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THE ULTIMATE RACE PROBLEM

BY KELLY MILLER

THE adjustment of the forward and backward races of mankind is, without doubt, the most urgent problem that presses upon the twentieth century for solution. The range of this problem is not limited to any country or continent or hemisphere; its area is as wide as the inhabitable globe. The factors involved are as intricate in their relations, and as far-reaching in their consequences, as any that have ever taxed human wisdom for solution. A problem as wide as human interest, and as deep as human passion, will not yield to hasty nostrums or passionate dogma, but calls for statesmanlike breadth of view, philanthropic tolerance of spirit, and exact social knowledge.

The local phase of this question in the United States has become so aggravated and acute that our solicitous philosophers are prone to treat it as an isolated phenomenon, separate and apart from the world-wide problem of which it forms but a fragment. But the slow processes of social forces pay little heed to our fitful solicitude. Indeed, the bane of sociological endeavor is the feverish eagerness of the extemporaneous reformer to apply his premature programme of relief to every local symptom, without adequate knowledge of social law and cause. We get a broader and better grasp upon the race problem in America, when we view it in the light of the larger whole. As the astronomer cannot divine the course and career of a particular planet without a broad knowledge of the underlying laws that govern the solar system, nor the naturalist gain any adequate notion of a single animal or plant unless his observation and study is based upon a general conception of the species to which it belongs, so the student of social problems will not wisely draw conclusions

from a single contributory factor, to the neglect of the general product. In the great social scheme of things, the adjustment of man to man is a unitary problem, and the various modes of manifestation, growing out of place and condition, are but parts "of one stupendous whole."

In attempting the solution of any problem of a social nature, we should first seek to separate those factors that are universal and unchanging in their operation from those that are of a special and peculiar nature. The primary principle which runs like a thread through all human history is the communicability of the processes of civilization among the various branches of the human family. This is indeed the determining factor in the solution of the universal race problem that confronts the world to-day.

It so happens, in the process of human development, that the whiter races at present represent the forward and progressive section of the human family, while the darker varieties are relatively backward and belated. That the relative concrete superiority of the European is due to the advantage of historical environment rather than to innate ethnic endowment, a careful study of the trend of social forces leaves little room to doubt. Temporary superiority of this or that breed of men is only a transient phase of human development. In the history of civilization the various races and nations rise and fall like the waves of the sea, each imparting an impulse to its successor, which pushes the process further and further forward.

Civilization is not an original process with any race or nation known to history, but the torch is passed from age to age, and gains in brilliancy as it goes. Those who for the time being stand

at the apex of prestige and power are ever prone to indulge in "Such boasting as the Gentiles use," and claim everlasting superiority over the "lesser breeds." Nothing less could be expected of human vanity and pride. But history plays havoc with the vainglorious boasting of national and racial conceit. Where are the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Egyptians, who once lorded it over the earth? In the historical recession of races, they are "one with Nineveh and Tyre." Expeditions must be sent from some distant continent to unearth the glorious monuments of their ancestors from beneath the very feet of their degenerate descendants. The lordly Greeks who ruled the world through the achievements of the mind, who gave the world Homer and Socrates and Phidias in the heyday of their glory, have so sunken in the scale of excellence that, to use the language of Macaulay, "their people have degenerated into timid slaves and their language into a barbarous jargon." On the other hand, the barbarians who, Aristotle tells us, could not count beyond the ten fingers in his day, subsequently produced Kant and Shakespeare and Newton. The Arab and the Moor for a season led the van of the world's civilization.

Because any particular race or class has not as yet been caught up by the current of the world-movement is no adequate reason to conclude that it must forever fall without the reach of its onward flow. If history teaches any clear lesson, it is that civilization is communicable to the tougher and hardier breeds of men whose physical stamina can endure the awful stress of transmission. To damn a people to everlasting inferiority because of deficiency in historical distinction shows the same faultiness of logic as the assumption that what never has been never can be. The application of this test a thousand years ago would have placed under the ban of reproach all of the virile and vigorous nations of modern times.

