

THE RACE PROBLEM.

We live under a Government, which is the glorious result of ages of experiments. In legislation we are pre-eminent. We have quenched the fires of revolution with our patriotic blood and heroically solved all problems encountered in our path to supremacy. But, as we cross the threshold of the second century of our national existence, we are confronted with a problem more portentous, more complicated and more defiant than has ever before confronted a Nation. It is the race problem, that is agitating the minds of the American people to-day. It is the race problem, that appears so threatening upon our political horizon, challenging the statesmanship of the 19th century, and upon whose right solution depends the future of our Republic. The Caucasian race, through centuries of growth and development, has placed itself in the van of civilization. From barbarism up to its present pyramidal height of enlightenment, disdaining amalgamation or assimilation, it has held itself aloof from the other kindred races. In barbaric times, when race conflicts were frequent, war and bloodshed were the disastrous results; but never has collision between two civilized races appeared more inevitable than at present. We have here two races headstrong and determined. The nearer they approach each other upon equal footing, the fiercer becomes the antagonism engendered and the more unpromising the outlook. We have excluded the Mongolian and practically exterminated the Indian, but the Negro can be neither exterminated nor banished. He is a permanent factor in our civilization and demands at our hands full and exact justice. From the time of his transportation to our shores as a prisoner of war, he has been despised, degraded and branded with inferiority. For two centuries he was subjected to countless cruelties and atrocities. For two centuries family ties were utterly ignored and he was the helpless victim and tool of the cruel, relentless and inhuman task-master, until Justice interposed and forged his chains into mighty battering-rams, with which the walls of oppression were broken down. To-day the race wall stands as immutable as the rock of Gibraltar, in sheer mockery of human legislation. The Negro is excluded from nearly all pursuits and professions, that bring wealth, power and social position. What encouragement has he to become a doctor or a lawyer, knowing full well that they would not acquire for him the slightest

social or political distinction, although he were pre-eminent in his profession? Social ostracism follows him from the highest profession, to the lowliest occupation. No inducements are offered him for advancement, no incentives to spur him on in a single direction. Every avenue is closed to him. He appeals to those, who preach with contemptuous arrogance the doctrines of universal brotherhood and equality and at the same time stigmatize him with contempt and degradation. What hypocrisy! What a burlesque on the principles of liberty and justice! Emancipation was the inexorable decree of justice and enfranchisement the natural sequence of emancipation. The Negro is no longer a chattel, but a human being, clothed with all the rights and immunities of citizenship and, casting aside all race prejudices, aversions and animosities, let us consider him as a citizen. He transformed our forests and malarial swamps into productive fields, whose fruits he never enjoyed. He fought valiantly for the integrity of our laws and Constitution, but his valor only riveted tighter upon him the manacles, from which he was striving to free himself. He fought for our flag, which was to him an ensign of bondage, an epitome of untold misery and suffering.

If valor, patriotism, integrity and true manhood entitle a citizen to the fullest enjoyment of the manifold benefits of a free Government, surely the Negro should be an untrammelled beneficiary. He has been a citizen only nominally and suffrage has been to him an abominable mockery. Not until the Winchester and Raymond rifles have been removed from the polls at the South, can he exercise the elective franchise with impunity. While we endeavor to keep him a mere constituent of Government and neutralize him as a factor, we are not acting with exact justice toward him. The gross and flagrant injustice, that the Negro has borne for a quarter of a century without remonstrance or retaliation, is without parallel in the annals of history. But a race, which for centuries has been the incarnation of meekness and humility, will not bear unlawful repression, when it has "set its foot upon the lower rung of the ladder of opportunity." Out of the chaos of ignorance may come the order of enlightenment. Out of poverty and want may come wealth and plenty. Out of vice and immorality may come virtue and chastity. Good may come out of Nazareth, but peace and harmony can never be the outgrowth of injustice. "Taxation without proper representation" is the cry of the Southern Negro to-day, and have we forgotten those immortal words, that fired us with rage and indignation and goaded us on in the conflict until we had broken from our limbs the shackles of British despotism? The bullet must

be exchanged for the ballot, the invincible bulwark of our Liberty, behind which it is the equal prerogative of white and black to entrench himself in this land, where man is treated without reference to "race, color or previous condition of servitude." Railway and packet companies may provide separate and unequal accommodations for white and black, but the highway has its unwritten law for the races of the earth. We may attend separate schools, but we each have the same object in view, the cultivation of our mental powers. We may worship in separate sanctuaries, but our God will ever be his God. The Negro is our equal before the law, but equality before the law, the old Greek distinction between freedom and barbarism, is impossible without a sense of equality in the hearts of the white race. There can be no Mason and Dixon's line dividing the races of this continent.

"We are one and inseparable," one in purpose, one in history, one in destiny. Our intellectual and moral criteria have degenerated toward criteria of station, wealth and color. Those, who argue from the supposed race superiority a similar superiority of social, civil and political rights, should have buried those views with that slavery, which is a blot upon the fair pages of our history. If in America we run a color line through all our social relations, we should not arrogate to ourselves the right to stretch it through our civil and political relations. It would bring to shame the dwarfed political intelligence of the most ignorant Russian. Ignominious race distinctions and discriminations in a land founded by Omniscience on the eternal and unswerving principles of liberty and equality, are the precursors of revolution. The subserviency of the civil rights of the freedman to the domination of the white man is the worst form of Asiatic tyranny. In state or local affairs Negro majorities are not recognized. When the majority is totally ignored, the fundamental principle of our Government is perverted and Republic becomes a synonym for Oligarchy or Aristocracy. Already mutterings of discontent have been heard.

The spark of hatred still lingers ready to be fanned into a mighty conflagration, by the hot breezes of injustice. When amid the prattle of the ignorant millions, who anathematize the Negro and clamor for his extermination, we raise our voice in his behalf, we raise it for the science of sciences—Humanity, the science which can settle amicably every issue between man and man. Then shall all sectional feeling be abolished and the words North and South shall designate only directions of country and not

antipodal ideas. Strife and dissension are the harbingers of ruin. Union is strength. It is the contagious idea of national unity without amalgamation or race confusion, that is flashing with electric rapidity from mind to mind among the intelligent people of our commonwealth.

It is this spontaneous outburst of the intelligence of our country, that heralds the near approach of a sublime era; an era when Reason will conquer Prejudice and when Falsehood will surrender to Truth and the dictates of conscience will direct the affairs of the Nation; when the people of this Republic, irrespective of party or caste, will unite in one supreme effort to break down the barriers, which prejudice and limited views have erected between the white and the black; establish our common humanity, enthrone Justice and proclaim to the world, that America is "a home of freedom and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and every clime."

CLASS OF '92.

W B. BREWSTER,
MACALESTER COLLEGE.