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THE FUTURE OF THE NEGRO.

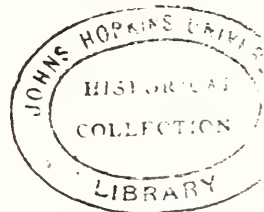
THE situation of the Negro race to-day presents both a bright and a dark side. It is most encouraging when viewed with regard to the race itself. Within less than a quarter of a century the Negro has made most wonderful progress, and his present, as contrasted with his past, exhibits an astonishing evolution, mentally, morally, physically, and financially. Even his worst enemies, or those who are most indifferent to all that pertains to him, will not attempt a denial of this. The mass stands on a higher plane. To use Mr. Grady's words, "the worthy and upright of his race may be found in every community, and they increase steadily in numbers and influence." No one has more clearly set forth in brief the magnitude of this upward movement than has Mr. G. W. Cable when he answers his own questions, "What has the Negro done? What is he doing?"*

But another view presents the dark side, that of his relative situation—a race suspended between a selfish, arrogant, and supersensitive South, and a vacillating, over-sympathetic North. This is said with a full understanding of that "miracle" of "kindly feelings" of which the South boasts as having ever existed between the races in that section, as well as with warm appreciation of all the material aid and sympathy from the North which have helped to make bright the other side of the picture. Still it is true.

With few exceptions the South shows in all discussions the determination to make the Negro bend to its desires, subordinate himself body and soul to what it conceives will make for its own prosperity and happiness, and allow it to exert dominion and power little removed from that of slavery. It proscribes and persecutes him in countless ways. Fraud, intimidation, violence, and constant depreciation of him as a man, are the methods which have been and are still pursued with relentless vigor to make

*The FORUM for August, 1888.

The Forum
1889.



plicable order, and against a background of awe-inspiring mystery. Coleridge is the name that will naturally occur to one here. His was in a pre-eminent manner a dreamy imagination. His metaphysics show this characteristic; the ideas are wanting in sharpness of edge. And the poems betray the characteristic yet more distinctly. It is not too much to say that poems like "Christabel" and the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," though not professing any affinity with dreams, are more truly dream-like in their feeling and conception than the poem which Byron calls "The Dream." Perhaps, indeed, one could hardly find a better illustration of the antithesis between the dreaming type of poetic imagination, with its leaning to the mystic and indefinable, and the waking type, with its love of positiveness and definiteness of conception, than in these two poets.

One would like to know how many of the quaint and fantastic creations of the poet that simulate more or less closely the dream-form, are the product of actual dreams. If all poetry is nothing but experience refined and sublimated, we should naturally expect the finest examples of dream-like composition to be based on actual dream-experiences. One might have safely hazarded the conjecture that Coleridge, De Quincey, Heine, and others were good dreamers, even if they had never made known the fact. Since, moreover, we know that so magnificent a fragment as "Kubla Khan" floated before the author's fancy in a state of profound sleep, it is not unreasonable to suppose that poets may owe many of their finest images to the revelations of sleep. The collections of dreams bequeathed to us by Shelley and Southey bear out the impression that poets are distinguished by the finer quality of their dreams. And perhaps Charles Lamb was not far wrong when he wrote, "The degree of the soul's contrivance in sleep might furnish no whimsical criterion of the *quantum* of poetic faculty resident in the same soul waking." This is borne out by the confession by Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson as to his dreams and the use he has made of them, for example, in the gruesome story, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

JAMES SULLY.

freedom a mockery and life simply a terrorized existence; and then in the refinement of cruel irony it turns from the murder of defenseless blacks to "impress upon him, what he already knows, that his best friends are the people among whom he lives." At every attempt to protect his life and liberty a hue and cry is raised that insurrection is threatened, and his most peaceful efforts to exercise the privileges conferred upon him by the Constitution are construed as a movement toward "Negro supremacy."

On the other side is the North, so divided between its desire to have right and justice meted out to the long-suffering subject race and the wish to deal fairly and magnanimously with its Anglo-Saxon brothers of the South, as to be incapable of decisive action on either side; now determining to relieve the Negro at all hazards, now yielding to the frantic appeal for non-interference and the pleading cry of the "peculiar situation."