In present-day discussion concerning the advanced and backward races of men, much stress is laid on what is called the white man's civilization, as if this color possessed exclusive proprietorship in the process. We might as well speak of the white man's multiplication table. It is impossible to conceal the secret and method of civilization as a quack secretes the formula of his patent nostrum. The lighted candle is not placed under a bushel but on a candlestick, and gives light unto all who come within range of its radiant influence. We reward with a patent right the originator of a new process, guaranteeing him the benefit of the first fruit of the creation of his genius; but its value to the inventor is always proportional to the diffusion of benefits among his fellow-men. And so the race or nation that first contrives a process or introduces an idea may indeed enjoy its exclusive benefit for a season, but it will inevitably be handed down to the rest of the world which is prepared to appropriate and apply its principles. When a thought or a thing is once given to the world, it can no more be claimed as the exclusive property of the person or people who first gave it vogue, than gold when it has once been put in circulation can be claimed as the exclusive possession of the miner who first dug it from its hiding place in the bowels of the earth. The invention of letters has banished all mystery from civilization. Nothing can be hidden that shall not be revealed. There can be no lost arts in the modern world. England to-day can utilize no process of art or invention that is not equally available to Japan. The most benighted people of the earth, when touched by the world-current, become at once "the heirs of all the ages, in the foremost files of time."

There is in every potential cult the pent-up spirit to multiply and expand itself. The impulse to disseminate as widely as possible that which stirs our own feelings or moves our own imagination is a law of social, as well as of individual,

psychology. It becomes the gospel of glad tidings which we are constrained to proclaim to all the people. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" is a vital mandate that applies to every type of civilization as well as to the religion of Jesus. While it is true that it is only in religious propagandism that the missionary motive is conscious and purposive, yet the principles of secular civilization are no less effectively imparted because the altruistic motive may not be a conscious part of the policy of those promoting them. The blessings of a higher civilization have always been vouchsafed to overridden peoples by their ambitious exploiters, and its secret and method proclaimed to "every creature" within the expanding circle of its influence. The self-seeking aggressor becomes the unconscious missionary of the language, laws, institutions, customs, manners, and method of the higher form of development which he represents; the soldier in quest of dominion brings system and discipline; the merchant's greed for gain introduces the comforts, conveniences, and refinements of the higher life; the pedagogue looking for a livelihood spreads a knowledge of literature and the subtler influences that minister to the higher needs of the mind.

The European races are now overrunning the world in quest of new resources to exploit, and are thus coming into close and intimate contact with the various weaker breeds of men. The commercial spirit is the ruling passion of the dominant world to-day. The whole surface of the inhabitable globe is practically parceled out among the stronger nations within defined spheres of influence. It is easy to predict the continuance of this process until "every creature" has been touched by modern civilization. The wonderful growth of exact knowledge and its application to the forces of nature is rendering this contact easy and inevitable. Steam and electricity have annihilated distance and banished the terrors of the deep; preventive and remedial

medicine has neutralized the baleful influence of climate, and checked the ravage of disease; the hardship of pioneer life is lessened by the easy transportation of material comforts, and the loneliness of isolation is relieved by the transmission of intelligence which is flashed around the world swifter than the wings of the morning. We may naturally expect that less and less heed will be paid to the fixity of the bounds of habitation of the various races and nations that dwell upon the face of the earth. The outcome of this contact constitutes the race problem of the world. As water when unrestrained flows from a higher to a lower level till equilibrium is established, so we may expect this stream to flow down and out from the higher fount until the various races and tribes of men reach an equilibrium of civilization and culture.

