

THE NEGRO PROBLEM IN TWO CONTINENTS

CLARENCE H. POE IN PROGRESSIVE FARMER.

People are always more interesting than things, and the best feature of travel is not seeing scenery, but folks. And life on shipboard affords one excellent opportunity for forming interesting friendships.

One of the countries I have always been interested in is South Africa. With regard to the South's greatest problem—the race question—conditions there more nearly parallel Southern conditions than anywhere else on earth. Nowhere else save there are great populations of white and blacks living side by side as with us. Sometime I hope I can run down there in the lower edge of the dark continent and investigate conditions at first hand.

Since the realization of such a plan seems a long time off, however, I have been especially interested, during our steamer trip, in talking with a distinguished citizen of United South Africa, Hon. Maurice S. Evans, C. M. G., recently a member of the Parliament of Natal, who is just returning from a tour through our own Southern States, made for the purpose of comparing conditions in his own country and ours. I do not believe I can better use my space this week than by writing, therefore, not of Europe but of Africa, not of agricultural conditions but of the race problem—simply setting down some of the more notable observations made by Mr. Evans in the course of the interviews I have had with him.

First of all I had probably better record some points of contrast between United South Africa and the South. To begin with, there is a contrast in that the negroes, in a great majority in the South, are in a great majority in South Africa. In Mr. Evans' own Province, Natal, he tells me the blacks outnumber the whites ten to one. There are, in fact, more Hindus—emigrants from India—than white people; but the British government in India has now forbidden the emigration of Hindus to South Africa—the cause being the ill feeling resulting from the British South African colonies' refusal to give the Hindus political rights and other privileges. Another contrast appears in that South African negroes are not treated as citizens, as ours are, but still maintain their tribal organizations, each tribe being ruled by its chief, as in the days of savagery, subject, of course, to the general laws enforced by the British government. While without the educational opportunities our colored people enjoy, Mr. Evans says that in natural capacity the South African blacks are fully equal to ours.

United South Africa is composed of four separate provinces or states united as one country a few years ago, and there is no common race policy for the entire nation. In forming the Union it was seen that to attempt to get together on one platform with regard to the negro would have defeated the formation of a confederacy—just as would probably have been the case had our American States in 1789 attempted to agree on a national policy with regard to slavery. In the Transvaal, where Dutch influence predominates, and where opposition to British influence led to the Boer War not many years ago, the "Grondwet," or fundamental constitution decreed that there shall forever be no equality between white and black in church or state. In the Orange Free State the same conditions obtain. In Natal a black man, by passing certain educational and civilization tests may come out from tribal rule and win the minor privileges of citizenship; and on permission of the governor, may be granted the suffrage. But that this opportunity is more nominal than real is indicated by the fact that out of one million natives, only two have received the suffrage in this way. In Cape Colony, the last of the four South African provinces, the constitution makes no formal distinction between white and black; but while for fifty years blacks, by learning to read and write, could have acquired the suffrage, they have taken so little interest in citizenship that the voting population now numbers only 9,000 in a total population of over one million.

Here then is the first great difference between United South Africa and the United States of America. In the United States we have national restrictions on race policy; in South Africa, none. In the United States all legislation must apply to whites and black alike; in South Africa, regulations vary for each race. Sometimes the differences are slight; in other cases they are very marked. In the Transvaal, for example, Mr. Evans told me, as I have had others tell me before, it is the law in many towns that no negro shall walk on the sidewalks; instead he must travel with the horses and cattle in the streets. Nowhere are the negroes allowed to buy or carry firearms, and in Natal they are not allowed to carry their native weapons. An excellent law is that which prohibits the sale of li-

quor to the natives; they can get only their light, native home-made beer. The tax levied on the blacks in Natal is not a property tax, but a "hut tax"—a tax of fourteen shillings (\$3.25) levied on each hut, or home; and as each home is supposed to shelter one wife, the polygamous element pay in proportion to the number of wives they have annexed.

Of course, too, in view of the fact that the whites are full-fledged citizens, while the blacks, under their tribal organizations correspond somewhat to the Indians on our American reservations, the educational advantages are by no means equal. For the whites, ample schools are provided, but all the government can do for the blacks is to grant subsidies for the missionary schools that are working among them.

