

THE LAST HOLD OF THE SOUTHERN BULLY.

I.

COMPETENT observers in almost every part of the South agree that crimes against white women by Negroes are becoming very much more frequent, that more frequent becomes the lynching of Negroes, and that this method of dealing with crime is tolerated and hence approved in an increasing number of communities. The race-clash, therefore, takes a somewhat new turn, and in this succession of crimes there is a singular conjunction of dangerous forces.

Most of the men who were masters and most who were slaves are dead. The men of each race that are now in active life have not the attitude to each other that their fathers had. There could be no more conclusive or startling evidence of such a change than the frequency of a social crime that was unknown and impossible in slavery, and that was very infrequent as long as the manners and traditions of slavery survived. This somewhat new race-clash which is different from the old political race-clash, brings for the first time a grave social danger. Whatever race-conflicts might come, it had generally been taken for granted that we should be spared this one. For this kind of a crime may light all the inflammable material in the race-relation. To begin with, it is a social crime; and, if so ludicrously slight a social jar as whites and blacks riding in the same railway coach has in the past stirred anger, what shall be expected of this? Nothing else could so arouse all the white man's race-feeling, no other crime or combination of other crimes—not even murder and arson and massacre all together.

Moreover all round about such a point of race-contact, the social structure is exceedingly sensitive. In addition to the defensive attitude that any other civilized society has toward its women there is in the South the tradition of a "knightly" attitude toward them. Whatever part this old-fashioned gallantry may play or may ever have played between individual men and women, the tradition of it is indomitable. The veriest bully feels a sort of sanctity gather about him when he goes forth to defend or to avenge a woman: the race tiger and the romantic tiger both leap to life.

II.

Now as to the other crime thus provoked—the crime of lynching: since this in turn must be withstood and dealt with by local public sentiment and since it will thrive directly in proportion to the weakness of public sentiment in upholding law, let us see in what condition Southern public sentiment finds itself to deal with an outbreak of lawlessness. Here, too, the presence of both races must be remembered.

The wholesale bestowal of the ballot on the freedman while in all essential respects but one he was yet a slave, prevented the rise of a balanced public sentiment. What was by law a crime came to be regarded as a political duty—the duty of self-defence. Public sentiment in the South was thrown still more out of plumb. There is proof of this in the fact that the old instinct of political leadership spent itself in the task of preventing Negro electoral equality, and it had little energy left for other tasks. Commonplace men whose equipment was an equipment of traditions became the natural public leaders, when no new life and no new thought had play, and rural Southern communities, even just now, have shown that they are the easy victims of such forces as the Farmers' Alliance and "Gideon's Band." It is sad to say that of the many honorable and useful Southern public men, there is not a single one who stands out to-day as a great leader of opinion or as a strong force in our national life. This could never have been said till now since the foundation of the government. Thus ill prepared, this public sentiment must now in the first place face this new social danger, and doubly ill-prepared it is called on to deal calmly and firmly with the spirit of revenge that this era of a new crime arouses. And during this generation of political race-conflict, as the old type of gentleman of the former time has receded into tradition, the qualities that were characteristic of him, growing rank on the lower slopes of life, have produced the bully, the race-bully, the romantic bully; and it is the brute of one race and the bully of the other that unite their forces against civilization, just where public sentiment is weakest.

On the side of the lower race, too, slavery, to speak mildly, did not promote good morals; and it was inevitable, that chastity should at the time of freedom be an almost unknown virtue among the Negroes. Since then, especially in recent years, according to the evidence of the leaders of the race, there has been as rapid an improvement as any wise moralist could expect—for he was not wise

who expected a sudden change in morals, since morals are habits; and the lifting up of the women has gone on, to their infinite credit, against the double disadvantage of having the dissolute of both races of men to withstand. Now in proportion as chastity has become esteemed among Negroes, they feel the more keenly their former humiliation in morals, and this is a keener feeling, I imagine, than the humiliation of mere servitude. It is not unnatural for the Negro, sensitive to this inherited degradation, to ask, Why deal with the Negro so severely for a social crime against a white woman when similar if by law lesser crimes were, and perhaps are to a degree still, regarded as venial offences when committed by white men against Negro women? But I have said enough to hint at the many-sided dangers in the social relation of the races in the future, now that a new generation has come into activity—a generation one remove from the influence of slavery on the race-relation. Such is the social background of the crime itself that has given a new impulse to the lawless dealing with crime.

III.

