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# THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF

By Anna J. Cooper

Of all the crimes of the universe, exploitation is the quintessence, the sum total of the most monstrous, the most heinous, the most ungodly. Exploitation means using your neighbor for yourself—shoving his body between your body and the bullets, manipulating his fingers to claw chestnuts from the embers, the savage expression at the Nth degree of human selfishness, the hoggish principle among men which makes self the center of the universe and stands ready to trample ruthlessly underfoot or greedily devour the entire not-self regardless of right, rhyme or reason. Exploitation is at the bottom of all the wickedness that ever plotted human woe, it has staged and enacted all the world suffering and sorrow from the tragedy of Cain to the latest crooked maneuver in watered stocks. It has more shapes than Proteus, more colors than the chameleon. Its Big Business is not merely enslaving the proletariat by the privileged as in Russia before the Revolution, nor blacks by whites as in this country before emancipation; it crunches its monstrous jaws upon the helpless victims of peonage today, wherever criminals are expertly manufactured in the mass production of cheap laborers, wherever the embers of racial passions are fanned to flames in order to run out of town friendless weaklings who are getting "too damn prosperous", wherever pogroms, or lynchings, or "rides" are suggested and conducted by disturbed debtors who have "insufficient funds."

The weak, too, have their come backs and right adroitly and efficiently learn to exploit "their betters"—for the trick works both ways and under many guises, and altho less bloody in the manipulation of the worm (till he turns!) than when worked by the "Lords of the jungle," the tiger, the panther, the bear, nevertheless the humble disguise is just as contemptible, just as selfishly mean.

Exploitation of rich by poor, of white by black, of philanthropist by charity promoters, tho its features are less harsh and it wears with insinuating humility the velvet glove over the iron claw, yet this colossus of crimes exploitation, the real thing is there and must plead guilty at the bar of humanity notwithstanding all its pious nosing. The snivelling beg-

tion, the real thing is that  
must plead guilty at the bar of  
humanity notwithstanding all its  
pious nosing. The snivelling beg-  
gar with a comfortable bank roll  
of his own, who holds up traffic to  
get a dime in his tin cup, is guilty  
and guilty too is the rummage  
sale that masquerades as church  
work but re-enacts the comedy of  
Annius and Sapphira and smil-  
ingly "holds back part of the  
price." Most insidiously does this  
protean monster work his way in-  
to the philanthropies of a people,  
teaching subtle ways of appealing  
for sympathy and money thru the  
beaten paths of pity and human  
kindness.

I was in a hotel once when an  
entertainer appeared with a piti-  
ful group of Negro children to  
"sing for the guests." Of course  
the children sang Spirituals—  
"Nobody knows the trouble I See"  
—"Aint got no friend but Jesus"—  
"Way down yonder by mahself,  
couldn't hear nobody pray," and  
then the inevitable collection was  
"lifted" and the wheedling beggar  
who posed as leader and "head of  
a school" trying to be facetious  
in what he meant to be a tremen-  
dous climax to his address: "Lad-  
ies and gentlemen, I just thot I'd  
bring mah face along."

Now this column's excuse for  
all the foregoing high powered  
indignation, or rather long drawn  
out and somewhat lurid introduc-  
tion to our "Educational Aims," is  
the writer's firm conviction that  
appealing to the world's pity is  
pretty surely inviting its con-  
tempt. While poverty is no dis-  
grace (as we are fond of recit-  
ing rather unconvincingly) it is,  
we must admit, quite systemati-  
cally charged up to social ineffi-  
ciency; and if any group expects  
to dictate either policies or per-  
sonnel it ought to square its  
shoulders, set its jaw, and heave  
to under its load. To come down  
to personalities: we cannot blame  
the white employer when he has a  
job to give out and white men  
with families to support are stand-  
ing in the bread line asking for  
work, if he does not leave it im-  
partially to the flip of a penny or  
a purely psychological test as to  
whether he will choose a colored  
man for the place. We have been  
hearing much of late of "colored  
management for colored institu-  
tions, and not a few of the out-  
spoken news agencies came back  
with the cynical but unanswerable  
retort: "Yes; with white money."  
We are not independent. Let's  
admit it, and if it's any comfort

to know it, neither is anybody else. Independence is all a big bluff. You've either got to serve, or wheedle, or bulldoze. For my part, I prefer service. Earn your way, and, if you desire that high chested feeling that we call honor;—give more than the specifications call for. Let humanity have the lagnappe. You feel better, it boosts your trade, and is in the long run sounder business promotion than exploitation. Honest work for an honest dollar, the quid pro quo with due regard for the other fellow's Self—Thy neighbor as Thyself.