The place of education in human development is a principle whose importance is just beginning to dawn upon the world. Knowledge is the great equalizing factor in modern civilization. At one time it was thought that divine favor made one man lord over another. It was but a short step from the divine right of the ruler to the divine right of race. But we are gaining a clearer and clearer conviction that racial, like individual, superiority depends upon knowledge, discipline, and efficiency, which may be imparted largely by education. A people may gain or lose its place according as it holds aloof from or keeps in touch with the highest attained efficiency of the world. The powers and forces of nature are not enchanted by any sorcery of race, but yield their secret and mystery to the application of knowledge. Steam and electricity, wind and wave and sunlight, will work as willingly for a backward as for a forward race. The only advantage that the latter possesses is a predisposition to a better discipline, and a higher social efficiency. It does not appear that it possesses a better grasp upon the recondite principles of knowledge. Education can be relied upon to discount, if not to liquidate, the disadvantage under

which the backward races labor. Nor is it necessary for such races to repeat the slow steps and stages by which present greatness has been attained. He who comes at the eleventh hour is placed on equal terms with him who has borne the heat and burden of the day in the vineyard of civilization. It takes the child of the most favored race twenty-five years to absorb the civilization of the world. The child of the backward race can accomplish the same feat in the same space of time. Japan is teaching the world that she can appropriate and apply the agencies of civilization as readily, and wield them as effectively, as the most favored nations of Europe. What Japan has done can be repeated by China, or India, or Africa, or by any hardy people with territorial and national integrity who will assimilate the principles of modern progress through education, and helpful contact with those nations which are now in the forefront of things.

There are three distinct modes of race-contact: (1) where the European takes up permanent residence among the weaker race, as in Australia, South Africa, and Hawaii; (2) where the white man has no expectation of permanent residence, but aims merely at political and commercial domination, as in India, North and Central Africa, and the Polynesian Isles; and (3) where the weaker race has been introduced into the land of the stronger for the sake of industrial exploitation, as in the United States, South America, and the West Indian archipelago. The several phases of the race problem growing out of these different modes of contact are too often overlooked in current discussion.

The conceivable lines of outcome of race contact are: the enslavement of the weaker, or, what amounts to the same thing, its subordination into an inferior caste; the extermination of the weaker; expulsion either of the weaker or of the stronger; amalgamation or absorption; and amicable adjustment and continuance of distinct ethnic types. All of these processes will doubtless contribute in

part to the solution of this problem. The outcome will not be uniform and invulnerable, but will depend upon the nature and complexity of underlying conditions.

In the United States this problem presents many interesting and unique phases which cause the student of social subjects to bestow upon it a degree of attention beyond that accorded any other point of race-contact throughout the world. Its workings are watched with the keenest interest, and much reliance is placed upon its indications, because it presents the widest types of ethnic divergence in the closest intimacy of contact.

1. In this terrible process of race-attrition, millions of the weaker races will be utterly destroyed. Whole tribes and groups and sub-races will perish from the face of the earth. Civilization is a savor of life unto life and of death unto death, and its beneficence is reserved only for those who are endowed with power to endure. The red and brown races have faded before the march of civilization as a flower before the chilling breath of autumn. The Australian has gone; the red Indian has been dispatched to his happy hunting-ground in the sky; many of the scattered fragments of the isles of the sea have vanished away, while others are waiting gloomily in the valley of the shadow of death. These people have perished and are perishing, not so much by force and violence, as because they were not able to adjust themselves to the swift and sudden changes which an encroaching civilization imposed. In Hawaii they have faded under the mild and kindly dispensation of the missionary of the Cross, quite as inevitably as if swept away by shot and shell. Even the American Indian has not succumbed so much as the victim of violence as the prey of the easily communicable vices of civilization. The frontier of civilization will always be infested with social renegades and outcasts, who flee from the light to hide their evil deeds. They carry with them the seeds of degenerative evil which destroy

both mind and body. These become the consorts of the weaker race among whom they sow the seeds of death.

It seems that where the backward race is thinly scattered over a wide area or thickly settled upon a limited territory, the white race is inclined to take up permanent settlement, which in the end is apt to lead to the destruction of the feebler element. After the disappearance of the eliminable elements, the fittest, or at least the toughest, will survive. The yellow and black races, through sheer physical toughness, have demonstrated their ability to look the white man in the face and live. They not only decline to vanish before his onward march, but actually multiply and replenish the earth in face of his most strenuous exactions. In India, in South Africa, in America, and in the West Indian Islands, these races are increasing at a rate that plainly forbids the prophecy of extermination. Wherever the European establishes his high standard of governmental efficiency, checks the ravages of disease, and puts an end to internal tribal strife, these races have increased their strength at an accelerated ratio. Three-quarters of a million slaves in the United States in 1790, under the rigors of a slave régime, had swollen to four and a half million in 1860. While fresh importations from Africa contributed somewhat to this remarkable expansion, yet it was due mainly to the reproductivity of the original stock. From 1860 to 1900, during a transitory interval as trying as any people ever passed through, this four and a half million had doubled itself without outside reënforcement. The white, the yellow, and the black races will doubtless constitute the residuary factors in the world's ultimate race problem.