How the brute and the bully unite against civilization may be made clearer by a description of a particular town where a Negro was lynched. It is a pleasant county-town of comfortable homes and intelligent and kindly people, and the moral tone of individual conduct—the moral tone of the individuals as distinguished from the moral tone of public sentiment—is exceptionally firm. A school of more than local fame has so long been established that a stock remark to strangers is, "Our town, you know, is quite an educational centre." The older generation in particular have a social grace about them that you recall long afterwards with pleasure, and the people practise their old habit of hospitality. They go about their business, clothed with leisure as with a garment, like men on a perpetual holiday; but life is as easy as it is simple and cheerful, and there are neither very poor people nor very rich people there. They all belong to the churches, with hardly an exception but the keepers of the grogeries, and the most frequent little jars in the social life of the town are caused by the friction of the church-cliques or an argument about theology. Nearly half the population is of blacks, who live chiefly at one end of the town. Most of the younger Negroes are educated in a rudimentary way, many of them are prosperous, many more measured by their standard are fairly well-

to-do, and the rest, half perhaps, lead the more or less wandering and irresponsible life of day-laborers. But they, too, are good-natured and generally law-abiding, in no way different from the usual black population of any Southern town where the whites predominate; and there has never been any serious race-friction. Cases of theft chiefly engage the court, now and then an assault, very rarely a murder.

But one day near the outskirts of the town a young Negro committed a crime against a white woman. The news quickly spread. Parties of men went forth and caught the criminal, for there is hardly a doubt but the captive was the criminal although there was no formal proof of it. In spite of a threat to lynch him, he was brought to the jail by a circuitous route and locked up, and a double guard was placed there. But just before midnight a group of perhaps fifty men, at least the leaders of whom were armed, came to the jail and demanded the prisoner. The guards, willing to do their duty but weak, did not long withstand the determined threats of the mob. The negro was taken out and hanged and shot.

The next morning the people went about their business as usual. But a sort of terror spread among the Negroes, and a desperate suggestion was of course made to the criminally inclined. There was a feeling that a white man would have had a trial, and that the criminal was lynched not only because of the crime but because he was a Negro. The whites said little about the lynching. There was an evident desire not to discuss it. Some said, "No more than he deserved," but more wished that the law had been allowed to take its course. They talked much, however, about the crime, and with a sort of dazed indignation. It stirred the whole community to its depths. The report that was published in the papers was chiefly an expression of this indignation at the Negro, but it was an odd mixture of sensationalism and moral reflections on chastity. In a little while the whole matter seemed to be forgotten.

There is no doubt but the public sentiment in the town passively approved the lynching. No effort was made to discover the lynchers. Overcome by indignation, public sentiment was subdued. The mob that killed the criminal killed civic spirit as well. Yet if a week before the lynching or a week afterward, every man there had been asked his opinion singly, nine-tenths of them would have expressed disapproval of the lynching. But it is certain that another crime of the same kind would be avenged in the same way. As regards this

crime, therefore, the law there has been permanently suspended. The strongest proof of the demoralization is that the public is unmindful of the consequences to itself of accepting lynching as a pardonable if not a proper substitute for law. It has not occurred to the community that though the rape was the beginning, the lynching was by no means the end of the matter. It has yielded to the insidious mastery of the bully, who seemed to the weak public spirit of the place, to have its own righteous indignation as his ally. Of course a similar crime may be committed in any community. In other communities, too, a lynching has at some time occurred. But the ominous fact about this crime and this lynching (and about all like it) is the acquiescence of the public spirit of the town in lynching as a method of dealing with the crime. It was by this acquiescence that the community let its civic sentiment die.

IV.

To any man who has ever considered the tedious development of civil society—and to these men of this town when any other crime than this crime or murder committed by a Negro is considered—it is plain that mob-law denies its first principle, which is nothing else than this: that men instead of avenging their own wrongs consent to have justice dealt out by law. Thus only is it that justice has come to take in civilized life the place that revenge held in savage life. The fundamental mistake they make is in supposing that lynching for a particular crime will deter from that crime. This belies all history, for all revengeful dealing with crime has increased crime. Every lynching adds a desperate dash to the temper of the whole community, especially to the criminal temper. The preventive of crime—the only preventive that men have found—is the undelayed and certain and solemn punishment by law, sustained by a confident and unyielding body of public opinion.

The breaking-down place in their public sentiment is the place so accurately pointed out by Judge Bleckley—that acquiescence in mob-rule brings its terrible demoralization without reference to the character of the crime that provoked it. There is no escape from this conclusion. The building-up of institutions that fortify us against the vengeance-taking temper of the savage, which is yet in us at no great depth below civilization, is the *summum bonum* of human achievement; and that the maintenance of these institutions is our only safeguard against a return to vengeance is perhaps the single

great human judgment that no conceivable experience of our race can ever make subject to revision.