It is this situation which makes the dark picture, and it is the true situation wherein is found the menace to the peace and prosperity of the South to-day. The unsettled, seething condition of affairs in that section is due to this situation, which has been made what it is by the stubborn refusal of the South to do the right. The shadow cast over the Negro's pathway by such acts as those mentioned is reflected in gloom upon all sides; nor does the defense of "self-preservation" make the South any the less responsible for what the Negro suffers and what itself endures. His increasing intelligence is blindly ignored, as are his rights, save when it serves some selfish purpose or ulterior design to admit their existence. And if he were not possessed of a steadfastness of purpose worthy of higher recognition and encouragement than it receives, he would feel like giving up the struggle as useless; for, in face of his unquestionable advance, it is a fact to be noted that never before has his presence as a factor in this body politic been so apprehensively looked upon—so generally considered by the South as a serious disturbing factor, conducive to critical complications and dire results.

We may well stop to ask how this is. The North refers the question to the South, which gives back the answer in its reiterated fear of "Negro supremacy," and which endeavors by every possible sophistry to impress upon others the terrors which it

claims will result from this dreaded thing. Is there any basis for this fear? None at all. That which the South declares it will not have—Negro supremacy—has no part in the Negro's plans for his future, nor is it desired by him. He simply seeks to exercise undeterred the freedom to enjoy rights guaranteed him as a citizen by the Constitution. He leaves all else to the future evolution of just public sentiment and to private choice. He has no desire to rule over or to harm the whites.

Pushed from the ground of Negro supremacy, the fear takes the shape of "being left to the mercy of an ignorant black majority," and "reconstruction days" are cited by Senator Wade Hampton * as proof of the evils in store, and as reason for abrogating the Negro's rights. I answer this by saying that there could now be no such ignorant rule as is claimed to have existed then. The conditions which governed those days have changed. The Negro has in the meantime made a remarkable advance in intelligence and education. The admitted progress of the race has given birth to leaders, younger and better educated, to replace those ignorant and irresponsible ones. This younger class is largely composed of men who know little of the horrors of slavery, who took no part in the strife and cherish no deep settled spirit of revenge for wrongs perpetrated in the past; men who bear a forgiving, kindly feeling in their breasts, who are able to take a calmer, more dispassionate view of all sides than could their elders who were so near the battle's recent heat and so fresh from slavery's wrongs; in short, men who, losing sight of mere narrow race fealty, white or black, are capable of assisting in the adjustment of matters upon higher considerations—the good of all as an American people. And as for being "left to the mercy of the blacks," it is a strange cry to come from a people who left wives, children, honor, and homes to the mercy of the "low, brutal, superstitious," ignorant slave; a strange shrinking is this from the freeman with his developed instincts, his higher aspirations and intelligence, as from a ravening beast bent upon their destruction.

Again, it is not ignorance that is feared. If it were, they might note the poor whites among them—an ignorant mass ac-

*The FORUM for June, 1889.

ording to their own statistics, some as unlettered and depraved as the lowest of Negroes. They might note the in-pouring stream of foreigners with which the North and West must cope as well as the South—a swarm of people from every nationality, the largest part ignorant and degraded, with the lowest principles and an utter disregard of all moral, religious, and civil law; the product of immemorial servility in their native lands. Yet these are allowed an astonishing freedom of speech and action, and a large share in the control of the machinery of the government, with no such abhorrence of their presence and rule as is shown of the Negro's, though the latter is a truer patriot in every sense. These are even welcomed and gladly used where their voice and vote may help to shut out the Negro. But this is no proof that black ignorance and corruption are more to be feared than white. No, such is not the point; the cultured, intelligent Negro fares no better at the hands of those who make this outcry than does the low and ignorant.

These fears are groundless and are not at the root of the feeling; but that which does underlie the whole matter and which gives the key to the disturbance is the deep-seated prejudices of color and caste. The South shrinks from the probable civil and political equality of the Negro race before the law, and more so now than ever, as it knows that intelligence cannot be crushed or easily overridden. And with these prejudices may be coupled the fear of loss of political power through the colored adherents of the opposing party. This is hinted at by Senator Colquitt* when he says:

“We thought we saw a determined effort so completely to Africanize our State and the States of the South as to leave for all time to come no doubt of Republican domination on our soil.”