I may pause just here to observe that about the most notable lessons I learned on my trip around the world was just this—that our southern negro, so far from being the oppressed, abused and mistreated child of destiny he is so often represented as being, is, in fact, the best-off colored man on the face of the earth. Even in slavery he had better food, clothing and care than he had formerly received in Africa, and today as the inheritor of a part in the most advanced civilization, and the most liberal and rewarding industrial order on earth—a civilization and a social order built up by long ages of suffering and effort by the white man himself—he has a fairer chance for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" than any other non-white race on the globe. The Chinaman has made contributions to civilization of the most important kind; he had a literature before our white ancestors had emerged from barbarism, and he has a history covering thousands of years of culture, achievement and orderly government. Yet the Chinaman's country is ever menaced by famine, and the average Chinaman gets only ten or fifteen cents a day for his bitter labors, whereas the negro in the South—without a history, a literature, a civilization of his own, or any distinctive contribution to the white man's civilization—gets five to twenty times as much as the Chinaman and has five to twenty times as good a chance for an education and for the advantages of modern civilization. Nor is the contrast between white man and yellow merely an economic one. The negro in the South holds a more independent position, is treated with more respect as a man than his brother day-laborer in China or India. In the East my servant called me "Master"; in the South my father, whose own father's ex-slaves called him "Master," was probably the last one of our line to receive the designation. In the South, moreover, the white man is at home, while the negroes constitute a foreign element, as it were; yet nowhere in the South have I ever seen negroes kicked about by white men as I have seen Chinamen in their own home-land kicked around, like dogs, by white foreigners, angered at some stupidity such as employers of negro servants in the South would put up with as a matter of course. No wonder Mr. Evans, speaking to a northern fellow passenger, a day or two ago, declared that the negro in America has a better chance than the working class in any other country—a conclusion which I believe Booker Washington himself reached after a tour in which he investigated the living conditions of European labor.

All this, of course, seems to be getting away from South Africa, but this letter is intended to be of a mere gossip sort, and this observation is suggested by what has just been said about the difference in legislation for whites and blacks in Mr. Evans' home country.

What interested me even more in my conversation with him, however, than his discussion of conditions in South Africa, was his impressions of our own southern country based on observations made in his recent tour through Dixie-land. He is convinced that in the South, as in South Africa, only the separation of the whites and blacks can save us from infinite trouble. This belief has been held, of course, by many earnest students in our own section, but too frequently the zeal with which they have supported their propaganda has blinded them to the almost insurmountable difficulties that stand in the way of its realization. Mr. Evans, however, does not deceive himself. "I realize, of course," he said to me, "that no far-reaching plan for the immediate separation of the races is practicable. Nevertheless, if the people of both races once realize and consciously accept the doctrine as wise and imperatively necessary to peace and safety, it can be worked out silently, gradually and steadily, the black sections becoming blacker and the white sections whiter through the voluntary migration and segregation of each class.

"One great obstacle in the way of separation in the South, however, is your considerable class of white men who erroneously believe that cheap, ignorant, negro labor is an asset of your section. These are the men who fancy they are making money by exploiting the negro—men who will sell cheap goods at exorbitant prices, furnish supplies at high rates of interest, or fancy that their plantations are more profitable to them because the tenantry lacks the independence and ambition of a white tenantry. As a matter of fact, these people themselves would be more prosperous if the country had a wholly intelligent, progressive and thrifty working class. But even if a few men here and there should suffer by the change, the great need of the southern rural country is homes rather than plantations. It should become a vastly more prosperous white democracy of thrifty home-owning, small farmers.

"The South has the conditions necessary, not only for growing stuff, but for growing people. It must not become a section whose farm products are increasing, but whose farm people are deteriorating. What is the use of growing grain if only to feed a people who are not worth keeping alive? You have indeed a country favored of Heaven. With its ample rainfall, its kindly climate which enables one to do outdoor labor all the year round, and yet is nowhere too enervating to prevent white men from working at anything, you have but to realize upon your opportunities to become a mighty people.

"I went to the South quite prepared to go away hopeless; instead I go away optimistic. I see no reason for pessimism. It is plain that your soil has been very badly treated, but it can be easily built up; and your negro problem, while oppressive, is hopeful in the light of the fact that the negroes constitute such a minority in your population, and your people seem to be steadily gaining wisdom in their management of the problem.

"In what I have said, however, about the importance of making a great empire of home-owning, small white farmers," Mr. Evans continued, "You must not assume for a minute that I believe in any policy of injustice toward the negro. I do not. On the contrary, the supreme message I should like to send the white people of the South is just this: You are white men and it is characteristic of white men not to be afraid and to be generous. You have no reason to fear the domination of the negroes and you owe it to yourselves to be generous to them. I would even encourage the negroes to own land—but I would have them acquire land in districts of their own instead of having the negro farms mixed in with the white farms—thereby further scattering or diluting your already too small white population and retarding the growth of that richer social life possible only in the thickly settled homogeneous white communities. In my opinion, the negroes themselves would be helped by flocking together in communities of their own, provided their native leaders are actively helped by the white people and trained under the influences of such institutions as Hampton and Tuskegee.