The gravest significance of this whole matter, therefore, lies not in the first violation of law, nor in the crime of lynching, but in the danger that Southern public sentiment itself under the stress of this new and horrible phase of the race-problem will lose the true perspective of civilization. If this happen, the white will not lift the Negro: both will go down to the vengeance-taking level. This raises the old question whether after all if a social clash come, Southern institutions will prove equal in the black districts to the task of maintaining themselves. Jefferson wrote in his Autobiography: "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people [the Negro slaves] are to be free; nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government." Then after pleading for emancipation and deportation he declared that if the evil of slavery or of the Negroes' presence "is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up." In fact civilization has already nearly gone out in certain low-lands where the Negro is dominant in morals and in numbers, and in every way except in politics. Of these regions we hear little; but whenever for any reason we decide to reclaim them we shall have a task of a new kind. Fortunately these places where the Negro lives almost apart from white civilization and almost beyond its influence are not yet extensive. But the fate that has befallen them must serve as a reminder of two cardinal principles that the experience of the two races in their unnatural living together has established; for these two principles have been established if no more: First, that the white man's surrounding and educating civilization is necessary to the elevation of the blacks or even to the maintenance of the level they have reached: the white man must save himself from Negro dominance, or both will sink. The next principle is that the yielding of public sentiment to the white bully will so dwarf and misdirect public sentiment that civilization itself will suffer an eclipse. Then the long shadow which has before given so many hints of it may at last unroll from its folds—barbarism. Consider the present condition of South Carolina where the bully has distorted and weakened public sentiment till it has fallen so low as to rejoice in its subjection. It has lost the true perspective of civilization and is of no help whatever to the moral force of the nation. It has, indeed, reached that grotesque level where the bully plays the part of a moral reformer.

V.

Indeed it is as a sort of moral reformer, a dispenser of justice, that the bully begins his career. To go back to the main matter in hand, let us see how insidiously under his influence vengeance comes to take the guise of justice and to break down the saner convictions even of strong and good men. The tone of some Southern newspapers bears witness to this in the comment that a lynching is a grave offence but that certain crimes require it. This gives up the case of civilization against the bully, for it throws away the only defence that civilization has against him—a confident and unconquerable reliance on law. It is only the worse that the men who make such comment are good men, mean to be good men; for it is only when good men yield that public sentiment decays.

Even a man of as great good sense as Major Charles H. Smith, of Georgia, a man of the most sterling personal qualities, sees in a lynching chiefly the deserved punishment of a brute. Deserved? Yes. But this does not touch the fringes of the question. Are men's deserts to be dealt out to them by mobs? Then the more righteous the mob, the fewer will be spared; and a really righteous mob, if it were not to encounter a stronger mob of a different mind, might go forth and clear the earth for the coming of the just. But it would meet another mob, and there would be as many mobs as men had impulses. There is nothing new in this: our ancestors spent many centuries thus; and thus to-day some of the African kinsmen of our colored people are engaged. History has usually called this barbarism.

Bishop Haygood, too, whose untiring labor to solve this same dark problem entitles him to the sincerest admiration, and I can speak of him only with the greatest respect—Bishop Haygood, who declares over and over again that mob-rule is anarchy, and does not mean to apologize for it, explains the burning of a brute who violated and murdered a child by saying that the mob suffered from “emotional insanity.” Pray, what ails any mob? The question lies far back of this: for the community accepted and acquiesced in the mob's work. This the Bishop does not point out. He does not seem to see that herein lies the greatest danger of all—which is not the “emotional insanity” of the mob but the permanence of the insanity and imbecility of the public sentiment that accepts the mob instead of law.