It is this which makes the whole southern problem in all its relations what it now is.

The Negro has little to hope for from the South, if it adheres to its determination to direct alone the settlement, refusing all aid which does not accord with its desires. That this is its stand is especially discernible from the general expression of public opinion, recently drawn forth by Mr. Murat Halstead, of the Cincinnati

* The FORUM for November, 1887.

"Commercial Gazette," as to, the wisest and best course to be adopted by the new administration in dealing with this question. While there is breadth of view and difference of opinion at the North, ranging from a decisive handling of the matter to the most pusillanimous leaving of it to self-adjustment or Southern adjustment, the South is nearly unanimous in its desire to be suffered to deal with it alone, and this desire runs the gamut from the cry of despair, through the whine of sycophancy and the bold demand, to threatening defiance.

Is there not a possibility that the South, in its continued cry for indulgence, is demanding too much forbearance under the circumstances from all parties, the Negro included? Would it not be for its own welfare to have some of its sensitiveness seared over, so that it may not always be pleaded as a ground for non-interference? Then, too, would it not be well for the North so to steel itself that its sympathies may not vibrate too readily when this cry is sounded?

Yet, dark as is this picture of the Negro's relative situation, I am by no means inclined to take a gloomy view of it. I denounce while I deplore the outrages and injustices of which he has been and is still made the victim; but when the question comes, "Watchman, what of the night?" I am constrained to claim in reply, "All is well." There must be pioneers of every race. This and at least the next generation of the blacks must be the pioneers, even martyrs, of the Negro race, opening up the way along paths blazed by blood and fire, but surely opening it to better days for the tramping feet of millions unborn; for the Negro has a future before him in this country, where he has elected to remain, and I believe it to be one of promise despite present discouragements. This view is based upon three facts:

First, his ability to improve even under most adverse circumstances, as shown by his admitted progress—the proof of the possession of inherent power to better his condition as well as the indicator of the upward trend of his desires.

Secondly, his determination to use this power to make that condition one to command the admiration and respect of all. He fully understands the situation with all of its hinderances and its possibilities, and is quick to see and to seize the advantages of-

ferred by education and wealth. He has no more idea of sinking into a mere nonentity than he has of becoming again a slave or of overmastering the whites; but he is bent upon being a man, with all that the word implies in a free republic, and this ambition pervades the mass.

Lastly, the awakened conscience of the nation, as evinced in the general admission, irrespective of race, section, or party, that this question, involving the rights of an entire race, is the question of the day, calling for settlement. And, as Mr. Grady asserts, "it dominates all other issues" in the South. But despite supersensitiveness, bitter rancor, and fire-eating, dogmatic assertions supported by neither facts nor reason, there is a growth of public sentiment even there, as shown in admissions such as Senator Colquitt's: *

"Of one thing friends and foes may rest assured, that the people of the Southern States are not so foolish as to believe that their peace, their prosperity, or even their safety can be assured if a moiety of the population is treated with injustice and denied its rights in the state."

This heaven is bound to work, and, I trust, with force sufficient for the salvation of all concerned. At any rate, discussion, which in the past gave rise to decisive action, is an approach to some sort of settlement of this vexed question. But it must be pervaded by justice and cool reason to prevent any further complications, because of existing inequalities between the races in the South, where the solution is to be largely worked out under present conditions. No one, white or black, should desire this to be other than an amicable one, and to this end a practical application of all the wisdom and philosophy at command to govern both speech and action, is needed to grasp and deal with the matter effectively. I am of the opinion that such inflammatory, strongly denunciatory utterances as those of Senator Eustis of Alabama, Mr. Grady of Georgia, Senator Hampton of South Carolina, and others, can but postpone this, if not render it impossible. The South, though poor in material resources, can never hope to prosper by repudiating its debt to the Negro and regarding him as a formidable foe to be laid prostrate, annihilated, or driven from its borders; for not only his future, but that of

*The FORUM for November, 1887.

