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BLACK'S, MARYLAND.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON AND THE NEGRO

By THOMAS DIXON, JR.

Author of "THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS"

Some Dangerous Aspects of the Work of Tuskegee.

[Reprinted from the Saturday Evening Post, of Philadelphia. Copyright 1905 by Curtis Publishing Company.]

For Mr. Booker T. Washington as a man and leader of his race I have always had the warmest admiration. His life is a romance which appeals to the heart of universal humanity. The story of a little ragged, barefooted piccaninny who lifted his eyes from a cabin in the hills of Virginia, saw a vision and followed it, until at last he presides over the richest and most powerful institution of learning in the south, and sits down with crowned heads and presidents, has no parallel even in the Tales of the Arabian Nights.

The spirit of the man, too, has always impressed me with its breadth, generosity and wisdom. The aim of his work is noble and inspiring. As I understand it from his own words, it is "to make negroes producers, lovers of labor, honest, independent, good." His plan for doing this is to lead the negro to the goal through the development of solid character, intelligent industry and material acquisition.

Only a fool or a knave can find fault with such an ideal. It rests squarely on the eternal verities. And yet it will not solve the negro problem, nor bring us within sight of its solution. Upon the other hand, it will only intensify that problem's dangerous features, complicate and make more difficult its ultimate settlement.

It is to this tragic fact to which I am trying to call the attention of the nation.

I have for the negro race only pity and sympathy, though every large convention of negroes since the appearance of my first historical novel on the race problem has gone out of its way to denounce me and declare my books caricatures and libels on their people. Their mistake is a natural one. My books are hard reading for a negro, and yet the negroes, in denouncing them, are unwittingly denouncing one of their best friends.

I have been intimately associated with negroes since the morning of my birth during the Civil War. My household servants are all negroes. I took them to Boston with me, moved them to New York, and they now have entire charge of my Virginia home. The first row I ever had on the negro problem was when I moved to Boston from the south to take charge of a fashionable church at the Hub. I attempted to import my baby's negro nurse into a Boston hotel. The proprietor informed me that no "coon" could occupy a room in his house in any capacity, either as guest or servant. I gave him a piece of my mind and left within an hour.

As a friend of the negro race I claim that he should have the opportunity for the highest, noblest and freest development of his full, rounded manhood. He has never had this opportunity in America, either north or south, and he never can have it. The forces against him are overwhelming.

My books are simply merciless records of conditions as they exist, conditions that can have but one ending if they are not honestly and fearlessly faced. The Civil War abolished chattel slavery. It did not settle the negro problem. It settled the union question and created the negro problem. Frederic Harrison, the English philosopher, declared that the one great shadow which clouds the future of the American republic is the approaching tragedy of the irreconcilable conflict between the negro and white man in the development of our society. Mr. James Bryce recently made a similar statement.

The Argument of the Ostrich Man.

If allowed to remain here the negro race in the United States will number 60,000,000 at the end of this century by their present rate of increase. Think of what this means for a moment and you face the gravest problem which ever puzzled the brain of statesman or philosopher. No such problem ever before confronted the white man in his recorded history. It cannot be whistled down by opportunists, politicians, weak-minded optimists or female men. It must be squarely met and fought to a finish.

Several classes of people at present obstruct any serious consideration of this question—the pot-house politician, the ostrich man, the pooh-pooh man, and the benevolent old maid. The politician is still busy over the black man's vote in doubtful states. The pooh-pooh man needs no definition—he was a born fool. The benevolent old maid contributes every time the hat is passed and is pretty sure to do as much harm as good in the long run to any cause. The ostrich man is the funniest of all this group of obstructionists, for he is a man of brains and capacity.

I have a friend of this kind in New York. He got after me the other day somewhat in this fashion:

"What do you want to keep agitating this infernal question for? There's no danger in it unless you stir it. Let it alone. I grant you that the negro race is a poor, worthless parasite, whose criminal and animal instincts threaten society. But the negro is here to stay. We must train him. It is the only thing we can do. So what's the use to waste your breath?"

"But what about the future when you have educated the negro?" I asked timidly.

"Let the future take care of itself!" the ostrich man snorted. "We live in the present. What's the use to worry about hell? If I can scramble through this world successfully I'll take my chances with the hell problem!"