And the bully distorts the incipient public sentiment even of the Negro himself. A correspondent, a Negro who has spent many years in teaching his race and is a man held in esteem where he lives, puts this question: "Why is it that a white man never was and never will be lynched for a similar crime against a Negro woman?" This goes to the heart of the lurking danger that lies in any race-conflict involving a social question. It may be meant as a cry for justice, but it will be heard as a cry for revenge. Because a Negro is lynched, a white man should not be lynched even for the same crime: each alike should be punished by law. But the Negro justly cries for justice in dealing with social crimes. Let it come, striking through all traditions of slavery, through race-hatreds, through the degrading attitude of men to women of their own race or of other races; let it come lifting men and levelling all artificial social standards to its equal dealing! He has not profited by democracy who flinches or hesitates. Let it come and work as inexorably as a law of nature! But men who know what social growths are, know that the standard of justice anywhere—especially touching any social institution—is a thing that has been slowly evolved and can be but slowly changed. The standard of justice that one race or one grade of society anywhere applies to another race or another social grade is not what the other race or other social grade would have; but the existing standard, high or low, can be changed in only two ways—by revenge (which will change it by making it lower), and by a firm tolerance and by time. The memory of slavery must become dimmer than it has become through one generation, and men must become milder and women stronger, before justice can anywhere come in our dealing with a social crime that cuts across a race-line or even across a social line. But its coming in Southern life will not be hastened by the Negro's reminding the white man of his own crimes. This will rip wide open all the healing seams that Time has sewed to cover up the social skeleton of slavery. The brute instinct will thrive on such a reminder, and the race cleavage will widen.

VI.

It is proper to remember and I most solemnly insist that it be not forgotten, that nowhere else has public sentiment such a strain on it, nowhere else has civilization such a burden, as in the South. No student of institutions can measure the weight of this burden, from the time that slavery began till now—a weight the heavier because both

slavery and reconstruction misdirected civilization—no man can measure it who has not lived under it and studied it while it crushed him. It is the colossal and continuous misfortune of modern times, the furthest-reaching blunder, attended with a longer train of evils than any other, than any war or pestilence—the coming of the African to this continent at all; for which he alone of all the parties concerned is guiltless, and by which he only, hard as his lot is, has profited. Herein lies the trouble. If he had come to our shores as a conqueror we should have driven him back. With this kind of problem the dominant races of the world have long known how to deal. But we dragged him from the jungles and brought him against his wish. He is a conqueror none the less. What matter, for instance, who owns the land of certain low-lying parts of the South or gathers tribute, or holds the little posts of honor there, so long as only Negroes live there, and set the slow pace of life, the low standard of living, the measure of receding morals? There they are the economic conquerors, and the world profits nothing by their conquest. With this kind of problem it is yet to be seen if we know how to deal. Even in slavery the Negro was an economic burden¹—and a social burden of course. In freedom he is a social and a political and, to a degree, an economic burden still, and a burden he will be on thought and character, as far into the future as men can yet see—except them who are always seeing the dawn of the millennium.

And the Negro's own case is nothing less than pathetic. Consider him at his best. I cite the case of a manly and accomplished gentleman of the race. His life has no background. What we mean by ancestry is lacking to him; and not only is it lacking but its lack is proclaimed by his color and he is always reminded of it. Be he who he may and do he what he may, when the final personal test comes, he finds himself a man set apart, a marked man. There is a difference between the discrimination against him in one part of the country and in another part, but it is a difference in degree only. He is not anywhere in a fellowship of complete equipoise with men of the other race. Nor does this end it. The boundless sweep of opportunity which is the inheritance of every white citizen of the Republic falls to him curtailed, hemmed in, a mere pathway to a few permis-

¹ See Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted's books, which seem strangely to have been forgotten in the mass of angry and useless literature that followed them—a literature, by the way, on which as much good brains was wasted as good blood was wasted on the battlefields it led to.

sible endeavors. A sublime reliance on the ultimate coming of justice may give him the philosophic temper. But his life will bring chiefly opportunities to cultivate it. And for his children what better? To those that solve great social problems with professional ease, I commend this remark that Mr. Lowell is said to have made: "I am glad I was not born a Jew; but if I had been born a Jew, I should be prouder of that fact than of any other." You can find men who are glad that they were not born Negroes; but can you find a man who, if he had been born a Negro, would be prouder of that fact than of any other? When you have found many men of this mind, then this race-problem will, owing to some change in human nature, have become less tough; but till then, patience and tolerance.

VII.

Now, as for the remedy, which is a remedy also for many other evils: Build up and vitalize the local public sentiment of the best men in the South. An energetic campaign should be made to strengthen it against acquiescence in lynch-law. Especially should those rapidly advancing communities whose industry has solved the race-problem and many other problems besides, make it known that they will not dally with this threat to their civilization and progress. If the business-man deal with the bully, he ought to make short work of him. Let it be proclaimed by boards of trade, by merchants, by bankers, by manufacturers, that they will not have industry and commerce hindered by lawlessness. All the other machinery for strengthening public sentiment should be used. There are three thousand newspapers in the Southern States. If the editor of every paper, each in its own town (as not a few are now doing, especially in North Carolina), were to ask the men of influence and of character there whether under any circumstances or for any crime they ever approve of lynching, he would give expression to the real sentiment of his town; for a mob never represents the sentiment of a community until a community's spirit is utterly dead. In the State of Tennessee, for instance, where not long ago there was a lynching, there are more than two hundred papers of all classes. If every paper in the State had published the opinion of a hundred of the foremost men of character and influence in its community, they would have given expression to the disapproval of twenty thousand of the most influential citizens of the State, and this surely would

have had a tonic effect on public sentiment and a deterring influence on criminals.

