

SERFS AND BEGGERS.

A Gloomy Picture Painted by an Iowa Observer of Events—Practical Education, Sensibly Applied, Our Only Escape From Existing and Impending Dangers—The Labor Question Analyzed on Somewhat Pessimistic Lines.

There are efforts being made along three distinct lines to benefit the Negro race:

1st, The religious work of different churches and missionary societies.

2nd, The educational work usually conducted in connection with religious training, and

3d, The training of the hand to useful work in the trades and arts, in manual training schools.

Or we might classify these efforts as 1st, the training of the heart; 2nd, the training of the head; 3rd, the hand.

The friends of these different movements agree that if we give our colored brothers the right kind of religious training and education and skill in useful industries, making them in every way equal to the whites, the whites must acknowledge these qualities, that they will come to respect them more, that persecutions will cease, and that they will be permitted to participate in the affairs of state, and enjoy the civil liberties to which they are justly entitled. They hold that with these privileges they will be enabled to compete against their white brethren in a business way, and will soon gather property about them, and become thrifty and independent.

This is a nice theory and looks logical; and when tried on a small scale can be proven logical. Because if they can benefit individuals, it would seem they would lift up the whole race if they could only make the movements far reaching enough to touch the whole race, for the race is composed of individuals. Now while I would not detract the least praise from that which justly belongs to those who are working in these different ways, I must say that I do not believe that any of these methods of work, nor all of them together, let them be carried on, on ever so grand a scale, can ever enable the masses of colored people to secure comfortable, pleasant homes of their own, nor to enjoy the political rights granted them by the constitution and laws of the United States.

These lines of work are doing much for individuals for which we should all be glad, but they do not benefit the race financially, nor politically. All commodities are regulated in price by the law of supply and demand. Labor is a commodity which the working man has for sale. If the demand is great, employers must bid against each other for it and it advances in price; but if the demand is light there are more men than jobs, and the laborers must bid against each other for the work, each offering to work for less than others, or less than formerly, and wages become less.

Now skilled labor is subject to the same law; and while it is comparatively scarce, it will command a fair price, and the colored man who is fortunate enough to become a skillful tradesman, while skilled workmen are few, will be benefited. But if the manual training schools should succeed in training a very great per cent of the people, the increased supply of skilled workmen, without an increased demand would run the wages down until skilled workmen would be no better off than unskilled laborers now.

The same is true of education. Those who are educated while others are not, have an advantage, but that does not

benefit the rest of the race. And if the time should ever come when all will be educated, it will not be of much benefit to any—except to the few who are still farther advanced than the others.

The white race has had every political advantage, has held all the offices, controlled all elections, has done all the voting—or at least controlled it—has owned all the property, and has monopolized all educational advantages of the country until within a comparatively few years. And what is our condition? Men in our cities, by the thousand and unable to get work on any honorable terms, compelled to beg or steal to prevent starvation, others crouching beneath the sidewalks or in unlocked stairways or in empty sheds to keep from freezing in the winter storms; women and children at home shivering in the cold, while husband and father is unable to find employment; people working in dark and poorly ventilated apartments, girls standing behind the counter without opportunity to sit down, so many hours per day, that it brings on female derangements, and their health permanently broken. And this is not all. Their wages are often so low that they must resort to other means to help pay their board and buy their clothes. While others must satisfy their employer's or foreman's lusts to retain their situation.

Year by year the working man's debts increase. Year by year his rents increase, and the price of land advances, making it more difficult for him to get a home of his own. It is estimated that a hundred years ago nine-tenths of the people owned their own homes, but now fully one half are renters, while over four million of the one-half who do own their homes are mortgaged. And it is a fearful fact that fabulous wealth on the one hand and extreme poverty on the other, have developed, while popular education has increased. This must not be understood, however, as an argument against education. Culture of mind and hand is good and may to a certain extent, lighten the persecution of the colored race. But when offered as a means of lifting up the poor of either race, financially, it is an absolute failure. I see no reason why it should be expected to do more for the colored man than it has for the whites. If the past furnishes us a means of judging the future we are in a few years to become a nation of cultured serfs and beggars, unless our education in the future should be such that it will lead us into wise co-operative effort along industrial lines.

If then, conditions grow worse when we have the very best educational advantages, we must supplant competition by co-operation and in that find relief. There seems to be nothing else for us to do. It may be operated on a national wide scale as a department of the government, in the future, and probably will be. But the thing for us to do now is to organize ourselves to manufacture and handle the things which we consume.