2. In the nomadic state of society, where population was only slightly attached to the soil, and roamed at will, without fixity of abode or permanence of abiding-place, the expulsion of the feebler element was not an unusual outcome of

race-contact. But under modern conditions where the whole surface of the earth is preëmpted, and population irremovably rooted in the soil, the hegira of a numerous race from one land to another is the most absurd of all possible solutions. This method has been suggested as a possible outcome of the Negro problem in America, but the proposition has always been regarded as an idle speculation. No publicist who has regard for the sanity of his social judgment would entertain it for a moment as a serious, practicable policy.

The temporary shifting of small groups of native peoples from one locality to another has been, and doubtless will continue to be, a minor process in the scheme of race-adjustment. The American Indian is confined to reservations of diminishing boundaries, the Australian will be pushed to the outer verge of the island continent, the moribund remnants here and there will flee to the hills to hide them from the wrath of the encroaching pale-face. But this is merely the preliminary stage of extermination which is the evident doom of these flying fragments. Where the weaker race constitutes the numerical majority, and thrives in multiplying numbers, the European is apt to withdraw under the sheer force of racial momentum. The white race has been expelled from most of the West Indian Islands, because the black race proved too prolific under such a congenial habitat. In the United States the whites are gradually growing relatively fewer in the black belts, and the bedarkened regions are steadily growing in intensity. Wherever any one of the hardier races is thickly settled, it is not likely to be interfered with by competing numbers of any other race. Where the stronger race sends out only a handful of representatives to command the superior governmental and commercial positions, ultimate expulsion of the stronger is the only predictable result.

3. Wherever the white man has touched the weaker races he has never scrupled to

mingle his blood with theirs. The sons of the gods are ever prone to look lustfully upon the daughters of men. There arises a composite progeny which enters as an important factor into race-adjustment. In this regard it is necessary to make a sharp distinction between the Teutonic and the Catholic races of Europe. The Latin or Catholic nations give the mongrel offspring the status of the father, while the Teutonic or Protestant races relegate them to the status of the mother race. In the one case, the white race becomes mongrelized while the feeble element remains comparatively pure; whereas in the other, the white race remains pure while the lower race becomes mixed. In Cuba, where the Latin dispensation prevails, the mixed element is returned as white; but in the United States it is classed with the Negroes. In Cuba, Porto Rico, and South America, the mongrelization of the races is either an accomplished or an assured result.

The Mohammedan religion and the Catholic branch of the Christian faith are, without dispute, superior to the Protestant type in allaying the rancor of race-passion. The amity of race-feeling in Constantinople and Rio de Janeiro is in marked contrast with that at Richmond and Baltimore. If the Mohammedan and Catholic races were in the ascendancy in the world's affairs, the mongrelization of races would assume a different aspect from what may be predicted under the dominance of the Teuton. But as these more tolerant races seem to have spent their force as world-ruling factors, we may as well place the stress of attention upon what is likely to take place under the dominance of the more intolerant races of Northern Europe. An increasing mixed breed will be the outcome of illicit intercourse between the white male and the darker female, and will be thrown back upon the status of the mother. Where the number of the weaker race is small in proportion, this will form an important factor in the final solution, but where the number is relatively large it

may be regarded as a negligible quantity.

A continuous infusion of white blood would bring about a closer and closer physical approachment between the two types, until all social restrictions would be removed upon the disappearance of the ethnic difference upon which it rests. If the Negro element in our American cities was not constantly reënforced by black invasion from the rural districts it would be easy to predict its final disappearance through extinction and amalgamation. But in South Africa, portions of the West Indies, and the heavy Negro states of America, race fusion will have but little determining effect upon the general equation.