those about him, primarily depends upon whether he be granted his rights, pushed to the wall, or arrayed on the defensive. If the Negro is to remain in the South, this settlement must look to the disposition of the political situation. With this in view, three courses have been proposed, with a possible fourth:

The first, to avail him anything, is dependent upon the justice and sufferance of the whites in granting fair play—allowing him his vote, a fair ballot, and an honest count; using their strength and influence to prevent intimidation, violence, and fraud in any form. It is useless to claim that this is now being done. Facts prove the contrary, no matter how strong the asseveration, or from whatever source it comes, or how fully believed by any of the better class making it. Indeed, it is broadly admitted by such an authority as Mr. Watterson when he says:*

“I should be entitled to no respect or credit if I pretended that there is either a fair poll or count of the vast overflow in States where there is a Negro majority, or that in the nature of things present there can be.”

Putting aside the bar sinister found in this closing dictum, it is positively certain that this is the only amicable solution possible, as it is based upon the recognition of the principles of right and a call for voluntary obedience to the law from all under the law. Because of this it could not be productive of evil. The Negro on his part stands ready to do his share toward bringing about peace and harmony upon the adoption and carrying out of this course. It remains for the South to cease its shallow pretense of “fear of an ignorant majority,” to divest itself of color and caste prejudice and its determination to solidify. All of these combined have not increased and will not increase its prosperity, while they have retarded the Negro's; and the danger of loss of political power is more imminent the longer this last is persisted in. Mr. Grady recognizes this when he says:†

“To remain solid, therefore, is to incur the danger of being placed in perpetual minority and practically shut out from participation in the government.”

He further says, “The solid South invites the solid North.” He might have added, the solid Negro; for that is one means for the

* The FORUM for April, 1888.

† Address delivered at Augusta, Ga., November 29th, 1888.

Negro's self-preservation—as strong a natural law with him as with others.

In case of refusal to adopt this course, the next means to the same end is the appointment of United States marshals and supervisors who shall exercise a strict surveillance over all federal elections, protecting all voters alike. Whichever one is to be followed, neither means “Negro supremacy” nor “ignorant rule,” whatever may be the result as to party power.

If the North fails to see to this, but one course of action is left—one which disregards the Negro entirely: to nullify the Amendments by legal enactment and disfranchise him. Whether his vote is allowed or disallowed, the thing must be done legally; at the same time the congressional representation according to votes cast must be reduced.

Against this course I enter a stern protest on broad grounds. Congressman Oates of Alabama is reported to have declared that the disfranchisement of the colored race would be advantageous to both races. I unqualifiedly dissent from this statement. To disfranchise many hundred thousand Negro voters after these years of suffrage, would not only be rank injustice, but would work injury irreparable to them, depriving them of the only weapon *now* in their hands for self-defense against oppression, no matter how seldom used; and to permit such to remain within the state, yet not of the state, without voice or vote, would precipitate far more serious trouble than would so-called Negro supremacy. The solid South might be broken, but the solid Negro element, with a gathering enmity intensified by this great wrong, would prove a formidable force against law.

No statesman could delude himself with the belief that this would be a solution in any sense save for the briefest period. It certainly would not be amicable, much less productive of security. No one need delude himself with the idea that the spirit of the Negro can again be easily broken, and reduced through discouragements to the former docile servility. Servility is becoming a thing of his past. The strains of independent blood are asserting themselves and unfitting him for further serfdom. For the first time he would be driven to desperation, and the state presented by such a perspective none should invite. He will aid

in every lawful solution but that promising a blight upon his future. Such he could but oppose with manhood's might, for he is not going to remain a mute and passive spectator in that which affects him so vitally. This is well borne in mind. He is no longer in swaddling-clothes; he is nearing his majority, and will not be summarily dealt with. He did not make himself the problem, neither is he alone the problem; his growth has injected some of the complications, but as a return for this he will certainly share in effecting the solution. Hamlet must speak and act in "Hamlet." What will be done with him in the settlement will largely depend upon what he will do himself; and Mr. G. W. Cable has given him pertinent and salutary advice in this connection.*