A friend said to me not long since, "Co-operation is nice in theory, but it won't work." It is now working in thousands of instances in every civilized country on earth. Every lodge building in the world is a triumph of co-operative enterprise. The Women's Temple in Chicago, with all its marvelous beauties, and the Y. M. C. A. buildings which are among best structures in almost every large city on the continent prove the wisdom of united effort. Every Masonic temple on earth

from that wonderful pile of steel and masonry rising to the fearful height of twenty-one stories in Chicago to the more humble temples which decorate the smaller cities, evidence the error of my friend's opinion. Every church building, from Trinity in New York City with its windows stained to soften the sunlight and cast a mellow splendor of color over the elegant furnishings which drive away the poor, to the little sod meeting house on the plains of Kansas, is erected by the co-operation of its members.

Beside, there are many co-operative enterprises of a purely industrial character in our country, which are highly successful. The idea is spreading all over the British Isles, Denmark, Germany and other parts of Europe, and is taking hold of the people, and they are taking hold of it, making it go. We can make it go, and we must.

CHAMBERS L. WOODS,

Washington, Iowa.

WANTED TO KNOW;—

When do you sail for Paris.

Did any of you guess the Bundy appointment.

Did the census enumerator get you on his little book.

Will the gold democrats try their luck with Admiral Dewey.

If Editor R. C. O. Benjamin has squeezed back into Kentucky politics to stay.

Why not Capt. William M. Meredith for Chief of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

How much civil service reform could be discovered with a microscope at the Government Printing office.

When those gentlemen who deal in pipe stories are going to put that boat for colored people on the river.

If it isn't singularly appropriate that so warm an article as Col. Jay L. Torrey should hail from Embers, Wyo.

Why Platform Editor Quigg didn't put a little more ginger into the XVth Amendment plank while he was doing all that alleged tinkering.

If any less distinguished personage than Booker T. Washington could win out here against a monster parade and innumerable brass bands.

If Prof. Robert H. Terrell wouldn't make a snug fit for the responsible office of assistant-superintendent of Washington's public schools.

When the National Capital's horde of departmental lawyers and doctors will ever get nerve enough to try to live upon their chosen professions.

If the seating of the "regulars," the Messrs. Hase and Jones, will not have a tendency to squelch the preacher-in-politics industry in this "neck-o'-the-wood."

How many of our business men will buckle on their progressive armor and attend the commercial congress called at Boston on August 24, by Booker T. Washington.

Are our would-be-spelt-binders care fully studying the issues so as to pass muster when they go up against the educational tests proscribed by the oratorical bureau.

Will any rubber-neck now charge that the seat of educational influence has been transferred to the Presbyterian and Second Baptist churches or Howard University.

If a change in the pastorate of one of Washington's largest churches would not be a distinct benefit to the commu-

nity, and a guarantee of decent regard for pulpit ethics.

If the election of William Jennings Bryan should mean a recurrence of that eminent public printer Hon. Thomas E. Benedict, would'nt democratic success be robbed of many of its terrors.

If the political parties are not pretty apt to place upon the Negro the valuation he places upon himself, and treat him good or bad according to the degree of honest independence he exhibits.

If the abolishment of the office of secretary of the Epworth League in the M. E. church carried with it the office of assistant secretary, what is the status of our esteemed friend, the Rev. I. Garland Penn.

If Mr. Bryan sympathizes with the outraged Filipinos out of sheer love of humanity, what has he to say of the infamous practice in his southern stronghold of shooting and burning unconvicted colored American citizens.

A Day in Bohemia.

Mr. C. P. Covington, of Louisiana, Mo., and a member of The Colored American staff, were visitors at Rosslyn, Va., last Sunday. Among the many points of interest visited was the Consumers' Brewing Company, of which Mr. E. L. Jordan is president and Mr. Abe King, secretary and treasurer. Although the brewery is closed on Sunday Mr. Charles S. Beach, the veterinary surgeon of the company, escorted us through the entire building and we had the pleasure of sampling the refreshments as it is served to the customers in its best state. Mr. Lewis Baur, the chief engineer of the company also showed us many courtesies. He had a large force of men at work making repairs but took time to give us passage through the different parts of the building. The Consumers' Brewing Company is all right.

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