According to the United States census of 1890, there were 956,689 mulattoes, 105,135 quadroons, and 69,936 octoroons. The proportion of Negro blood in this admixture would represent about 500,000 Negroes of pure type. It must also be remembered that illicit intercourse between the races is largely limited to the mixed element, and there is likely to be very little fresh absorption of the undiluted blacks. On the other hand, the degree and grades of admixture returnable in the census represent but a small proportion of persons actually affected by admixture of blood. It is estimated that fully three-fourths of the colored race are affected by some slight strain of white blood. The octoroon and quadroon class will be apt to pass over clandestinely to the white race, in order to escape the inferior status of their mother blood. Such transition tends to widen the breach between the races. The white race will take in only such homœopathic dashes of Negro blood as to remain substantially pure. The white blood already infused in the Negro race will be more equably diffused, and the colored American will represent a more solid ethnic entity, being brown rather than black in color.

We are forbidden to prophesy any general fusion of races, by the sure knowledge that when the white race becomes

conscious of what it deems the evil of miscegenation, it bars the process both by law and public sentiment. In all the heavy Negro states the laws forbid intermarriage between the races, and, even where there is no law, public sentiment is pronounced and unmistakable.

4. There will be an attempt to relegate the backward race to an inferior status wherever the white race takes up permanent residence. When slavery was an accepted system throughout the civilized world, the process was simple and easy. But, in the absence of the fixed status of servitude, the same result is sought to be accomplished through contrivance and cunning. This policy is most clearly noticeable in the United States. Although the Negro enjoys theoretically all the rights and prerogatives of an American citizen, yet in public sentiment and in actual practice he is fixed to an inferior social, civil, political, and industrial status. But this scheme of subordination can only be local and temporary.

A caste system must be like a pyramid, each layer representing a broader area than the one resting upon it. It is impossible to form a lasting scheme of caste with a superincumbence of ten white men upon the substratum of one Negro. If the Negroes were everywhere relatively as numerous as they are in some parts of the Southern States, and if the whites were not smothered out by numerical predominance, the permanence of caste might be counted on as a calculable factor. The slave system in America was doomed to destruction because the slave element was not sufficiently numerous to support the entire white population. Even in the South there were only 500,000 slaveholders, who controlled 4,000,000 slaves, leaving 6,000,000 free whites practically on the level with Negro bondmen, a condition which could exist only until the non-slave-holding class became conscious of their condition. The free laborer of the North was the first to awake to conscious-

ness of the fact that he was made the competitor of slave labor, a condition which he resented and resisted to the bitter end. The overthrow of slavery was due to economic, as well as to moral and philanthropic, causes. It is impossible to relegate the Negro to any status without at the same time affecting a sufficient number of white men to make up the full quota of that status. Any degradation placed upon the Negro laborer must react upon white workmen of the same grade.

The caste system in America is bound to fail, not so much from humanitarian considerations, as because it lacks a sufficient physical basis upon which to rest. Abraham Lincoln possessed an illumined understanding. His motto that a country cannot exist half-slave and half-free is just beginning to be appreciated by those who are devoted to the study of our complex national problems. New England does not make a fixed status for the Negro because, as President Eliot informs us, she does not deem it worth while. The country at large will ultimately be brought to the view that it is not worth while to establish a separate and distinct status for a diminishing fraction of the total population.

5. After the red and brown races shall have perished from the face of the earth; after the fragmentary peoples have been exterminated, expelled, or absorbed; after the diffusion of knowledge has established a world-equilibrium, there will be left the white, the yellow, and the black as the residuary races, each practically distinct in its ethnic identity, and occupying its own habitat. We can only prophesy amity, peace, and good will among these types, who will more fully appreciate than we do now that God has made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth, within assignable bounds of habitation. Whether this will be but a stage in the ultimate blending of all races in a common world-type transcends all of our present calculable data, and must be left to the play of the imagination.