The possible course left would be a division of the Negro vote; but it is not probable that there would be at any time a division of sufficient strength to guarantee him protection, or to placate the South. Compulsion cannot effect it. Mr. Grady sees danger in such a division, which pre-supposes a divided white vote, and he argues against it as a ground for southern solidity. His claim as to "what the Negro vote is," is not only unverified by facts but couched in language too strong to be allowed to pass unchallenged. He says: †

"It is alien, being separated by racial differences that are deep and permanent. It is ignorant, easily deluded or betrayed. It is impulsive, lashed by a word into violence. It is purchasable, having the incentive of poverty and cupidity and the restraints of neither pride nor conviction. It can never be merged through logical or orderly currents into either of two parties."

This is the unproved assertion made in support of the further claim that

"The very worst thing that could happen to the South would be to have the white vote divided into factions, and each faction bidding for the Negro, who holds the balance of power."

But the only conclusion to all this must be the one first reached, that the South fears not condition, but color; not loss of "political integrity," but of political power; and the present situation is the result.

* The FORUM for August, 1888.

† Address delivered at Augusta, November 29th, 1888.

If none of these courses can produce a settlement, with the Negro in the South, he must leave it. This is the only alternative fraught with more of good than evil to all, leading to greater promise for himself than he could hope for where conflict is a constant menace. I firmly believe this to be the wisest plan and the one which will ultimately be carried out. The various movements which have taken place when liberty of speech and action seemed purchased at too great a price by remaining, all look to this step. He is beginning to see that vigor and blood are wasted to a large degree by endeavoring to cope with any situation where security is dependent upon either southern sufferance or congressional aid alone. But where will he go? West, where other Americans are turning. He is already noting the breadth of that territory, and the great middle class will see a brighter future awaiting them there.

But this removal must be a voluntary one, and it must not be *en masse*, but gradual. I do not mean by this that the Negro should colonize; far from it. His leaders know that colonization would be his death-knell. The isolation of any race as a distinctive people in one large solid body in any part of a country means retrogression. In this case it would in time become an *impesium in imperio*, and the question which is now considered such a "cancer" would be but shifted from our shoulders to those of our descendants, who, if not vastly wiser grown, would find the cancer of too malignant a type for cure, because of its stronger hold and magnitude.

As a member of that race I believe the Negro is looking over the whole situation as a patriot should view it—with an eye not only to his own prosperous growth, but to that of the American people, of whom he considers himself an inseparable part. With such a view he can but take that step which will lead from present troubles to a fruition of his hopes—to be a man among men and not simply a Negro.

W. S. SCARBOROUGH.

REVIEWERS AND THEIR WAYS.

"ENOUGH," said the Prince. "You have already convinced me that no man can be a poet." Perhaps it will prove equally easy to persuade the reader that no man can be a reviewer. That is not precisely the purpose of this essay on the mystery of reviewing. I rather propose to bid young authors suffer reviewers gladly, while I would fain struggle with certain delusions of the public mind. As for addressing the hardened judge in the dock—the reviewer himself—with any moral reflections, the task is hopeless, though that is no reason why it should not be attempted.

Literary criticism of contemporary works, as practiced in the various countries now imperfectly civilized, cannot be spoken of with complete satisfaction. Literary criticism is the cheapest and commonest profession in the world. In quarterly magazines, in monthly magazines, in weekly serials, and in the daily press, an enormous bulk of criticism is constantly compiled. The endeavor of criticism, her Sisyphean task, is to keep up with current literature. Every publisher sends all his books to every periodical which he expects to give them a "notice." Among this myriad of notices there must be some good—some candid, competent, industrious estimates; but who can expect the majority to possess all or any of these virtues? Suppose we begin at the broadest and lowest rung of the reviewing ladder. Suppose we begin with the daily papers. In them literature comes after politics, the city article, riots, prize-fights, racing, and other forms of sport. Literature yields the precedence to murders, rumors, debates, and general tattle. I do not complain of this, for to the majority of mankind literature is deadly dull. The newspaper must give its public what they want, and, in England at least, they would rather learn that Mr. Browning wore patent-leather boots, or that Mr. Swinburne shielded his head from the ray of the sun-god under a straw hat, than read a column

