevelt to do so.

Perhaps the dinner to our good friend Prof. Washington was intended as a substitute for this omission; if such is the case the President has made a grave mistake. The intelligent Negroes of this country, while thanking him for the honor bestowed upon their chief leader, will not be satisfied with his silence on the most important question before the country. Of the dinner they will say: "This ye ought to have done!" and of his failure to speak against lynching and disfranchisement of Negroes because of their color they will say: This ye ought not to have done. A few insignificant positions given to members of the colored race will not compensate for ignoring the rights of 10,000,000 people.

The late President McKinley seemed to be dominated by southern influence; now that the South was thorough-

ly opposed to the President commenting adversely on their acts of mob violence and disfranchisement, out of deference to their wishes in his second message to Congress he remained silent on those subjects, and they took his silence to be a tacit acquiescence in their acts of disfranchisement, etc. Hence this emboldened the South to proceed more unblushingly in its acts of curtailment of the rights of the black man with the exception of the Hayes administration.

Our civil and political losses were greater during the administration of President McKinley than at any period

ple. We ought to stop shouting until something tangible is done for us. We are contending for our constitutional rights and ought not to be pacified until we secure them.

SOUTHERN POLICY.

The policy of supplanting colored office holders in the South with white ones on account of color prejudice is as unwise as it is unjust. Wherever colored citizens are tax payers and men of character and ability, they ought to be allowed to hold office in common with their white brethren. This policy should not only obtain in the South, but should also be followed in the North. This would be fair play, and that alone can make peace.

OPPOSED TO REDUCTION OF SOUTHERN REPRESENTATION.

To reduce southern representation in Congress on account of the disfranchisement of Negroes is to legalize the laws of disfranchisement which have been passed by some of the southern



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since our emancipation. In this particular we hope that President Roosevelt will not follow in the steps of his predecessor, but I am frank to confess that the outlook is not at all encouraging. Let us hope that he is "God's Man" and has come to the throne for such a time as this.

SHOULD BE TOO SOON.

When we heard that Mr. Washington by invitation of President Roosevelt had dined with him at the White House, a host of us threw our hats in the air and hurrahed ourselves hoarse over the President's magnanimous action. We did not stop to think that possibly it was the act of a wily politician who felt he was safe in inviting a colored gentleman to his table who was the supposed "idol" of the white people of the South. It was not thought that any offense would be given to them by such an action; their disapproval of the affair was a surprise to us all. As a rule we are too easily satisfied; a smile and a few kind words on the part of those high in authority seem to satisfy the majority of our peo-

states; such an action instead of helping the Negro would be an injury to him. What is needed is not reduction of representation, but refusal to seat any and all southern representatives who have been elected under the new state constitutions which are in conflict with the Federal Constitution. This will cause them to repeal the laws and enact such as will affect both white and black alike. To such laws we have no objection.

NEGROES SHOULD UNITE.

It is time for us to lay aside our bickerings and petty jealousies and unite for self protection. How long will the leaders sit supinely by and see state after state pass laws of disfranchisement, and their brethren burned at the stake, and all manner of injustices perpetrated against them? Has all the courage died out of the race? What has become of the manhood of the Negro of which we used to hear so much? Has it fled? It is high time that the leaders should meet and confer together as to the best policy to be pursued in this crisis. Let us up and enter a long and loud protest against these discriminatory laws until we are heard and a change for the better is effected.

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