

THE NEW AGE

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SATURDAY, JULY 12, 1902.

The campaign will soon be on. This is the year to put aside personalities, feuds and differences, and by a united effort to establish a high race prestige in politics.

We are living in an age of commercialism, an era of materialism, and a man is respected and esteemed according to his integrity and the amount of business which he can command.

The cordial and enthusiastic support which our position upon the consolidation and concentration of the colored vote of the state, both in the individual districts and the state collectively is receiving from the testimonials and letters which we are receiving at our office is indeed gratifying. That the negro's progress as a factor in the industrial, mechanical, commercial and business life of our nation has been and is wonderfully increasing is an axiom, but as a political factor the means within his power are sadly neglected. Let every negro citizen of Montana take a renewed pride in the heritage of his citizenship and the value of his ballot, and by placing himself in touch with the concentrated movement in the state can make the use of his ballot a powerful instrument to himself and his race.

We publish in this issue an article from the Atlantic Monthly, entitled, "The Negro—Another View." The writer pictures and portrays the actual existence of southern life in all of its heinous dealings with the colored citizens. We stand aghast to see such ideas in print from the pen of one who actually lives in the heart of the South; and for the plan and suggestions which he has portrayed for the solution of the race problem, we can offer no amendments. It is an actual fact that the Negro is regarded in the estimation of the majority of the southern whites as a beast and is not even given the consideration at the hands of lynching mobs as that of a beast. Again he states that the Negro is inferior as a race to that of the boasted Anglo-Saxon. This we do not endorse, as God created all men equal, and should the privileges be given the colored man as he suggests, and let the Negro make his own destiny, it will readily be shown that he is not inferior to any race. The Negro does not seek to enter the social circles of his white brother. We gently ask that we not be discriminated against just because our skin is dark; and do not consider our best citizens because they are colored as being no better than the lowest criminals which no race is free from. Do not condemn the race for the crimes of a few.

THE NEGRO: ANOTHER VIEW.

So much has appeared in the public prints touching the various phases of the negro problem in the South that it is perhaps presumptuous to attempt any further contribution to the literature on that subject. Previous discussion, however, seems open two serious criticisms—it has been largely sectional; and, by consequence, it has been for the most part partisan.

Northern writers, with practically no knowledge or experience of actual conditions, have theorized to meet a condition that they did not understand. Since emancipation, the negro has been regarded as the rightful protegee of the section that wrought his freedom; and his cause has been championed with a bitter and indiscriminating zeal as earnest as it is misguided. Southern writers, on the contrary, remembering the negro as the slave, consider him and his rights from a position of proud and contemptible superiority, and would deal with him on the anti-bellum basis of his servile state.

The North, with many things in the Southern treatment of the negro justly open to impeachment, by a general indictment at once weakens its own case and fortifies the evils it seeks to overthrow. The South, in answer to what is unjust in the charge of the North, recalls former days, persuades herself of the righteousness of her cause, and continually recommits herself to an antiquated and unsound policy.

Such partisan and sectional discussion cannot fail to be alike bitter and unfruitful. While it may, indeed, have been natural at the close of the Civil War that the hostile sections should align themselves on opposite sides, and carry on by the pen, and with a

more virulent because impotent animosity, the discussion that had been fought out with the sword, yet now, surely, the time for such recrimination is past. If we are, indeed, one people, United States is more than name only, the problems, perplexities, and interests of every section appertain in no slight or trivial measure to the country as a whole. It is true that each section and state and county and township has its own problems—but the particular problems of the part are the general problems of the whole; and the nation, as a nation, is interested in the administration and concerns of the most insignificant members of the body politic.

It would be trite and old-fashioned apply to ourselves the old fable of the body and its members; but we surely lie open to its application in our treatment of the negro question. The South has regarded as a local and not a national matter; has refused to receive any light upon it from outside sources; and has met any suggestions or offers of outside help with a surly invitation to "mind your own business." The North, on the other hand, considering the question in its wider bearing, has approached it from the side of performed theories, rather than of actual facts; in a spirit of fearful or indignant sentimentality, rather than of calm, unbiased reason; and has therefore proposed remedies that must, in the very nature of things, be at once undesirable and impossible. As is usual in such cases, the truth lies between the two extremes.

The negro question is a national one, as much so as the question of tariff, of immigration, of subsidies or any such issue that is universally recognized as touching the interests of the whole people. It is but right, therefore, that the solution of the question should command the attention and enlist the interests of the people, regardless of section or party or ante-bellum attitude; and the South has no right to take offense at any well-meant and kindly effort to relieve the situation.

