

THE NEGRO AND OUR NEW POSSESSIONS.

MANY theories have been proposed for the solution of the Negro problem. It is declared by some that it is a question of the South, as most of the Negroes are found in that section, and that, therefore, it should be settled there, and with reference to the people who will be most largely affected by the Negro's presence; that his education and life should be adapted to his environment; that any education tending to lift him out of his sphere, as it is put — referring, of course, to the higher training — is both harmful and destructive to the interests of both races. These views are based upon the assumption that the Negro is always to remain in the South, and that he is always to occupy a subordinate place — a presumption without an adequate basis of fact.

Colonization is offered as another solution. The black man is advised to migrate westward, to take up unoccupied territory there, to settle down, and to work out his own destiny to the best of his ability. In this way, it is argued, he can best develop the powers within him. Again, it is proposed that the race leave the congested districts of the South — scatter, diffuse itself over the whole country, and, in a sense, lose race identity, by mingling with the whites, as far as possible. And still another theory is more vigorously pressed than any hitherto mentioned. It is declared that this will produce a change operating for the good of all concerned. Its advocates unhesitatingly assert that it is best to confine the Negro largely to industrial lines, to set a limit to his education, to reserve the higher training for a few picked out here and there as capable to receive such instruction, and to make of these leaders; thus encouraging the race, as it is claimed, to maintain its place in the labor ranks.

No matter, however, what theory is proposed by which the many problems concerning the Negro are sought to be solved, and no matter what individuals have accomplished, no one will deny that the race as a whole cannot make substantial progress unless there are outlets for its capabilities and acquisitions. This fact brings up one of the most discouraging features in contemplating the subject — that here, in this coun-

try, it makes no difference what the Negro has done or may do in any line whatever, he finds few opportunities for the exercise of his gifts and powers. He must simply hope on and do the thing he can find to do next him. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, is a saying proved true in life again and again; and it is only owing to the characteristic good spirits of the race that many of these who are ready for advanced lines of labor can sturdily hold to the thought that there may be a future in which they shall share along these lines. It is this that helps the plucky ones to push on and find niches for themselves here and there, defying dislodgment from a position that brain, and not brawn, has enabled them to fill.

As I have said elsewhere, at different times, the Negro finds everything against him just now. He meets boycott, refusal to work by his side, and closed doors of labor unions. He sees plainly a determined stand to force him back from the vantage-ground he has gained and a resolve to circumscribe him, in every effort he puts forth, and to keep him within his "sphere"; where he may do only those things "of which he is capable from inherited aptitudes," as one puts it, referring to servile or industrial lines. It is a most discouraging state of things that confronts him on every hand. It is assuredly the darkest period in the progress of the race since the Civil War, not excepting the dark days of Reconstruction; for then he had more sympathy from those who looked on and who stood by him. More forbearance was exercised toward him then, and there was a greater desire to forward all his aspirations. In short, his friends were many more than now. To-day he is largely left to himself, to make his way all alone, with the odds greatly against him.

So, with proscription, disfranchisement, prejudice, hate of the lower classes all over the land, Jim Crow cars set apart as his portion without reference to individual status, whether educated or uneducated, refined or vicious, with hotels and places of amusement closed against him, with restrictions in civil and legal rights, and with lynchings on mere suspicion, how can the race look upon the present hour other than as the darkest? Such is the situation, and no one feels it more keenly, experiences more humiliation, or chafes more under the continual ban than does the educated Negro, the man or woman of culture who has fine sensibilities and high aspirations, and who wishes to make of life what he or she has been taught should be made of life — the best possible of every faculty given by the Creator.

A crisis seems to be at hand, and well may it claim the serious attention of friends and of foes — all who are interested in social and eco-

conomic problems. The complications are great, and the race, with this growing enmity against it, is thrown into a dangerous state of unrest. It is a wonder that under the circumstances the balance is kept so true — that the Negro remains the loyal, patriotic citizen that he does. But this true balance is most largely due to the wisdom of the leaders, the good sense of the higher classes, the exercise of judgment and sage counsel by the trained men and women of the race, those who keep faith and constitute the ballast bringing about proper self-control. Thus there is patient waiting to see if light will not come out of darkness, if salvation will not be afforded from what seems a hopeless situation. But while the country at large is thinking as to what it shall do with him, the Negro is feeling that something must be done and done by himself. He is thinking deeply on the situation, and his thought is turning on how he may better race conditions.