"Moreover, both races will be helped, in any event, by giving the negro a common school education. I was very much pleased to see how much the South was doing in this direction, and how gladly ignorance in any part of its population cannot fail to hold back a people or a state. An ignorant population helps nobody. Your white people need to wake up to the fact that so-called cheap labor, unintelligent labor, is never really cheap. I know this is true from observation in South Africa and I can see that the same thing holds good in the South. Some of our unthinking farmers in South Africa regard themselves as having done a big thing when they get together and try to keep down the price of labor to six pence (12 cents) a day, but such labor is not half so profitable as the intelligent, educated labor in New Zealand where a high grade of diversified farming has been developed through intelligence, and a good laborer at harvest time gets as much as ten shillings (\$2.50) a day. We import butter, cheese and other profit-producing farm products from our New Zealand brethren, and they make more money with their high-priced intelligent white labor than we do with our so-called cheap negro labor. The New Zealand farmer, when work grows pressing, gets a piece of labor-saving farm machinery which doesn't need to be fed when the rush work is over.

"Where cheap negro labor exists, the farmer simply gets another negro who must be fed all the year round. Wherever labor is high-priced, supervision is more exact; more labor-saving machinery is used, and more profitable lines of farming carried on. The New Zealand far-

mer, for example, works his own children (between school terms) or employs the high-priced labor I have mentioned and he will not waste their time on scrub animals or crude machinery. If you are paying eight shillings (\$2) a day or taking the time of your own flesh and blood in labor, you want the time spent, if in a dairy on high-grade Jersey cows—let on a scrub, if on a farm, you work with fine Percheron horses, not with little donkeys or lumbering oxen; and in any case you see that the tools or machinery used are such as will bring the maximum results, not the minimum from every stroke of labor."

It must be that everywhere that a superior and an inferior race come into contact, a portion of the stronger race gets caught between the upper and nether millstones.

"We have a class of whites in South Africa," Mr. Evans said, "as you seem to have in the South, who are not progressing, landless people who formerly subsisted by hunting and fishing or by freighting (hauling) and who in the present condition of things have grown idle and shiftless. In any other country they would be thrifty and hard working, but here they have gotten a fatally false idea about the dignity of labor. With us they refer to certain forms of work as 'Kaffir work'—just as they would probably call it 'nigger work' in your South. I do not despair, however, even of this class of people. The thing to do is to teach their children, educate them in schools where industrial efficiency is emphasized and which teach the dignity of all labor by teaching how to apply skill and knowledge to its performance."

Like our best southern leaders, Mr. Evans cherishes no illusion as to the negro. He would have the white man frankly recognize his own superiority and no less frankly recognize that his superior strength and intelligence imply an obligation of generosity and helpfulness toward the weaker race. "One is always sure to see one's own interests and we must be even more careful to safeguard the negro's rights than our own," he urges.

The supreme duty in the South, as in South Africa, in Mr. Evans' opinion, is that of preserving racial purity. "The two races must remain distinct. Whether one assumes, as we do, that there is a superior and an inferior race, or as some philanthropists do, only that there are different races, the importance of preserving the distinctive characteristics of each is equally important. With any mixture of radically distinct races there is, instead of a strengthening of the characteristics of either a confusion of blended characteristics and a consequent instability—which breaks up and puts an end to the whole process of evolution by which these characteristics have been developed." It is much as if the pointer should be crossed with a bulldog—the progeny having the good qualities of neither; or an Angus crossed with a Jersey, the progeny having neither as useful for beef purposes as the former or for dairy purposes as the latter.

It is largely because the menacing specter of amalgamation haunts the white man in South Africa as it has haunted us in the South that Mr. Evans insists upon the absolute necessity of a gradual voluntary separation of the races. Social lines that separate the whites and the blacks cannot be broken down without making a chaos of our whole civilization. Mr. Evans recognizes, as we should recognize, that the mulatto in whose veins beats the blood of the masterful white race is in a cruel and tragic position, but sin has ever inflicted its penalties on the guiltless as well as on the guilty, and it is better that the individual tainted with negro blood should suffer than that the fundamental interests of a whole race should be endangered. "Nevertheless," Mr. Evans concluded in a remark that can not be too strongly emphasized, "you need a more thoroughly awakened and more acutely sensitive conscience with regard to this, the vilest and ugliest phase of the whole terrible problem. The white men who are responsible for mingling white blood with black should be the objects of your severest ostracism. Your white women should treat such a man as though he were a negro. He is your danger—the most hideous danger to that racial purity of which they are the sacred guardians.

"These are the men whose lives constitute the greatest menace to the purity of our blood, and they should be treated as traitors to their color and to their country."

(On Board S. S. Caledonia, approaching Ireland.)

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Having been appointed and having qualified as Administrator *et al.* of Estate of E. M. Partin, deceased, of Wake county, this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 22d day of July, 1913, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This 23rd day of July, 1912.
W. W. WILLIAMS,
Administrator *et al.* of E. M. Partin, deceased.
W. B. SNOW, Attorney.
7-23-law-6WES.