But, at the same time, the fact must be recognized that the negro question is not different from all other questions, does not occupy a place apart, unique, and cannot be dealt with in any other way than the common, rational method applicable to the commonest social and political problem. Ignorance of the facts cannot take the place of knowledge here any more than elsewhere. Sentiment cannot safely here or elsewhere usurp the place of reason. Blindness, prejudice, uncharitableness, vilification, have the same value here as elsewhere, and are as likely to lead to a fair and satisfactory problem as any other—just as likely and no more. We must, as a whole people, candidly and honestly recognize a certain set of underlying facts, which may or may not differ from our theories, cross our sympathies, or contravene our wishes. Then we shall be in a position to deal with the question.

Now, the fundamental facts to be recognized in the case are these:—

(1.) The negro belongs to an inferior race. And this not by reason of any previous condition or servitude of brutal repression on the part of his former master, whether in the days of slavery or since; not on account of his color or his past or present poverty, ignorance and degradation. These, to be sure, must be reckoned with; but they do not touch the fundamental proposition.

The negro is lower in the scale of development than the white man. His inferiority is radical and inherent, a physiological and racial inequality that may, indeed, be modified by environment, but cannot be erased without the indefinite continuance of favorable surroundings and the lapse of indefinite time. But what the negro race may become in the remote future by process of development and selection is not a matter for present consideration. The fact remains that now the negro race is an inferior race.

There can hardly be any need to defend this proposition in these days of the boasted universal supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon. Occasionally we hear hysterical utterances by negroes or by well-meaning, but misguided friends of the race to the effect that the negro is the equal of any white man anywhere. But in general such ill-advised cant is being laid aside and the inferiority of the race is coming to be recognized.

This is a hopeful sign. And the general recognition of the proper place of the freedman will go far toward adjusting conflicting theories and removing lingering sectional misunderstandings and bitterness. It will do away at once with all those schemes that used to find favor in the North, and are still at times most unwisely advocated for the establishment of social equality and the amalgamation of the races.

Probably no scheme advanced for the solution of the problem has given more lasting offense to the people of the South or done more to embitter sectional feeling than this of amalgamation. It has been received in the

same spirit, and has engendered the same feelings, as a proposition to bring about equality and a union between some cultured New England belle and the public scavenger of her city, with all the filth and foulness of his calling on his person and in his blood. The very words are sickening. And the idea, so coarse and repugnant to every finer feeling, could have originated only in the brain of the wildest theorist, ignorant of conditions, and hurried by his negroophile propensities and desire to do justice to the black man into entire forgetfulness of the rights and feelings of the Southern white man.

There seems to be no essential condition of casualty between the previous bondage and suffering of the negro and the assumption by him or for him, on emancipation, of any equality with his former master other than the grand and fundamental equality of man to man before God and the national law. Emancipation could not eradicate the essential inferiority of the negro. No such conditions existed as in other states of slavery—in Greece or Rome, for example, where the slave was often of kindred blood, and even higher born, better educated, and of finer tastes and feelings than his master. Emancipation there might naturally be followed by an approximate equality between the ex-slave and his former master. But the negro when enslaved was a negro; and the emancipated negro was a negro still. Freedom had not made him a new creature. He was, indeed, better than when he entered slavery; but his emancipation had not changed, and could not change, the fundamental features, the natural inferiority of the race.

(2.) But the negro has inalienable rights.

When the North had erred in approaching the negro question with the assertion of the equality of the races, and seeking to solve it on that unsound postulate, the South has, much more gravely, erred in precisely the opposite direction. For our section has carried the idea of the negro's inferiority almost, if not quite, to the point of dehumanizing him. This is an unpalatable truth; but that it is the truth, few intelligent and candid white men, even of the South, would care to deny. Blatant demagogues, political slysters, courting favor with the mob; news sheets, flattering the prejudices, and pandering to the passions of their constituency; ignorant youths and loud-voiced men who receive their information at second hand, and either do not or cannot see, these, and their followers, assert with frothing vehemence that the negro is fairly and kindly treated in the South, that the Southern white man is the negro's friend, and gives him even more than his just desert.

But, if we care to investigate, evidences of our brutal estimate of the black man are not far to seek. The hardest to define is perhaps the most impressive—the general tacit attitude and feeling of the average Southern community toward the negro. He is either nothing more than the beast that perishes, unnoticed and uncared for so long as he goes quietly about his menial toil (as a young man recently said to the writer, "The farmer regards his nigger in the same light as his mule," but this puts the matter far too favorable for the negro); or, if he happens to offend, he is punished as a beast with a cud or a kick, and with tortures that even the beast is spared; or, if he is thought of at all in a general way, it is with the most absolute loathing and contempt. He is either unnoticed or despised. As for his feelings, he hasn't any. How few—alas how few—words of gentleness and courtesy ever come to the black man's ears! But harsh and imperious words, coarseness and cursing, how they come upon him, whether with excuse or in the frenzy of unjust and unreasoning passion! And his rights of person, property, and sanctity of home—who ever heard of the "rights" of a "nigger"? This is the general sentiment, in the air, intangible, but strongly felt; and it is, in a large measure, this sentiment that creates and perpetuates the negro problem.