Then there are the ecclesiastical organizations. The preacher is in certain ways a greater power in most Southern communities than in any other part of the country. If the regular Conferences of the Methodists, the Associations of the Baptists, the Synods of the Presbyterians, as a part of their proceedings were to recite the hurt done to the character of every community by mob-violence and were to speak frankly what they all feel—this would have a strong influence, and it would encourage every preacher to be as bold in practical religion as he is valiant in theological argument.

But, most important of all, every political convention should recognize this evil and work for its abolition. If the platforms of the State conventions demand it, most of all if the county conventions demand it and require candidates for the shrievalty to declare boldly that they will resist mobs at the risk of their lives,—as several sheriffs have lately done with great bravery, and as the mayor of Roanoke, Virginia, did—public sentiment would soon actively shape itself into such condemnation of mob-violence that it would cease. Thus, through these organizations, and especially through the grand juries of every county whose sworn duty this is, the dazed and languid sentiment of any unfortunate community can be strengthened. It is the vast majority of good men, law-loving men who make up these organizations, and it is they that must defend themselves from the dangerous savagery of the smaller number who regard it as a manly thing to take the law into their own hands.

It is safe to say that there are not five men in every thousand in any county in all the black States who ever went with a mob or ever lynched a man. The appalling spectacle is therefore presented of a few men bringing great commonwealths into disrepute, holding back their development, and demoralizing their civilization. This is the simple truth; but the whole truth is more—the nine hundred and ninety-five law-abiding and law-loving men share in the guilt as they must share in its consequences, if they show themselves unable or unwilling to put an end to it. Acquiescence is surrender.

With the brute the law can deal; and there are most hopeful indications that the bully is doing his last violence to a civilization that he has so long cowed. He is an old acquaintance to those who know Southern life, this imitator of the faults and pretender to the traditions of that much-discussed worthy, "the old Southern

gentleman." He had much to do with a war the penalty of which other men who had nothing to do with it have had to pay. With his oaths and "honor" he has strutted through all the quiet ways of Southern life, calling himself "the South," writing and speaking of "our people," and now he leads mobs to avenge "our women." The new spirit of industry should take him in hand. Commerce has no social illusions; it has the knack of rooting up vested social interests that stand in its way; and it has been left for commerce, by infusing its influence into the body of local public sentiment in the South, to rid us at last of this historic, red-handed, deformed, and swaggering villain.

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AMERICA'S BATTLE FOR COMMERCIAL SUPREMACY.

WHAT was the impelling force that brought the restless sea-rovers to Britain, and sent their descendants all over the world from that mother of nations, enabling them to possess and hold eighty per cent—the fairest lands—of the Temperate Zone? Is not that force more impelling now than it was in the early history of that wonderful race, and are not Anglo-Saxon freedom, law, and language destined to prevail in all lands where nature has provided the most suitable habitation for man?

Of the world's stores of coal, that potential basis of future sea-power and industrial and commercial supremacy, the United States possesses fifty-eight per cent, and England and her colonies possess thirty per cent. Measured by availability, quality, and nearness to the sea, these Anglo-Saxon peoples own more than ninety per cent of all the coal in the world. France, Germany, Belgium and Spain combined own less than two per cent, and the coals of Russia are in the remote interior, and forever landlocked. Great Britain exported twenty-one million tons of coal to European countries, in 1891. The bulk of the coal owned by England and her colonies is in islands, convenient to deep harbors, easily defended so long as she is mistress of the seas. Thus the coal of Great Britain, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Vancouver, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, South Africa, Borneo, Labuan, is connected by railways with deep harbors defended with modern rifle-guns; and in case of war, the English fleet, supported by the fortresses of Hong-Kong and Port Hamilton, would control the coal of China and Corea. For lack of coal and fortified coaling-stations, no fleet could keep the seas against the English navy.

It would seem that England is preparing either to fetter the commerce of the world, or to insure the good behavior of mankind. Steadily she has acquired and fortified strategic points commanding the pathways of commerce. Gibraltar, Malta, and Aden command the short route between Europe, Asia and Australasia. The fortified