As none of the theories advanced looks toward anything else than keeping the Negro in a quasi-peasant stage, or in absolute subjection, or deporting him, they naturally do not find favor with the race at large. Colonization, meaning the isolation of the people as a whole, I firmly believe will be detrimental to any rapid advancement. But I do think that a certain amount of emigration would be advantageous; and in this connection I do not think we have entertained seriously enough the possibility of using our new possessions as an opportunity for the American Negro. It seems to me that this is forced upon the race just now, when the best in it are suffering more or less from the keen humiliation incident upon the stress of the situation and the present pressure that bars advancement everywhere. This consideration seems of vital importance.

I have had occasion to say, at other times, that a curious coincidence is to be found in connection with the three wars in which this country has engaged since 1861. In each case it is to be noted that the consideration of the darker races of the world has formed a prominent feature. While this evidently has its significance relating to the work Providence has given this land as a Christian land to do, in close connection are to be found certain indisputable facts relative to the race resident within its borders.

Despite all that is said about the lack of progress of the Negro along certain lines, it is true that he has had here the opportunities to work out a higher civilization of his own, and he has not failed to grasp them. The higher classes of the race are the results of this opportunity, and they have gathered such strength that there is a peculiar fitness in making

use of their acquisitions among the darker peoples of our newly acquired territory. It may be true that in many ways the future may show, as Mr. Fortune says in the New York "Age," that the more dark peoples that we have under our flag the better it will be for those of us who came out of the forge and fire of American slavery. There will be outlets for the American Negro and a swifter uplifting because of interest for these new peoples.

Advices from Luzon assert unreservedly that there is a great field for the Negro in the Philippines. The reason for such assertion is given by one whose position makes it possible for him to speak with authority. He says:

"Though there are not many Negroes in this part of the world, those that are here are doing exceedingly well. They have no race prejudice to combat from the native, and when compared with white men of equal attainments they possess the vantage-ground over the white brother."

The same authority goes on further to say:

"Again, the white man everywhere seeks to oppress, when possible, the dark races; and differing from the white man in this, the native soon regards his dark Occidental brother in the light of possessing affinity with himself, be he rich or poor. The Filipinos and the Japanese especially — these two hate white people most — receive the colored man with open arms. They would deny him no opportunity — this is not speculation — and are delighted when they see or hear of a great man of color."

Now it seems to me that whether this state of things is pleasing to white people or not, this does signify much in the way of escape from some of the unpleasant situations hedging the race about in this country.

The same correspondent puts it thus:

"If the colored man of the United States will be benefited in any way by the acquisition of territory and new markets by the country, it is manifestly certain it will be in the direction of enlarged opportunities."

He feels certain of these as "evident rich fields presented by the Oriental countries to American colored men of education, push, and energy." In fact, he declares from observation that while this is especially true of the Philippines, it is also true of every country, state, or dependency of the Orient, as Japan, China, Siam, Java, Ceylon. We, here in America, do know that many of these same foreigners try to be contemptuous of the Negro when upon American soil, so that they may not be classed in any way with a despised people. It is a matter of self-preservation, of convenience, to these foreigners; and so when here they follow the fashion of the hoodlum element and attempt to show scorn

whenever they come in contact with a person of color. But at home they do differently.

These facts, as presented to us by one who is where he can judge accurately — on native soil and under un-American conditions — are not the observations of solely one man. There are other shrewd observers in the new possessions, who see the same thing, express the same opinion, and ask the same pertinent questions. Why not lead the Negro in America to see this too? Why not open up the way for him to have a share in doing something for these color kinsfolk?

And why should not the educated Negro, the capable Negro, take part in the movement that has just begun in the Philippines, in Cuba, in Porto Rico, in Hawaii even, for the general good of the governed in these islands? A foreign tongue need be no obstacle. The Negro has a natural aptitude for language. African history will bear me out in this statement, which is corroborated by my own experience with natives from the isles of the sea and from Africa. It does seem, as previously intimated, that the evolutionary process the race has gone through in this country would make such men and women of color of inestimable value in undertaking the evolutions which must take place in the attempt to lead out to the light and on to strength the weaker, dark races of the world, wherever found. The cry comes from the Philippines, from the natives: Why does not the United States send out colored men as school teachers, and in various other official capacities? It would seem wisdom for the government to heed this cry, and to yield to the wish in the effort that is being put forth to bring these peoples under law and government represented by the American flag. The Filipinos especially, we are told, "want Occidentalism, but want it to come through hands of a like complexion to theirs."