If the negro could be made to feel that his fundamental rights and privileges are recognized and respected equally with those of the white man, that he is not discriminated against both publicly and privately simply and solely because of his color, that he is regarded and dealt with as a responsible, if humble, member of society, the most perplexing features of his problem would be at once simplified, and would shortly, in normal course, disappear. But the negro cannot entertain such feelings until certain such feelings while the evidence of their groundlessness and folly is constantly thrust upon him. We do not speak of the utterly worthless and depraved. There are many such; but we whose skins are white need to remember that our color, too, has its numbers of the ignorant, lecherous, and wholly bad. But take a good negro—well educated, courteous, God-

fearing. There are many such; and they are, in everything save color, superior to many white men. But what is their life? As they walk our streets, they lift their hats in passing the aged of the prominent, whether man or woman; yet no man so returns their salutation. They would go away—a the depot they may not enter the room of the whites, and on the train they must occupy their own separate and second-class cars. Reaching their destination, they may not eat at the restaurant of the whites, or rest at the white hotel. If they make purchases shop ladies and messenger gentlemen look down upon the man manifest contempt, and treat them with open brusqueness and contumely. And if, on a Sabbath, they would worship in a white man's church, they are bidden to call upon God, the maker of the black man as well as of the white, and invoke the Christ, who died for black and white alike, from a place apart. And so, from the cradle to the grave, the negro is made, in Southern phrase, "to know and keep his place."

In the case we are considering, these distinctions are not based on this negro's ignorance, or his viciousness, on his offensiveness of person or manner; for he is educated, good, cleanly and courteous. They are based solely on the fact that he is a negro. They do not operate in the case of a white man. But the black man, because of his blackness, is put in the lowest place in public esteem and treatment.

Lynching, again, is but a more inflamed and conspicuous expression of this same general sentiment. An investigation of the statistics of this practice in the United States will bring to light several interesting and startling facts.

1. In the last decade of the last century of Christian grace and civilization, more men met their death by violence at the hands of lynchers than were executed by due process of law. And this holds true, with possibly one exception, for each year in the decade. The total number thus hurried untried and unshriven into eternity during these ten unholy years approximated seventeen hundred souls.

2. The lynching habit is largely sectional. Seventy to eighty per cent of all these lynchings occur in the Southern states.

3. The lynchings are largely racial. About three-quarters of those thus done to death are negroes.

4. The lynching penalty does not attend any single particular crime, which, by its particular nature and heinousness, seems to demand such violent and lawless punishment. But murder, rape, arson, barn-burning, theft—or suspicion of any of these—may and do furnish the ground for mob violence.

These facts, especially the second, third and fourth items, are bitterly controverted in the section which they most concern. But they are as demonstrable as any other facts, and demand the assent of every candid mind. The world is familiar with the usual Southern defense of lynching. Passing by the number, place and race of the victims, the defense centers on the fourth statement above made; and our public men and our writers have long insisted that this terrible and lawless vengeance is visited upon the defilers of our homes, who should be as ruthlessly destroyed as they have destroyed our domestic purity and peace. This is the regular plea put forth in defense of this brutal practice, warmly maintained by hot-blooded and misinformed people in private and in public prints. No less a person than a former Judge Advocate General of Virginia, in a recent issue of the North American Review, reiterates these thread-bare statements.

He says: "It is unnecessary to shock the sensibilities of the public by calling attention to the repulsive details of those crimes for which lynching in some form has been the almost invariable penalty. They have always been, however, of a nature so brutal that no pen can describe and no imagination picture them." Lynchings in the South are mainly caused by the peculiar nature of the crimes for which lynching is a penalty; and, more explicitly, "The crime itself, however, is more responsible for mob violence than all other causes combined." "No right thinking man or woman, white or black, ought to have, or can have, any sympathy for such criminals as those who suffer death for the crime described, nor can they believe that any punishment, however cruel or severe, is undeserved." This is a fair type of the usual plea of the Southern advocate. For such a statement as the last quoted to be possible is sufficient evidence of the general sentiment of the section.

But, now, if it were strictly the fact that violent rape is the cause of most of our lynchings; if it were true, moreover, that the man were suddenly and violently slain by the husband, lover, father, brother, of the dishonored one, in quick temper of wrath and agony unspeakable—while we must still condemn, we might, in sympathy

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