My friend forgets that this was precisely the line of argument of our fathers over the question of negro slavery. When the constructive statesmen of Virginia (called pessimists and infidels in their day) foresaw the coming baptism of fire and blood ('61 to 65) over the negro slave, they attempted to destroy the slave trade and abolish slavery. My friend can find his very words in the answer of their opponents, "Let the future take care of itself! The slaves are here and here to stay. Greater evils await their freedom. We need their labor. Let the question alone. There is no danger in it unless you stir it."

The truth which is gradually forcing itself upon thoughtful students of our national life is that no scheme of education or religion can solve the race problem, and that Mr. Booker T. Washington's plan, however high and noble, can only intensify its difficulties.

This conviction is based on a few big fundamental facts, which no pooh-poohing, ostrich-dodging, weak-minded philanthropy or political rant can obscure.

The first one is that no amount of education of any kind, industrial, classical or religious, can make a negro a white man or bridge the chasm of the centuries which separate him from the white man in the evolution of human civilization.

Expressed even in the most brutal terms of Anglo-Saxon superiority there is here an irreducible fact. It is possibly true, as the negro, Professor Kelly Miller, claims, that the Anglo-Saxon is "the most arrogant and rapacious, the most exclusive and intolerant race in history." Even so, what answer can be given to his cold-blooded proposition: "Can you change the color of the negro's skin, the kink of his hair, the bulge of his lip or the beat of his heart with a spelling-book or a machine?"

What Abraham Lincoln Said.

No man has expressed this idea more clearly than Abraham Lincoln when he said: "There is a physical difference between the white and black races which, I believe, will forever forbid them living together on terms of social and political equality."

Whence this physical difference? Its secret lies in the gulf of thousands of years of inherited progress which separates the child of the Aryan from the child of the African.

Buckle in his History of Civilization says: "The actions of bad men produce only temporary evil, the actions of good men only temporary good. The discoveries of genius alone remain: it is to them we owe all that we now have; they are for all ages and for all times; never young and never old, they bear the seeds of their own lives; they are essentially cumulative."

Judged by this supreme test, what contribution to human progress have the millions of Africans who inhabit this planet made during the past four thousand years? Absolutely nothing. And yet, Mr. Booker T. Washington in a recent burst of eloquence over his educational work boldly declares:

"The negro race has developed more rapidly in the thirty years of its freedom than the Latin race has in one thousand years of freedom."

Think for a moment of the pitiful puerility of this statement falling from the lips of the greatest and wisest leader the negro race has yet produced!

Italy is the mother of genius, the inspiration of the ages, the creator of architecture, agriculture, manufactures, commerce, law, science, philosophy, finance, church organization, sculpture, music, painting and literature, and yet the American negro in thirty years has outstripped her thousands of years of priceless achievement!

Education is the development of that which is. The negro has held the continent of Africa since the dawn of history, crunching acres of diamonds beneath his feet. Yet he never picked one up from the dust until a white man showed to him its light. His land swarmed with powerful and docile animals, yet he never built a harness, cart or sled. A hunter by necessity, he never made an ax, spear or arrowhead worth preserving beyond the moment of its use. In a land of stone and timber, he never carved a block, sawed a foot of lumber or built a house save of broken sticks and mud, and for four thousand years he gazed upon the sea yet never dreamed a sail.

Who is the greatest negro that ever lived according to Mr. Booker T. Washington? Through all his books he speaks this man's name with bated breath and uncovered head—"Frederick Douglass of sainted memory!" And what did Saint Frederick do? Spent a life in bombastic vituperation of the men whose genius created the American republic, wore himself out finally drawing his salary as a federal office-holder, and at last achieved the climax of negro sainthood by marrying a white woman!

What Education Cannot Do.

Says the author of Napoleon, Honorable Thomas E. Watson: "Education is a good thing, but it never did and never will alter the essential character of any man or race of men."

I repeat, education is the development of that which is. Behold the man whom the rags of slavery once concealed—nine millions strong! This creature, with a racial record of four thousand years of incapacity, half-child, half-animal, the sport of impulse, whim and conceit, pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw, a being who, left to his will, roams at night and sleeps in the day, whose native tongue has framed no word of love, whose passions once aroused are as the tiger's—

]Continued on Page Three.]

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