Under the present conditions, when the call has come for such a large number of instructors in various capacities, the question forces itself upon public attention: Why not make large choice from among members of the Negro race in America for the purpose? There are plenty of both sexes fitted for this work. With the knowledge of the limited opportunities in this country, it would seem that sincerity of purpose to help solve the race problem would demand that such be given every possible consideration, and most especially when it is known that in these possessions the sought-for "Occidentalism" would be preferable coming through such channels.

It has been frequently stated that the Negro has not the "colonization instinct"; and his failures in Africa to make a way for himself are

brought forward as proof. This is doubtless true. The race has not gone far enough on its road to imbibe this spirit to the extent of making it a success. But a movement looking toward our new territory need not partake of the colonization feature pure and simple, which, as before said, I should not deem advantageous if viewed as isolation. That would be a misfortune. But what is presented as most advantageous is the encouragement to extend the Negro's outlook by personal inducements offered where there is something besides pure savagery and barbarism to contend with.

From Luzon the word comes:

"Some time ago I made an investigation among the Filipinos to determine to what extent their love for the American Negro went, and found that colonization of American blacks among them would be highly acceptable, while white people as ranchers among them could only become established by having a regiment of soldiers stationed at each white ranchman's back."

This sentiment seems to pervade every stratum of life there. And through it may not this very idea of the lack of colonization instinct be rightly gauged by trial under circumstances that must differ from those surrounding the emigrants to Africa? With such a sentiment prevalent, it would seem that here is an outlet that ought to find acceptance in some way among the thoughtful ones of the race, where the Negro's industrial as well as his intellectual training may be utilized with decided benefit to the present generation and may help on marvellously future generations. The German experiment in Africa, of utilizing trained Negroes from America, is one that might fittingly be tried in our new territory, which needs development along the same practical lines to bring it to a higher degree of civilization.

This is not said with any idea that the race must give up all thought of a future as a race right here in the United States; but a movement looking toward these new possessions would simplify the problem in a measure by reducing numbers and showing that the Negro can act for himself. I feel confident that the present dark outlook will give way in time to a brighter one — that the frenzy of hate and passionate prejudice will pass away. If not, the white race will undoubtedly reap a sowing it has little expected. But it is time for the Negro to reach out individually, as some have already done and as many should do, to take courage to face new things, to weigh, then dare (*Wägen, denn wagen*), as the motto goes.

It is not a fanatic rush of all classes into these new fields that will better matters either here or there. These Filipinos are not an unedu-

cated people as a whole. They are not barbarous, uncivilized, poor, as a class. We have plenty of authority to the contrary. Among them, it is said, are some of the ripest scholars the world has. We cannot call them barbarians indiscriminately. The wealth of some is dazzling, and in those Oriental countries there are not a few dark-skinned millionaires. Then, again, we face the fact that these same dark people are in the trade world, first and foremost, competing with the lighter-colored races, showing a sharpness in business matters which in reality makes them marvels of that trade world. So those who would take advantage of this outlook are the men who can do something, manage something, create something.

In the idea existing among these people that the American colored man is a distant relative of theirs — and, above all, that he is not a white man, which for him “is a free passport without credentials,” lies the great opportunity for the thrifty, energetic Negro. These same people have no hope, it is asserted, in a white man’s country; no more, perhaps, than has the American Negro here, in those sections where the determination to dominate him is tenaciously held. But these isles cannot be said to be the white man’s country, because for centuries such has been the mixture that the color line is not known — it is not drawn unless the idea is imported from those countries where prejudice has rank hold.

The color question which Spain, with other countries, was called upon to face long ago led to one thing: despite her treachery, oppression, cruelty, and misrule, she did not humiliate these peoples because of the admixture of blood of darker races. The color question should never be allowed to be injected into that part of the world. There we find places where the dark face may meet with humane treatment, with civility, even with deference, if the manhood back of it deserves it; and there this feeling of equality should be kept in its purity. It may be, as has been said, that it is a good thing for all that more of the dark races are under the American flag. There may be a lesson for all in this fact — a lesson that nothing else will teach — a lesson that man’s inhumanity to man cannot forever continue, especially that inhumanity based upon color and assuming a contemptuous, dominant attitude toward it. Can there not be one place on the face of the globe where the white man does not seek complete control; where a channel may be opened up to give the broadest possible opportunity for the strengthening of the weaker races; where black manhood can stand erect and unhindered, and can enlarge respect for itself, or even create it where it does not exist? But to enter hopefully this door, open to the man of color, two things are necessary — aid

and proper treatment from those who have it in their power to help or to hinder.

It would seem that our war with Spain was providential, aside from humanitarian grounds; that the great Ruler of the universe, in permitting this country to gain continuously such signal victories over the Spanish people, intended that, despite its prejudice and race hatred, it should take a leading part in the solution of some of the great problems pertaining to the darker races of mankind. Because of its Christian civilization it assuredly has the vantage-ground for taking a prominent part in this direction. It cannot honorably recede from the initiative it has already taken; and as a sequence it must handle the problems thrust upon it, with the acquisitions of these new millions, in a way that shall command, on the one hand, the respect, or, on the other, the condemnation, of the civilized world. It must deal with these people justly or unjustly. To do the latter is to show itself unequal to the task of coping with the situation; it is to weaken it at home and abroad.

The selection of the Negro for campaigning purposes in this new territory was a wise one. The only thing to be regretted is that more are not thus employed in the foreign military service of the nation. But the hope of the future is that this will be brought about. The black man has proved himself not only a brave soldier, but a patriot as well, in spite of the treatment accorded him. We need only cite as proof of this his readiness at all times to take up arms in his country's defence, and his career at San Juan and El Caney. Campaigning in Cuba, Porto Rico, or the Philippines gives the black man an opportunity to see and study the country for himself, to study its people as he could not under other circumstances. He is doing it, and this very knowledge gained from experience constitutes a new era, the dawn of a brighter day, for the race and its descendants. Though the Negro himself at first looked upon the idea of sending black troops to these new countries as an attempt at expatriation, yet there is hardly one of the race to-day who does not see in this new movement a great amount of good to come to those with whom these soldiers are allied at home. To my personal knowledge not a few of the best of these soldiers propose to stay in the Philippines, and to start out in life there. This of itself will have its influence upon others in America. Gradually the adventurous spirit will develop itself.

In connection with this, it sounds more like a prophecy than anything else, when we recur to the words of that gallant old soldier, Gen. Thomas J. Morgan, who knew well what it was to command Negro

troops, and who did not hesitate to advocate their employment. In the early days of the Spanish war, he said:

"If the United States has really entered upon an era of colonization or of taking under its protection the West Indian and Philippine Islands, we must be prepared for the necessity of a large army of occupation. Such an army could with advantage be made up largely, if not exclusively, of Negro soldiers. They would be better suited for tropical or semi-tropical climates, would be more contented than white men in that far-away service, and would not be objectionable to the native inhabitants of the islands in either ocean, so that there seems to be no special reason why there should not be given to the Negroes at least a fair opportunity to show what soldierly qualities they possess and what fitness they have for official positions."¹

Gen. Morgan has touched vital points. Fair trials only are desired. A chance to determine what the black man can do when out from under the stress of prejudice is necessary to the *highest development of the powers within*. Let the black man have this chance under conditions which obtain nowhere in this country exactly the same. Let him be encouraged along lines that promise opportunity, and we feel confident that much of this present unrest will be a thing of the past and that his future will be assured as it cannot now be in view of existing conditions in this country.

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SOME CHINESE TRAITS.

WHILE China is as autocratic as Russia, she is, at the same time, the most democratic country in the world. This may seem a paradox, but, at the worst, the Chinese Government is a patriarchal despotism. In the village the head man rules as a father would rule a family. Lawsuits are abhorred. There are no lawyers, no jury trials. Equity governs the judgments of the courts. I knew of a case in Shanghai in which there was a finding for the plaintiff; but because his conduct had not been perfectly just, the amount assessed in his favor was ordered to be paid to a charitable institution.

If a magistrate fails in his duty, he is set upon by a mob and dragged from his chair, and the insignia of his office are removed, especially his official boots. The gods are treated in like manner. They are put out in the sunshine in times of drought that they may see for themselves the inconvenience of the hot weather, and during rains which last too long they are lashed with whips as a punishment.

High and low are imbued with superstition. No two houses in Peking are set on the same line. One is always farther back or farther forward than its neighbor. The reason for this allocation is that it is believed that the evil spirits cannot turn a corner, and that when they get started they must continue in a straight line, and so go out into space, and be lost. Little clay dogs are placed on all the ridges of the houses, with wide-open mouths, to catch the evil spirits as they approach them. The chief function of the great Almanac, which is published by the Government every year, and controls Chinese action in every particular, is to name the lucky days for doing every act in life — particularly for marriages. A dog is supposed to be eating up the moon at the time of its eclipse; and the population of the Empire turns out, beating gongs and tin pans to drive him away. Several years ago, at Tientsin, a wretched little water snake was caught in the Peiho River, and the populace took it to a temple and worshipped it as the water god. Li Hung Chang attended and worshipped with the others. When asked if he